V

Revolution

The Mexican revolution was the defining event in modern Mexican history. The long, bloody, chaotic war began when Porfirio Díaz, ruler of Mexico since 1876, declared in 1908 that Mexico was ready for democracy and, accordingly, he would not seek another presidential term. But when Francisco I. Madero, the scion of a wealthy Coahuila family, launched an energetic political campaign that threatened to land him in the presidency, Don Porfirio had him arrested and prepared for a standard round of election-fixing. This time, however, the aging dictator (who pundits had taken to calling *Don Perpétuo*) badly miscalculated. Radical activists like Ricardo Flores Magón had for years been stirring up opposition to the regime. By mid-1910, economic downturns and the dictator's increasing harshness prepared Mexicans to support that opposition. Ultimately, when the more moderate Madero called for an armed rebellion to ignite in November 1910, that call was seconded by a broad cross-section of Mexican society. A decade of violence ensued, as a bewildering array of interests clashed.

What did it all mean? Luis Cabrera, perhaps the greatest ideologue of the revolution, declared that "La revolución es revolución"—arguing that the "fundamental purpose" of revolutions is "transcendental," for they "seek to change the laws, customs, and the existing social structure in order to establish a more just arrangement." The Mexican revolution brought change, certainly, but the question of whether the postrevolutionary arrangement was more "just" remains hotly debated. Indeed, even the appropriate case of the initial letter in *revolution* is a matter of some dispute. We have chosen the lower case, to distinguish what began as a multifaceted, distinctly local process from the postrevolutionary regime's subsequent appropriation and simplification of that process—after which the revolution was always rendered in the upper case by the Party of the Institutional Revolution.

The readings that follow present the views of politicians, peasants and poets, radicals and reactionaries, the well-heeled and the dispossessed. We hope they will give readers a sense of why the interests involved in the 1910

revolution were so difficult to reconcile, why violence came to beget violence, and why the passions unleashed proved so hard to pacify. We also provide assessments of the regimes of reconstruction (roughly 1920–1934) and radicalization (1934–1940), to enable readers to better understand the complex forces that contested and represented the revolution's consolidation and, in the process, shaped modern Mexico.

Land and Liberty

Ricardo Flores Magón

Like any great social movement, the Mexican revolution had many precursors. None was quite so radical or influential as Ricardo Flores Magón. Born in 1874 in a small village in the impoverished southern state of Oaxaca, Flores Magón studied law before settling into a career in journalism. In 1900, together with his brother Enrique, he founded the journal Regeneración, *which frontally criticized the Díaz dictatorship. Within the year, Flores Magón was in prison, and by the end of 1903 he was forced into exile in the United States. In 1905 Flores Magón helped to found the Mexican Liberal Party in St. Louis, Missouri. He spent most of the remainder of his life in exile, agitating constantly against the Porfirian regime through the pages of several journals, including* Regeneración, El Hijo del Ahuizote, *and* Revolución. *In the United States, he was repeatedly incarcerated on charges of violating the neutrality and espionage laws. In 1918 he was sent to Leavenworth prison in Kansas, where he died in November 1922.*

Despite the name of his party, Flores Magón's politics were the antithesis of turn-of-the-century liberalism. He was, in fact, a staunch partisan of the international anarchist movement, which declared private property to be theft, denounced governments of all stripes, and advocated "direct action" in place of political participation. His writings envision self-governing, self-reliant, socialistic communities. It is not surprising, therefore, that Flores Magón's relations were poor with most of the revolutionary factions, which tended, to a greater or lesser degree, to cleave to nineteenth-century liberal traditions (note his disdain for Madero expressed in his dismissal of the anti-reelectionists). Ultimately, his work found its greatest resonance in the agrarian movement of Emiliano Zapata, which adopted the slogan "Land and Liberty" as its own. The essay reproduced below appeared in Regeneración *on November 19, 1910, one day before the Mexican revolution officially broke out.*

The fruit, well-ripened by ardent revolt, is about to fall—fruit bitter to all who have become flushed with pride, thanks to a situation which brings honour, wealth and distinction to those who make the sorrows and slavery of humanity the foundation of their pleasures; but fruit sweet and pleasant to all

who have regarded as beneath their dignity the filthinesses of the beasts who, through a night that has lasted thirty-four years, have robbed, violated, slain, cheated and played the traitor, while hiding their crimes beneath the mantle of the law and using official position to shield them from punishment.

Who are they that fear the Revolution? They who have provoked it; they who, by oppression and exploitation of the masses, have sought to bring the victims of their infamies despairingly into their power; they who, by injustice and rapine, have awakened sleeping consciences and made honourable men throughout the world turn pale with indignation.

