

MHS Microfilms

the Papers of John Lind's Mission to Mexico

Deborah K. Neubeck



FOR THE manuscripts department of the Minnesota Historical Society, the year 1971 marked both the completion of a six-year microfilming project sponsored by the National Documentary Sources Program of the National Historical Publications Commission (NHPC) and the establishment of an independent microfilming program. The former program was instituted to promote, through co-operation of the federal government and the scholarly community, the preservation, dissemination, and use of documentary source material important to the study and understanding of the history of the United States as a nation. A major function of the program has been the granting of federal financial assistance for the reproduction of manuscript collections in high quality microfilm editions and their description in sophisticated finding aids. During the manuscripts department's participation in the program, it published microfilm editions of and pamphlet guides to six of the society's most important collections: the papers of Ignatius Donnelly, the National Nonpartisan League (with Henry G. Teigan Papers Supplement), Alexander Ramsey, Henry Hastings Sibley, Lawrence Taliaferro, and James Wickes Taylor.

Convinced of the value of microfilm as a medium for preserving and disseminating manuscript collections, the manuscripts department resolved to continue a microfilm program under its own auspices. Lucile M. Kane, curator of manuscripts, chose to launch the new series with a microfilm edition of the Mexican Mission Papers of John Lind (1913–1931) on the basis of “the papers’ demonstrated utility to scholars studying relations between Mexico and the United States as well as on an internal need for a better reference guide to the materials.”¹

The Mexican Mission Papers represent a cohesive subject unit. They were extracted from the society's larger collection of Lind Papers (1870–1933), including all items for the 1913–1916 period (most but not all of which deal with Mexican affairs), plus those papers for the 1917–1931 period that relate to Mexico. Letters,

¹Introduction to Deborah K. Neubeck, *Guide to a Microfilm Edition of the Mexican Mission Papers of John Lind*, iv (St. Paul, 1971).

Mrs. Neubeck, former manuscripts assistant at the Minnesota Historical Society, prepared the recently published pamphlet, Guide to a Microfilm Edition of The Mexican Mission Papers of John Lind. She also prepared the manuscripts for filming and edited the microfilm.

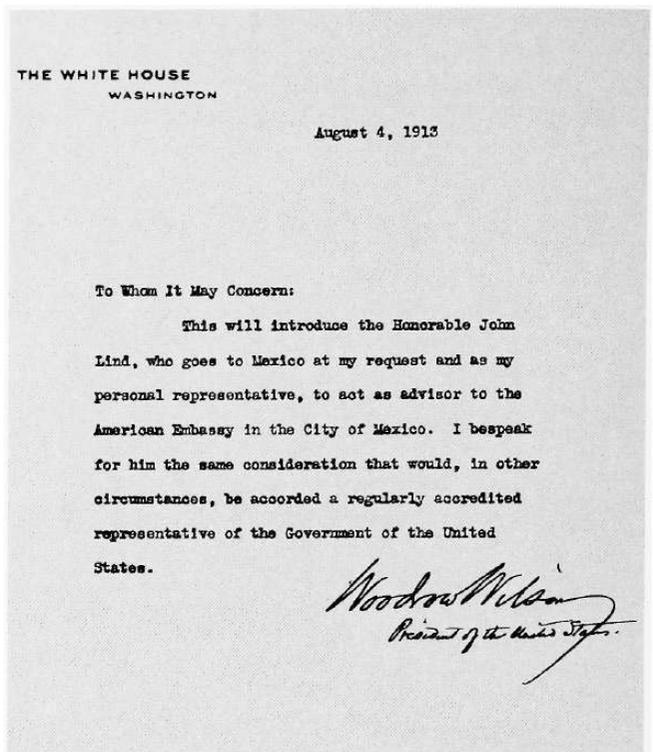
JOHN LIND, photographed with friend and political ally, Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan.

telegrams, and dispatches; official government documents; newspapers, magazines, and clippings; pamphlets, fliers, leaflets, and broadsides; and pictures, post cards, and photographs unfold on seven rolls of microfilm in an integrated, chronological sequence of correspondence and miscellaneous papers. Together they recount John Lind's diplomatic mission to Mexico in 1913 and 1914 as the personal representative of President Woodrow Wilson and Lind's continued involvement and interest in Mexican affairs after his return to the United States. From a special vantage point, they illuminate one of the most fascinating episodes in American diplomatic history: the unsuccessful attempt by the United States government to dictate the outcome of the Mexican Revolution.

WHEN WOODROW WILSON assumed the office of president of the United States in March, 1913, Mexico was in the throes of revolution. Guerrilla warfare, *coups d'état*, and political assassinations had for three years been the order of the day. In 1911, the thirty-five-year dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz had been toppled by revolutionary forces led by Francisco I. Madero, who was subsequently elected president. Madero, in turn, was overthrown and executed in a *coup d'état* engineered by one of his own generals, Victoriano Huerta, shortly before Wilson was inaugurated. Huerta's position as military dictator was soon to be challenged by rebels led by Venustiano Carranza, who called themselves Constitutionalists after the form of government they advocated.

During the struggle for military and political control, anarchy and economic collapse constantly threatened to engulf Mexico. Powerful governments, motivated by ideological and economic interests, complicated the chaotic situation by interfering in Mexican affairs. Between 1913 and 1915, President Wilson made the United States' relations with Mexico the chief international concern of his administration. Appalled by the recent events in Mexico, he and Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan—neither of whom had previous experience in the complex art of international diplomacy—embarked on a Mexican policy that reflected primarily their moralistic and idealistic impulses. Its goal was the re-establishment of social, economic, and political order through the elimination of Huerta and the creation of a democratically elected constitutional government. The policy was doomed to fail from the beginning, however, because it was based on unrealistic assumptions about and appraisals of the Mexican situation.

Wilson and Bryan tried various tactics to achieve their goals. They first rejected the historic American practice of recognizing *de facto* governments and



A LETTER to Mexican officials introduced Lind as the personal representative of President Wilson.

withheld formal recognition from the Huerta regime, although relations on an informal basis were to be maintained. This approach failed, so they recalled the United States ambassador, Henry Lane Wilson, and devised a mediation scheme designed to force Huerta's resignation and the holding of free elections.²

It was at this point, in August, 1913, that John Lind entered the scene. President Wilson selected him to travel to Mexico to present the mediation offer to Huerta and to exert diplomatic pressure for its acceptance. Because sending an ambassador would have been inconsistent with the policy of nonrecognition, Lind was given the ambiguous title of "personal representative." Clearly, however, he was to act in an ambassadorial capacity.

Lind was virtually unknown in national political circles when he went to Mexico for Wilson. Contrarily, he was a prominent lawyer and politician in his home state of Minnesota, to which he had emigrated from

²The terms of the mediation agreement were (1) immediate cessation of fighting and an armistice; (2) early and free elections participated in by all; (3) a pledge by Huerta not to be a presidential candidate in the elections; and (4) an agreement by all parties to accept the results of the election. See George M. Stephenson, *John Lind of Minnesota*, 217 (Minneapolis, 1935).

Sweden as a young boy. As a congressman from 1887 to 1893 and again from 1903 to 1905, and as governor from 1899 to 1901, he had established a widespread reputation as a man far more committed to progressive principles and issues than to party loyalty — a man who had once described himself as a “political orphan.”³

According to biographer George M. Stephenson, Lind’s appointment was as much a surprise to him as it was to the American public. For a mission of extreme delicacy, Wilson had chosen a man with no diplomatic experience, with no knowledge of Mexican affairs or the Spanish language, and with a strong anti-Catholic bias. Lind had, however, evidently been strongly recommended by Secretary of State Bryan. He and Lind had formed a lasting friendship when they served together in Congress from 1891 to 1893. Both had left the Republican party over the free-silver issue and had opposed the United States’ policy of imperialism during the Spanish-American War. They also had supported one another during their respective political campaigns. In addition, Lind was firmly committed to Wilsonian progressivism and had worked to secure Wilson’s presidential nomination and election in 1912. Lind had previously turned down Wilson’s offer to appoint him United States minister to Sweden.