The Revolution is now about to break out at any moment. We, who during so many years have followed attentively the social and political life of Mexico, cannot deceive ourselves. The symptoms of a formidable cataclysm leave no room for doubt that we are on the eve of an uplift and a crash, a rising and a fall. At last, after four and thirty years of shame, the Mexican people is about to raise its head, and at last, after this long night the black edifice, which has been strangling us beneath its weight, is about to crumble into dust.

It is timely that we should here repeat what already we have said so often; that this movement, springing from despair, must not be a blind effort to free ourselves from an enormous burden, but a movement in which instinct must be dominated almost completely by reason. We [Liberals] must try to bring it about that this movement shall be guided by the light of Science. If we fail to do this, the Revolution now on the point of coming to the surface will serve merely to substitute one President for another, one master for another. We must bear in mind that the necessary thing is that the people shall have bread, shelter, land to cultivate; we must bear in mind that no government, however honourable, can decree the abolition of misery. The people themselves—the hungry and disinherited—are they who must abolish misery, by taking into their possession, as the very first step, the land which by natural right should not be monopolized by a few but must be the property of every human being.

No one can foretell the lengths to which the impending Revolution's task of recovery will go; but, if we fighters undertake in good faith [to help] it as far as possible along the road; if, when we pick up the Winchester, we go forth decided not to elevate to power another master but redeem the proletariat's rights; if we take the field pledged to conquer that economic liberty which is the foundation on which all liberties rest, and the condition without which no liberties can exist; if we make this our purpose, we shall start it on a road worthy of this epoch. But if we are carried away by the desire for easy triumph; if, seeking to make the struggle shorter, we desert our own radicalism and aims, so incompatible with those of the purely bourgeois and conservative parties—then we shall have done only the work of bandits and

assassins; for the blood spilled will serve merely to increase the power of the bourgeoisie and the caste that today possesses wealth, and, after the triumph, that caste will fasten anew on the proletariat the chain forged with the proletariat's own blood, its own sacrifices, its own martyrdom, which will have conquered power for the bourgeoisie.

It is necessary, therefore, proletarians; it is necessary therefore, disinherited, that your thought be not confused. The conservative and bourgeois parties speak to you of liberty, of justice, of law, of honourable government; and they tell you that when you replace with others those who are now in power, you will have that liberty, justice, law and honourable government. Be not deceived! What you need is to secure the well-being of your families—their daily bread—and this no government can give you. You yourselves must conquer these good things, and you must do it by taking immediate possession of the land, which is the original source of all wealth. Understand this well; no government will be able to give you that, for the law defends the "right" of those who are withholding wealth. You yourselves must take it, despite the law, despite the government, despite the pretended right of property. You yourselves must take it in the name of natural justice; in the name of the right of every human being to life and the development of his physical and intellectual powers.

When you are in possession of the land you will have liberty and justice, for liberty and justice are not decreed but are the result of economic independence. They spring from the fact that the individual is able to live without depending on a master, and to enjoy, for himself and his family, the product of his toil.

Take, then, the land! The law tells you that you must not take it, since it is private property; but the law which so instructs you was a law written by those who are holding you in slavery and a law that needs to be supported by force is a law that does not respond to general needs. If the law were the result of general agreement it would not need upholding by the policeman, the jailer, the judge, the hangman, the soldier and the official. The law has been imposed on you, and these arbitrary impositions we, as men of dignity, must answer with rebellion.

Therefore, to the struggle! Imperious, unrestrainable, the Revolution will not tarry. If you would be really free, group yourselves beneath the [Liberal] Party's banner of freedom; but, if you merely want the strange pleasure of shedding blood, and shedding your own by "playing at soldiers," group yourselves under other banners—that of the Anti-reelectionists, for example, which, after you have done "playing at soldiers," will put you anew under the yoke of the employer and government. In that case you will enjoy the

great pleasure of changing the old President, with whom already you were becoming disgusted, for a spick and span new one, fresh from the mint.

Comrades, the question is a grave one. I understand that you are ready for the fight; but fight so that it shall be of benefit to the poor. Hitherto all your revolutions have profited the classes in power, because you have no clear conception of your rights and interests, which, as you now know, are completely opposed to the rights and interests of the intellectual and wealthy classes. It is to the interest of the rich that the poor shall be poor eternally, for the poverty of the masses guarantees their wealth. If there were not men who found themselves compelled to work for other men, the rich would be under the necessity of doing something useful, of producing something of general utility, that they might be able to exist. No longer would there be slaves they could exploit.

I repeat, it is not possible to foretell the lengths in which the approaching Revolution's task of recovery will go; what we must do is to endeavour to get all we can. It would be a great step in advance if the land were to become the property of all; and if among the revolutionists there should . . . be the strength, the conscious strength, sufficient to gain more than that, the basis would be laid for further recoveries which the proletariat by force of circumstances would conquer.

Forward, comrades! Soon you will hear the first shots; soon the shout of rebellion will thunder from the throats of the oppressed. Let not a single one of you fail to second this movement, launching, with all the power of conviction, that supremest of cries, Land and Liberty!

Plan of Ayala

Emiliano Zapata and Others

The revolution headed by Francisco I. Madero relied heavily on the support of diverse groups and interests. Prominent among these were peasants who demanded an end to government repression and immediate agrarian reform, and who were encouraged by vague proposals contained in Madero's Plan of San Luis Potosí. Upon attaining power, however, Madero's message to those peasants was that they must disarm and demobilize before reforms could be contemplated. Meanwhile, he collaborated with the federal army and many other elements of the old regime. Not surprisingly, he quickly lost the support of agrarian elements, the most prominent of which were the southern forces of Emiliano Zapata. In 1911 Zapata and his followers issued their Magna Carta, the Plan of Ayala, from a small town in southern Puebla. For as long as the Zapatista movement survived, it regarded the Plan of Ayala as practically a sacred text. Interestingly, the plan was rather conservative, as revolutionary documents go. It included a rather unfashionable reference to God, while in agrarian matters it did not go as far, for instance, as the law issued in early 1915 by the rival faction of Venustiano Carranza, which provided for lands to be granted to any village that could prove it had insufficient land for its needs. The Plan of Ayala did not seek to eliminate the hacienda, but rather to have it coexist with the peasant villages.

Liberating Plan of the sons of the State of Morelos, affiliated with the Insurgent Army which defends the fulfillment of the Plan of San Luis, with the reforms that it believes necessary to increase the welfare of the Mexican Fatherland.

The undersigned, constituted into a Revolutionary Junta to sustain and carry out the promises made to the country by the Revolution of 20 November 1910, solemnly declare before the civilized world which sits in judgment on us, and before the Nation to which we belong and which we love, the propositions we have formulated to do away with the tyranny that oppresses us and to redeem the Fatherland from the dictatorships that are imposed upon us, which are outlined in the following plan:

1. Taking into consideration that the Mexican people, led by don Francisco I. Madero, went out to shed their blood to reconquer liberties and vindicate their rights which had been trampled upon, and not so that one man could seize power, violating the sacred principles that he swore to defend with the slogan "Effective Suffrage and No Reelection," thereby insulting the faith, cause and liberties of the people; taking into consideration that the man to whom we refer is don Francisco I. Madero, the same who initiated the aforementioned revolution, who imposed his will and influence as a governmental norm upon the Provisional Government of the ex-president of the Republic, licenciado Francisco León de la Barra, causing with this deed much bloodshed and many misfortunes to the fatherland in a cunning and ridiculous fashion, having no goals to satisfy apart from his own personal ambitions, his boundless instincts for tyranny, and his profound disrespect for the fulfillment of the preexisting laws emanating from the immortal Constitution of 1857, written with the revolutionary blood of Ayutla.

Taking into account that the so-called chief of the Liberating Revolution of Mexico, don Francisco I. Madero, due to his great weakness and lack of integrity, did not bring to a happy conclusion the Revolution that he began with the help of God and of the people, since he left intact the majority of the governing powers and corrupt elements of oppression from the dictatorial Government of Porfirio Díaz, which are not and can never in any way be the representation of the National sovereignty, and that, being terrible enemies of ourselves and of the principles that we defend, are causing the ills of the country and opening new wounds in the breast of the Fatherland, making it drink its own blood; taking also into account that the aforementioned don Francisco I. Madero, current president of the Republic, tried to avoid fulfilling the promises he made to the Nation in the Plan of San Luis Potosí, . . . nullifying, persecuting, imprisoning, or killing the revolutionary elements who helped him to occupy the high post of president of the Republic, by means of false promises and numerous intrigues against the Nation.