Aside from his personal and political loyalty to both Wilson and Bryan, Lind apparently was credited with two other qualifications considered important: a reputedly circumspect attitude toward public statements and a strong, independent spirit that supposedly would enable him to resist partisan pressures in the execution of his mission. This estimate of Lind’s character proved to be only partially accurate. On the one hand, during his eight-month stay in Mexico (from August 9, 1913, until April 6, 1914), and for several years thereafter, newspapers made him well known to the people of the United States as “silent John Lind,” the tall, gaunt

Swede who would not comment on Mexican affairs. On the other hand, when Lind occasionally did issue statements for publication, he somehow managed to stir up a great deal of controversy. Moreover, he became a strong supporter of the Constitutionalist cause shortly after his arrival in Mexico, and the conduct of his mission thus had neither the neutrality nor the objectivity that Wilson and Bryan ostensibly desired.⁴

In some ways, Lind’s strong character proved a handicap, too. His preference for directness in speech and his impatience for tangible results made him temperamentally unsuited for the role of diplomat. These qualities, combined with his peculiar position, the manner in which the Wilson administration dealt with him and handled American-Mexican relations, and his lack of familiarity with the country, often left him feeling frustrated and isolated in Mexico.

IN AUGUST, 1913, when Huerta refused to accept the terms of the mediation plan proposed by the newly-arrived Lind, the mission appeared to have failed right at the outset. Instead of summoning Lind home, though, Wilson instructed him to remain in Mexico in the crucial role of observer and reporter, while the president and Bryan next embarked on a policy of “watchful waiting.” Following another attempt by Lind to force Huerta’s resignation through application of diplomatic pressure, “watchful waiting” was abandoned in favor of two measures — encouragement of the Constitutionalist forces opposed by Huerta and direct military occupation of Veracruz — also advocated by Lind.⁵ Eventually, in mid-1914, the Constitutionalist military forces drove Huerta from power. Their “First Chief,” Carranza, assumed control of the government without holding elections. In spite of the elimination of Huerta, Mexico seemed no closer to stability through democracy than it had been before.

The Constitutionalist ranks soon split. Carranza was challenged both militarily and politically by such former allies as Francisco (“Pancho”) Villa and Emiliano Zapata, who were referred to as Conventionists after the Convention of Aguascalientes. The latter, held in the fall of 1914, had elected a provisional president to whom Carranza was to yield power, but the “First Chief” refused. Wilson and Bryan, having discovered that Carranza was as stubbornly unwilling to allow the United States to interfere in Mexico’s internal affairs as Huerta had been, switched their allegiance for a time from Carranza to the Conventionist forces. In the fall of 1915, however, as the Constitutionlists managed to continue in power and as Wilson’s attention was drawn increasingly to the crisis in Europe, he granted *de facto* recognition to the Carranza government. Except for the 1916 Punitive Expedition sent into Mexico against

³ Stephenson, *John Lind*, 150.

⁴ For extended treatment of Lind’s Mexican mission, see Stephenson, *John Lind*, 208–262, and Kenneth J. Grieb, “The Lind Mission to Mexico,” in *Caribbean Studies*, 7:25–43 (January, 1968).

⁵ In April, 1914, on the pretext of halting arms shipments to Huerta, Wilson ordered United States military forces to occupy Veracruz in retaliation for three recent insults: (1) the Tampico incident, in which Huerta refused to accede to the demand of the commander of the United States naval squadron at Tampico that the American flag be raised and given a twenty-one gun salute by the Mexican commander as reparation for the arrest of several American sailors, since released; (2) the arrest by a Mexican soldier of a United States mail courier at Veracruz; and (3) the delay of an official State Department dispatch by a Mexican censor at Mexico City.

Villa, the United States withdrew from its intense involvement in Mexican affairs with its ultimate policy objectives unachieved and left one of the most important revolutions of the twentieth century to run its own course.⁶

As for Lind, while he had eagerly returned home to Minnesota in the spring of 1914 to resume the more comfortable roles of lawyer and political maverick, he maintained an active interest in Mexico. In retrospect he viewed his sojourn there as the most "intensely interesting" period of his life and comforted himself with the feeling that, despite the frustrations and disappointments of his mission, he had contributed to shaping the destinies of both the United States and Mexico.⁷

THE DIPLOMATIC DISPATCHES, through which officials in Washington, D.C., and diplomats in Mexico kept one another informed of local developments, are the heart of the Mexican Mission Papers of John Lind. Most of the dispatches are from Lind to Bryan, usually in both coded and transcribed forms and sometimes with Lind's original drafts attached. In his efforts to give the Wilson administration as complete a picture as possible of the social, economic, political, military, and religious conditions in Mexico, Lind packed his dispatches with diverse types of information. First, he reported actual, confirmed events, such as those witnessed personally, reported in the press, verified by corroborating documents, or established as fact in some other way. Included are events relating to the negotiations with the Huerta government; the elections held in October, 1913; the request of presidential candidate Félix Díaz for asylum in the United States consulate in Veracruz; the arrival of arms and fuel shipments for Huerta from Europe; the conduct of Mexican governmental affairs, such as the convening of congress and changes in Huerta's cabinet; the progress of important military campaigns and battles; and the financial crises continually plaguing the government.

Second, Lind relayed reports and rumors of unverified events (often transmitted to him by informants), such as supposed arrests and executions carried out by the Mexican government; secret alliances and agreements entered into by Huerta with the business community and the Catholic church; and uprisings planned by anti-Huerta partisans. Unfortunately, Lind did not always indicate clearly whether the information contained in his messages was more likely rumor or fact, and when he did, he sometimes judged incorrectly and exaggerated situations. For example, he repeatedly warned that the principal British oil investor in Mexico, Lord Cowdray (Weetman D. Pearson), had resolved to monopolize the Mexican oil industry; that the Englishman had already consolidated his position to the

extent that he dictated the Mexican policy of Great Britain and controlled the Huerta government; and that he was determined to embarrass the United States and thwart its policy goals. Lind further contended that the British minister to Mexico, Sir Lionel E. Carden, was acting as Cowdray's agent and was, therefore, party to these Machiavellian intrigues. Lind's belief in the existence of this conspiracy became an obsession; his accusations and his insistence that Carden be replaced are major themes in his dispatches.

Third, Lind reported what are clearly his personal opinions and interpretations, and he recommended strategies and tactics he believed should be employed by the Wilson administration. For example, he conveyed his negative views of the Irish, the Jews, the Catholic church, and the Mexicans, especially those in southern Mexico; his convictions that the fundamental causes of unrest in Mexico were not political but social and economic and that political stability was ultimately dependent on agrarian reform; and his estimate of what course the principal revolutionary leaders would follow. He also communicated his firm belief that, because the Mexicans understood only power and force, Wilson and Bryan had to develop a well-thought-out policy and plan of action, adhere to them without vacillation, and apply and maintain pressure at every point if they were to achieve their goals. He also transmitted his deepening sense of frustration as he realized that such a program did not exist and that Huerta could repeatedly call the administration's bluff.

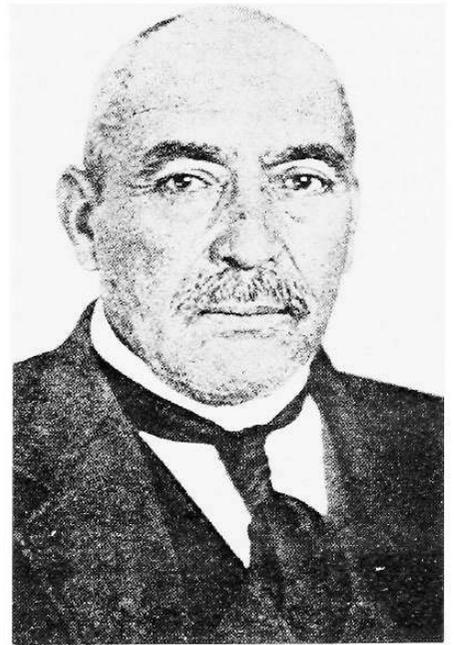
As his feelings of frustration and lack of accomplishment mounted, Lind began to fill his dispatches with recommendations designed to precipitate decisive action. At first he argued that, since the Constitutionalists would ultimately defeat Huerta, it would be wise for Wilson to recognize them. If, as was likely, United States military intervention became necessary to pacify the country, the Americans would then have the good will of the faction in power. He subsequently decided, however, that it would be more expedient and far wiser for the United States to achieve its objectives indirectly. If the United States abandoned the façade of neutrality, granted public support to the Constitutionalists, and lifted the embargo on American arms shipments to Mexico, the Constitutionalists would have the means to achieve what apparently could not be effected through

⁶When Villa raided the town of Columbus, New Mexico, in retaliation for the United States' recognition of Carranza, Wilson ordered troops into Mexico to capture Villa. Commanded by General John J. Pershing, the expedition remained in Mexico almost a year but failed to achieve its goal. Villa proved too elusive to be captured.

⁷Stephenson, *John Lind*, 327.