Taking into consideration that the oft-mentioned Francisco I. Madero has tried to silence with the brute force of bayonets and to drown in blood the people who ask, solicit, or demand the fulfillment of the promises of the Revolution, calling them bandits and rebels, condemning them to a war of extermination, without conceding or granting any of the guarantees that reason, justice, and the law prescribe; taking equally into account that the president of the Republic, Francisco I. Madero, has made of Effective Suffrage a bloody mockery by imposing, against the will of the people,

the licenciado José María Pino Suárez as Vice-President of the Republic, imposing also the governors of the States, designating such men as the so-called general Ambrosio Figueroa, cruel tyrant of the people of Morelos; and entering into collaboration with the científico party, feudal hacendados and oppressive caciques, enemies of the Revolution he proclaimed, with the aim of forging new chains and continuing the mould of a new dictatorship more opprobrious and more terrible than that of Porfirio Díaz; so it has become patently clear that he has undermined the sovereignty of the States, mocking the laws with no respect for life or interests, as has happened in the State of Morelos and other states, bringing us to the most horrific anarchy registered in contemporary history. Due to these considerations, we declare Francisco I. Madero incapable of realizing the promises of the revolution of which he was instigator, because he has betrayed all of his principles, mocking the will of the people in his rise to power; he is incapable of governing and because he has no respect for the law and for the justice of the people, and is a traitor to the Fatherland, humiliating the Mexicans by blood and fire because they wish for freedom and an end to the pandering to científicos, hacendados and caciques who enslave us; today we continue the Revolution begun by [Madero], and will carry on until we defeat the dictatorial powers that exist.

2. Francisco I. Madero is disavowed as Chief of the Revolution and as President of the Republic for the reasons expressed above. We shall bring about the overthrow of this functionary.

3. We recognize as Chief of the Liberating Revolution General Pascual Orozco, second of the caudillo don Francisco I. Madero, and in case he does not accept this delicate post, we shall recognize as chief of the Revolution General Emiliano Zapata.

4. The Revolutionary Junta of the State of Morelos manifests to the Nation, under formal protest, that it adopts the Plan of San Luis Potosí as its own, with the additions that shall be expressed below, for the benefit of the oppressed peoples, and it will make itself the defender of the principles that they defend until victory or death.

5. The Revolutionary Junta of the State of Morelos will not admit transactions or agreements until it has brought about the defeat of the dictatorial elements of Porfirio Díaz and of Francisco I. Madero, for the Nation is tired of false men and traitors who make promises like liberators, and upon attaining power forget those promises and become tyrants.

6. As an additional part of our plan, we make it known: that the lands, forests and waters that have been usurped by the hacendados, científicos or caciques in the shadow of venal justice, will henceforth enter into the

possession of the villages or of citizens who have titles corresponding to those properties, and who have been despoiled through the bad faith of our oppressors, and they shall maintain that possession with weapon in hand, and the usurpers who believe they have rights to those lands will be heard by the special tribunals that will be established upon the triumph of the Revolution.

7. In view of the fact that the immense majority of Mexican villages and citizens own no more land than that which they tread upon, and are unable in any way to better their social condition or dedicate themselves to industry or agriculture, because the lands, forests, and waters are monopolized in only a few hands; for this reason, we expropriate without previous indemnization one third of those monopolies from the powerful proprietors, to the end that the villages and citizens of Mexico should obtain ejidos, colonias, and fundos legales for the villages, or fields for sowing or laboring, and this shall correct the lack of prosperity and increase the well-being of the Mexicans.

8. The hacendados, científicos or caciques who directly or indirectly oppose the present Plan, shall have their properties nationalized and two thirds of those properties shall be given as indemnizations of war, pensions to widows and orphans of the victims who are killed in the struggles surrounding the present Plan.

9. In order to execute the procedures respecting the aforementioned properties, the laws of disamortization and nationalization shall be applied, as convenient; for our norm and example shall be the laws put into effect by the immortal Juárez against ecclesiastical properties, which chastised the despots and conservatives who have always wanted to impose upon us the ignominious yoke of oppression and backwardness.

10. The insurgent military chiefs of the Republic who rose up in arms to the voice of don Francisco I. Madero in order to defend the Plan of San Luis Potosí, and who now forcefully oppose the present Plan, will be judged traitors to the cause that they defended and to the Fatherland, for presently many of them, in order to placate the tyrants, or for a fistful of coins, or owing to schemes or bribes, are shedding the blood of their brothers who demand the fulfillment of the promises that were made to the Nation by don Francisco I. Madero.

11. The expenses of war will be appropriated according to article XI of the Plan of San Luis Potosí, and all of the procedures employed in the Revolution that we undertake will be in accordance with the same instructions that are set out in the mentioned Plan.

12. Once the Revolution that we are making has triumphed, a junta of

the principal revolutionary chiefs of the different States will name or designate an interim President of the Republic, who will convoke elections for the organization of federal powers.