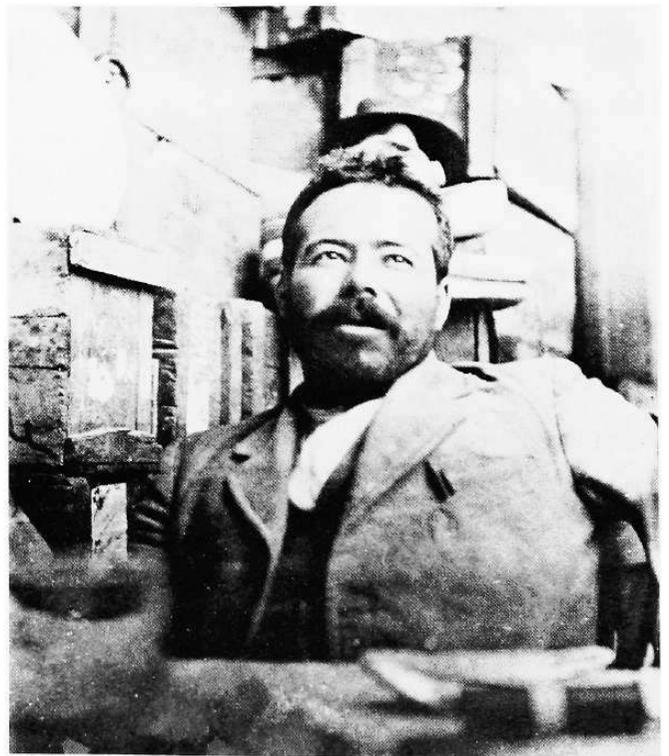
PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE FÉLIX DÍAZ



VICTORIANO HUERTA

FRANCISCO ("PANCHO") VILLA

"FIRST CHIEF" VENUSTIANO CARRANZA



direct diplomatic pressure — the ousting of Huerta and the establishment of democratic stability. This proposal, Lind argued, was the only alternative to military intervention which would arouse intense hostility among the Mexicans toward the United States.

Shortly before leaving Mexico in April, 1914, Lind was recommending that the United States aid the rebels in seizing the gulf ports of Tampico and Veracruz in order to halt the flow of arms and fuel to the Huerta government and to establish a base of operations from which a semblance of law and order could radiate. But since he was no longer in Mexico during the Tampico incident (see footnote five) and the United States' occupation of Veracruz, there is very little in the papers relating to these important events.

In his replies, Bryan acknowledged Lind's messages, reported that his information and recommendations were receiving careful consideration, informed him of the administration's decisions and actions, assured him of the importance of his contributions, and occasionally requested documentation for his statements. Personally, Lind was irritated by the lack of specific information he received, and he felt that Wilson and Bryan did not always keep him fully advised of the administration's policy. And, for the most part, Bryan's messages do show a lack of information about the decision-making process in Washington and of the nature of Lind's influence on it.

Next to the dispatches, the richest manuscripts in the collection are the letters, memoranda, and reports sent to Lind by people in Mexico who were in a position to inform and advise him about various aspects of the Mexican situation. A comparison of these manuscripts with the dispatches suggests that, while Lind did meet and receive communiqués from native-born Mexicans, he usually relied more heavily on data received from foreign-born, English-speaking confidants in formulating both his reports to Washington and his own opinions. This predilection severely limited the perspective from which he and officials in Washington viewed Mexican affairs.

Printed materials in the Lind Mission Papers include newspapers, magazines, clippings, pamphlets, fliers, and broadsides in both English and Spanish. Lind either collected the printed items himself or received them from others during his Mexican sojourn. With copies of official government documents, they supplement the information in the dispatches and correspondence and give an added dimension to the topics discussed. Included in the papers also are numerous calling cards that indicate Lind's contacts in Mexico as well as picture post cards portraying Mexican architecture, revolutionary leaders and activities, and Lind himself on board the U.S.S. "Michigan."

Veracruz Sept 9th [1914]

Bryan
 My judgement is that I had better remain here until Gameona mission is fully developed and until Congress has convened. September 16th is independence day. Huerta government is making great preparations for display of "patriotism" and Huerta sentiment on that day. I can watch developments from here quite as well. Mexican press is assuming that I am planning to go to Orizaba to remain indefinitely to observe situation. I have no such plan in view. I am trying to ascertain whether these sugges-

ions are prompted solely by solicitude for my personal comfort. It is rumored that Felix Diaz is about to return. The situation continues as inscrutable as ever. The only hope lies in pursuing the policy adopted vigorously and drawing the cordon a little tighter every week. If this is done something may drop ~~by~~ after a ^{while} time.