13. The principal revolutionary chiefs of each State, in council, shall designate the governor of the State, and this high functionary will convoke the elections for the proper organization of public powers, with the aim of avoiding forced appointments that bring misfortune to the people, like the well-known appointment of Ambrosio Figueroa in the State of Morelos and others, who condemn us to the precipice of bloody conflicts sustained by the dictator Madero and the circle of científicos and hacendados who have suggested this to him.

14. If President Madero and the rest of the dictatorial elements of the current and old regime want to avoid the immense misfortunes that afflict the fatherland, and if they possess true sentiments of love for it, they must immediately renounce the posts they occupy, and by so doing they shall in some way stanch the grievous wounds that have opened in the breast of the Fatherland, and if they do not do so, upon their heads shall fall the blood and anathema of our brothers.

15. Mexicans: consider the deviousness and bad faith of a man who is shedding blood in a scandalous manner, because he is incapable of governing; consider that his system of Government is tying up the fatherland and trampling upon our institutions with the brute force of bayonets; so that the very weapons we took up to bring him to Power, we now turn against him for failing to keep his promises to the Mexican people and for having betrayed the Revolution he began; we are not personalists, we are partisans of principles and not of men!

Mexican people, support this Plan with weapons in your hands, and bring prosperity and welfare to the Fatherland.

Liberty, Justice, and Law. Ayala, State of Morelos, November 25, 1911

General in chief, Emiliano Zapata; signatures.

The Restoration of the *Ejido*

Luis Cabrera

Emiliano Zapata was not alone in his criticism of Madero's handling of the agrarian issue. Some criticism came from within the ranks of the government itself. Luis Cabrera (1876–1954) was arguably the most important ideologue of the Mexican revolution. He had a distinguished career as a lawyer, schoolteacher, professor, and journalist in the years prior to the outbreak of the revolution. He backed the candidacy of Francisco I. Madero in 1910 and was elected a federal deputy in 1912. In the Chamber of Deputies, he headed the Bloque Renovador, *a group of progressive legislators who pressured Madero to approach social reform more decisively. His most famous pronouncement on the issue came in the speech excerpted below, delivered to congress in 1912. Cabrera would go on to become a prominent figure in the government of Venustiano Carranza, during a period when violent factionalism was rampant. As Carranza's treasury secretary, he authored the Law of January 6, 1915, the regime's key initiative on agrarian reform, which would largely be incorporated into the Constitution of 1917. When Carranza was overthrown and assassinated in 1920, Cabrera's influence waned drastically and he grew increasingly conservative. Nevertheless, his advocacy of distributing* ejidos *(common lands) to the villages as a means of satisfying their needs while attacking the inefficient* latifundista *system would be of enduring significance: the government of Lázaro Cárdenas, which during the 1930s carried out one of the most ambitious agrarian reforms in Latin American history, did not view the distribution of* ejidos *as an urgent expedient of war but as an end in itself. Thus, the* ejido*—which was ultimately an ambiguous concept of property involving state ownership of the land and communal usufruct by the villages—became a cornerstone of Mexican agriculture until the neoliberal "reform" of the agrarian reform in 1992.*

While considering the presentation of this Project to the House of Deputies, I made sure to ascertain [President Madero's] opinion, in the hope of finding a disposition favorable to these reforms. I must state frankly that I did not find such a disposition on the President's part. He believes, rightly or wrongly, that the work of reestablishing peace must take precedence over economic reforms that, in his view, will cause further disruptions. I disagree. In my own view,

the restoration of peace should be brought about by preventive and repressive measures, but also by economic reforms that will bring conflicting social groups into a relative state of equilibrium. One of these economic measures that may help to restore peace is the restoration of the *ejidos*. . . .

DON FRANCISCO I. MADERO, in the San Luis Plan, noted that the demand for land was the cause of political unrest and promised to remedy this problem. . . . The need for land was a kind of a phantasm, a vague idea floating in a nebulous state through all minds and spirits. Everyone believed that the solution to the agrarian problem consisted in distributing land; yet no one knew where, or to whom, or what type of land. . . .

Meanwhile, the real agrarian problem, [the need to distribute] lands to the hundreds of thousands of pariahs who had none, was gradually becoming more urgent. We needed to give lands not to selected individuals, but to social groups. The fact that the people owned land in previous times made the solution simple and clear: restoration of that land to the people. All dispossessed populations naturally thought that restorations were the solution. [Many] communities . . . recalled that they had but recently lost their lands, and it was undeniable that their lands were taken by illegal means. Is it not natural for people to think that the restoration of their usurped lands will follow the triumph of a revolution that has promised them justice? [And is it not natural to suppose also] that a capitalist, however ambitious, will not willingly give up the lands that he had usurped? And that there will be some means of justice by which the unfortunate people who hunger for the land they once occupied will be satisfied and will return to living the way they lived for more than four hundred years, because their rights were established in the epoch of the Aztecs?

The logical but ingenuous system of land restorations was accepted, of course, by the Secretary of the Interior. All the populations seeking the return of their *ejidos* were invited to come forward and identify themselves and the size of their lands in order to see if restoration would be possible. But what actually happened was inevitable: it was not possible to restore the *ejidos,* because the greatest injustices in a people's history cannot be simply undone by a corresponding act of justice—they must be remedied in some other form. . . .

Let me now sketch out the problem as I understand it. At the risk of tiring the reader, I ask for your indulgence with regard to one point. I believe that politics is the most concrete of the sciences, as well as the most concrete of the arts, and extreme caution is needed to avoid rationalizations that rely on analogies with other countries and other periods. Our political system requires a personal and local knowledge of our country and our country's needs,

not general principles gathered from the study of other peoples. The antecedents that I draw upon to develop the resolution to this dilemma are not found in the histories of Rome, the English or French Revolutions, Australia, New Zealand, or even Argentina. There is only one country [and history] that can teach us the solutions: New Spain. . . . Two factors must be taken into consideration: the land and the people; the land, whose possession we will discuss, and the people, to whom lands should be given.

The Spanish occupants of New Spain at the time of the conquest respected the conditions that they found and, under the wise rule of Philip II, the indigenous peoples were not interfered with; later, villages were created through "reductions"[1] and the founding of colonies. In the Spaniards' view, such villages could not survive without their *casco,* their *ejidos,* and their *propios.* The *casco* [or *fundo legal*] was the land upon which the town itself was constructed; the *ejidos* were the communal lands of the village; and the *propios* were the village's public lands.

We need not concern ourselves with the *casco* at present. The *ejidos* and *propios,* however, have been very important economic entities in our country. Anyone who studies a land title from the colonial period can read on every page the transcendental struggle between villages and haciendas. In the conflicts between the villages and haciendas, the former triumphed thanks to their privileges, their organization, and effective means of cooperation among the villagers, developed over centuries. . . . But above all, they triumphed thanks to the enormous power that the villages retained through the possession of public lands [*propios*], which brought wealth and power, and of *ejidos,* which helped to preserve their communities.

The *ejidos* assured the people of their subsistence and the *propios* guaranteed the power of the village governments; the *ejidos* ensured tranquillity of the families gathered around the village church, and the *propios* brought economic power to the village authorities. The villagers were, in effect, communal landowners rather than individual owners of large landed estates. This was the secret behind the preservation of the villages in the face of the hacienda, in spite of the great political privileges held by Spanish landowners during the colonial period.

Later, the true nature of landownership became clear. Laws were passed mandating the breakup of lands held in "dead hands,"[2] and public lands were invariably considered a very dangerous form of landownership which needed to be ended, just as the lands of lay groups and religious institutions had to be dismantled.

The communities' situation with respect to the haciendas was a notoriously privileged one prior to the 1856 law of disamortization. This law was

perfectly justified economically, but I do not need to remind you gentlemen that, although the breakup of the public lands may have been necessary, the application of the law to the *ejidos* was a very serious mistake. The laws were applied to the *ejidos* in accordance with the circulars of October and December of 1856 which, rather than awarding the lands to individual tenants, stipulated that they be divided up and distributed among the villagers. This led to the disappearance of the *ejidos* and to the absolute impoverishment of the people. I would not say that all of the land was usurped, although much of it was; I will not say that all of the land was stolen with the connivance of the authorities, although there are thousands of such cases. But the distribution of the *ejidos* was naturally intended, for economic reasons, to transfer the land to those who could put it to better use. The lands eventually went from the villages into the hands of *hacendados.* You know the results of this process: in certain parts of the Republic, and principally in the area of the Central Mesa, all of the *ejidos* became part of the surrounding estates; communities like Jonacatepec, Jojutla . . . ; but, why do I need to mention Morelos? I will simply mention the Federal District: towns like San Juan Ixtayopan, Mixquic, Tlahuac, and Chalco were reduced to their own town boundaries, and in conditions so poor that even the most foolish of the Spanish monarchs or viceroys would not imagine that a people could live this way. . . . This is the situation of ninety percent of the population in the Central Mesa, which [Andrés] Molina Enríquez has called the cereal zone, where life makes no sense without the *ejidos.*

Some have fought against the disintegration of the *ejidos,* [and some villages] have even managed to preserve them. Not just one, but many villages have learned to resist the disintegration of their *ejidos,* using methods easily available to all. After distributing their lands among the villagers, they instinctively deposited their deeds with that person in town who merited the greatest confidence, until this chief . . . had collected all of these titles with the implicit charge of preserving and defending the people's land through a communal administration. In the state of Mexico, this system was used frequently, and it was perfected to the point where villages became practically cooperatives or corporations which existed with the aim of returning the village to a communal system, but using procedures more in line with modern social organization, according to the rather limited intelligence of the town clerks.