Lind

DIPLOMATIC DISPATCHES written by Lind were wired in coded form to the secretary of state.

LIND RETURNED to the United States in mid-April, 1914. He had hoped to proceed directly to Minnesota but was detained in Washington until early June, 1914, by the A.B.C. Mediation Conference called during the crisis in American-Mexican relations following the

occupation of Veracruz. (Argentine, Brazilian, and Chilean envoys in Washington offered to mediate the conflict, and the conference was held in Niagara Falls, Canada, during May and June, 1914. It contributed little, however, toward settling substantive issues.) That Lind played a pivotal role in the conference negotiations is amply revealed in his papers. They show that he served as an adviser not only to the State Department but also to the Constitutionalists. Copies of letters, memoranda, and reports that Lind submitted to Wilson and Bryan give his assessment of the conference and outline his policy recommendations, which strongly favored the Constitutionalists. Comparison of Lind's handwritten drafts and notations with copies of official Constitutionalist communications indicates that statements he formulated were often released by the Carranzistas essentially as he wrote them.

The papers also disclose that Lind's delicate position was further complicated by his serving as a liaison between rebel leader Emiliano Zapata and the State Department. This involvement proceeded from a commitment Lind made to Zapata sympathizers (one of whom was the United States consul general at Mexico City) shortly before leaving Mexico. Zapata was attempting to blackmail the United States government into sending him money, arms, and relief supplies. He did this by threatening to attack Mexico City, thereby jeopardizing the mediation negotiations. Copies of telegrams indicate that Zapata's demands and Bryan's replies were transmitted in "underground messages" through the consul general in Mexico City and Lind in care of the State Department. The sense of intrigue surrounding the situation is heightened by the fact that the key figures are referred to by code names in the messages.

It is obvious from the correspondence, newspaper and magazine articles, pamphlets, fliers, news releases, information sheets, copies of official documents, and other materials in the collection for the 1914-1916 period that Lind's concern with Mexican affairs did not wane when he returned to Minnesota after severing his official connection with the State Department. Through letters and memoranda, he continued to submit his views of the Mexican situation to various high-ranking officials in the Wilson administration. He passed on information he received from various informants and urgently pressed his belief that the Carranza government had to be recognized—a move he felt was the only alternative to military intervention.

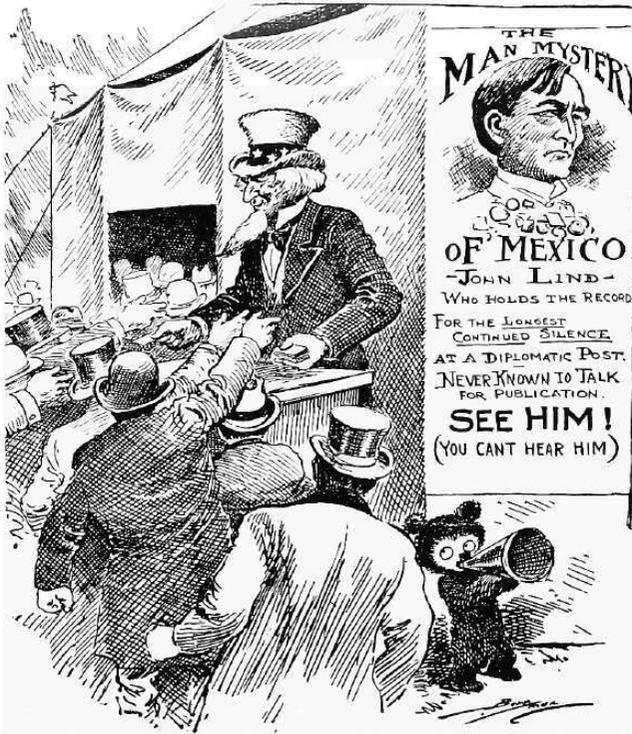
Lind undoubtedly influenced developments in the vigorous campaign for recognition waged by Carranza's representatives in the United States. He did this through contacts with such men as the Carranzistas' chief counsel and the First Chief's confidential agent and head of the Constitutionalist mission in Wash-

ington. Through correspondence and periodic personal trips to the East at critical times, Lind suggested actions to be taken and drafted statements for public release. Both before and after the United States granted *de facto* recognition, Lind persistently recommended that the Constitutionalists mount a publicity effort to counteract the anti-Carranza campaign of the American Catholic church.