This was the means found to defend against the disappearance of communal property; but this strategy was entirely ineffective in the face of the avarice of the surrounding estates toward the distributed land. And so it went, whether through mismanagement by the small landholders or abuses by the authorities; what is certain is that the *ejidos* have passed almost entirely from the villages to the *hacendados.* As a consequence, a large number of popula-

tions currently are unable to satisfy their most basic needs. In the towns of the state of Morelos, in the southern part of Puebla, and in the state of Mexico, the villagers do not have enough land to feed a goat, or to collect what is ironically called firewood—although it is really only garbage—for the pariah's home; they do not have the means to satisfy the most basic needs of rural life, because there is not even a square meter left of the *ejidos* to provide for the population. Neither economic arguments nor scientific proof are needed to understand that people cannot live when they have no way to perform the agricultural tasks that used to ensure their survival.

The simplest means of remedying this situation is restoration of lands to the people. If the people of, say, Ixtlahuaca or Jilotepec can remember that they once had *ejidos,* what could be simpler or more natural, now that the revolution that once promised justice and lands—and it did promise these things, no matter what anyone says—has triumphed, than for the people to request their *ejidos* once again? Restorations have been attempted, but in the most unjust ways imaginable. The most recent spoliations of the villages have been ineffective; they receive no support from any party, neither from the justice ministry, nor from this Chamber. On the other hand, the distribution of lands seized from small landholders and from villagers who managed to retain some part of their *ejidos* have received some support of the most unjust sort, for it comes primarily from local authorities who believe that by encouraging the pillaging of those who still have portions of their former *ejidos,* the situation will be saved. No one seems to see that the true restorations, those we should be attempting, are the ones that aim to recover the lands that have passed into the hands of large landowners, some of whom are completely protected by their influential families. Of course, some of the large landowners are foreigners, and their interests must be respected in order to protect Mexico's domestic and foreign credit. . . .

I hesitate to mention specific individuals, for I do not wish to shame anyone; but I will, with your permission, mention some. I will mention how, under the feudal domination of Iñigo Noriega, the villages of Xochimilco, Chalco and many other villages have been unable to take back lands that were usurped through the most unjust and violent means; the authorities continue to protect Iñigo Noriega and his enormous estates, which were established by pillaging the people. By contrast, there is the case of [the relatively small landowner] Aureliano Urrutia of Xochimilco, who must deal with the agitation of some individuals and some ridiculous local authorities who provoke the people with claims that his "enormous estate" of 300 hectares is a threat to the sacred promises proclaimed by the 1910 Revolution.

Thousands of cases like Urrutia's have occurred throughout the Republic,

and they have caused discontent to a great number of people. The example suggests a paradox, for it is the small landholders who are the principal victims of the restoration of lands, and they are cast as the enemies of any and all change in the economic condition of the people. Why such absurdity? Because the agrarian issue is the Achilles' heel of the Revolution. . . .

If the rural population had—as only a few communities [presently] do—lakes to fish in and lands to hunt on; or land to plant and harvest, even if under the vigilance of authorities; if there were woodlands from which people could gather material to make tiles, furniture, and firewood; [thereby solving] their food problems on a basis of freedom; if the rural working population had land where they could plant freely, even a small plot, workers could augment their salaries without relying on the hacienda; they could work on the hacienda during peak seasons for a more equitable wage, and during the rest of the year devote their energies to working for themselves. The *ejido* would give them these opportunities.

Until it is possible to create a system of small-scale agriculture to replace the current system of large estates, the agrarian problem can be resolved through the granting of *ejidos* as a means to complement the workers' salaries.

The complement to the workers' wages must come from communal possession of land for subsistence. There are some rural classes which must always serve as day laborers; but we cannot continue to use the political strength of the Government to force these classes to work all year on the haciendas for extremely low wages.