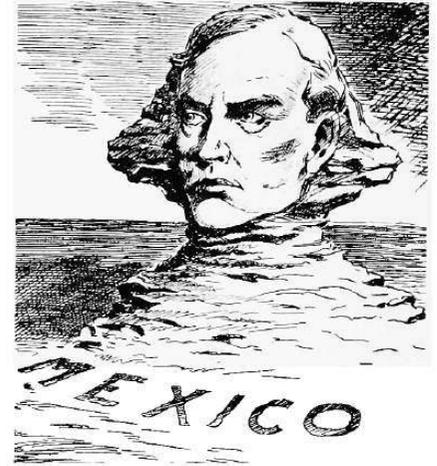
Lind also kept up a lively correspondence with friends and informants who continued to supply him with data on conditions in Mexico and developments in Mexican-American relations. Subjects discussed in these letters include the continuation of the alleged anti-American conspiracy of Carden and the English oil interests, the feud between Villa and Carranza and the anti-Carranza rebellion launched by Villa, and various public and private Mexican relief efforts.

Some letters and numerous newspaper clippings in the Lind Mexican Mission Papers also deal with such subjects as the reported break between President Wilson and his adviser, Colonel Edward M. House; Lind's allegations that the former ambassador to Mexico, Henry Lane Wilson, had prior knowledge of Huerta's *coup d'état* and the plan to execute President Madero; Lind's trip to the Mexican border town of Piedras Negras in 1915 to meet First Chief Carranza; and the speculation that Lind would be named ambassador to Mexico. Other subjects covered in the papers include the anti-Constitutionalist attitude of the American Catholic church and press, the pressure for United States military intervention in Mexico, and General John J. Pershing's Punitive Expedition against Villa. Lind's speech about Mexico to the Industrial Club of Chicago in November, 1914, prompted many comments by correspondents, particularly in reference to charges of plagiarism and anti-Catholicism that followed the speech's publication in the *Bellman* and in pamphlet form under the title, *The Mexican People*.

MATERIALS MICROFILMED for the 1917-1931 period consist only of those items from the Lind Papers that relate to Mexico. They fall into four major categories: (1) correspondence between Lind and persons he had met in Mexico whose occasional letters informed him about mutual friends, reported on conditions in Mexico, or asked his assistance in securing jobs; (2) letters and newspaper clippings pertaining to Mexico's role in World War I, including correspondence discussing Lind's scheme to recruit an independent Mexican brigade for service in France (an action that he believed would foster closer relations between the peoples of the United States and Mexico in the face of Carranza's continued insistence on Mexican neutrality); (3) correspondence relating to legal work Lind



AFTERWARD, PERHAPS!



CARTOONS from the Evening Star (Washington, D.C.), January 10, 1914 (left), and the Chicago Record-Herald, January 17, 1914 (right), lampooned the taciturn Swede.

performed in 1917 on behalf of a client who owned a hacienda in the Mexican state of Oaxaca; and (4) printed pamphlets on various social, economic, political, and religious aspects of the Mexican situation.

Other noteworthy items are newspaper clippings about the activities of Villa and the withdrawal of the Punitive Expedition from Mexico; a copy of a speech Lind made at a Loyalty Day rally sponsored by organized labor in September, 1917 (in the speech he referred to Wilson's Mexican policy in the course of urging support for the president's decision to enter World War I); materials regarding Lind's testimony before the Senate committee on foreign relations, which in 1919-1920 conducted an investigation of Mexican affairs; and letters exchanged between Lind and several magazine and newspaper editors seeking articles or interviews about Mexico. Some of these letters contain interesting reminiscences by Lind.

Members of the society's manuscripts department hope that the program initiated by the microfilm edi-

tion of the Mexican Mission Papers of John Lind will develop into a permanent, ongoing institutional activity. A microfilm edition of the Allyn K. Ford Collection, made possible by a grant from Mrs. Ford, is scheduled for completion in 1972. Other projects under consideration are the filming of an index to the 1860 Minnesota census and segments of the Northern Pacific Railway Records.

The past six years have witnessed the evolution of the manuscripts department's firm commitment to making available, to professional and amateur scholars alike, Minnesota-based documentary source material on local, regional, and national history. A continually expanding range of material can be used not only at the society but also elsewhere through the purchase or interlibrary loan of its microfilm editions.

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS and documents are from the Lind Mexican Mission Papers in the Minnesota Historical Society.



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