The large rural proprietors must resolve to test new agricultural systems which use workers only during the months when agriculture demands it, for the large farms do not absolutely require a permanent workforce. If the haciendas can get by with a maximum of six months and a minimum of four months of labor, and if the working population refuses to be enslaved by the haciendas and their Government allies, the workers either will take up their rifles and join the Zapatista ranks or they will find legal ways to employ their energies, exploiting the fields, plains and hills of the *ejidos*.

When a sick man lies prostrate in his bed or on the table awaiting the surgical knife, he closes his eyes, clenches his jaw and tells the doctor, "Cut," because his pain resigns him to the greatest heroics; when a man's whole head is swollen by a fearsome toothache and he goes to the dentist, he is resolved to have all his teeth extracted; but when the pain subsides, he is no longer disposed to make such sacrifices. It is the same in society: when a time of revolution arises, we must apply pressure to resolve problems; we must cut, we must demand sacrifices, because these are times when people are willing to make those sacrifices and changes can be made easily. When the storm clouds

pass, however, the old system returns, responses are slower and more tempered, and we are no longer disposed to resolve the transcendental issues that brought about the revolution in the first place.

This is why we have not resolved our agrarian problem, the principal dilemma of our country and one which deserves more of our attention. If the solution does not come from here, the Chamber of Deputies, the wound will be reopened.

Notes

1. During the Conquest era, as disease decimated the indigenous population, survivors would be relocated into newly founded villages called "reductions." See the selection in Part III by Zorita. *Ed.*
2. In the liberal lexicon of the nineteenth century, non-entrepreneurial institutions such as the indigenous villages or the church were referred to as "dead hands." See the selection by Luis González in the previous section. *Ed.*

Zapatistas in the Palace

Martín Luis Guzmán

The government of Francisco I. Madero was overthrown in February 1913, and soon thereafter both Madero and his vice-president, José María Pino Suárez, were killed. The regime which took over, headed by federalist General Victoriano Huerta, was authoritarian and reactionary, and had very little popular support.

Factions arose in various parts of the country to oppose the Huerta dictatorship; the most important was led by the governor of Coahuila, Venustiano Carranza, who was tenuously recognized by the insurgent armies as "First Chief." The revolution quickly entered a tremendously violent phase, one which did not end with Huerta's ouster in July 1914.

In October 1914 the several revolutionary factions met in the city of Aguascalientes to participate in the Sovereign Revolutionary Convention, whose goal was to establish a new government for all of Mexico. Sharp disagreements and clashes among leaders quickly led to a violent rupture between Conventionists (the populist forces of Zapata and Pancho Villa) on one side, and Constitutionalists (led by the patrician Carranza) on the other. The president of the Conventionist faction was Eulalio Gutiérrez, though the real power was held by Pancho Villa in the North and Emiliano Zapata in the South. The two movements were remarkably different in character, and their prospects for a successful alliance were remote. Still, they were able to occupy Mexico City briefly from late November 1914 until late January 1915. The following excerpt presents a scene from that occupation.

Martín Luis Guzmán (1887–1976) was the son of a federal army colonel from the northern state of Chihuahua. Eschewing his father's profession, he became one of Mexico's greatest literary figures. When the revolution broke out in 1910, the young Guzmán had just begun a career as a journalist. During the fight against Huerta he served as emissary from Venustiano Carranza to Pancho Villa, an experience that provided the material for his most famous books, The Eagle and the Serpent *(1928) and* Memoirs of Pancho Villa *(1951), both works of fiction based on Guzmán's first-hand observations. In the vignette that follows, he provides a vivid portrait of the Zapatista leadership and their ambivalence toward political power. At the same time,*

Provisional President Eulalio Gutiérrez *(left)* and General Eufemio Zapata *(right)* after taking possession of the National Palace, December 4, 1914. (Reprinted by permission of Fototeca del INAH, Mexico.)

he graphically evokes the yawning cultural chasm that separated Mexico's humble peasant revolutionaries from urbane, middle-class intellectuals like himself.

Eulalio Gutiérrez wanted to visit the National Palace before he installed his government there. So that same afternoon he, José Isabel Robles [a Villista general appointed minister of war by Gutiérrez], and I presented ourselves there. Eufemio Zapata [the elder brother of rebel leader Emiliano Zapata], who was in charge of the building, came out to the main entrance to receive us and began to do the honors of the house. To judge by his air, he was taking his momentary role of receiving the new President in his government abode and showing him the splendors of his future drawing rooms and offices very seriously. As we got out of the automobile, he shook hands with each of us and spoke like a rough but affable host.

While the greetings were being exchanged, I looked around me. The car had stopped just past one of the arcades of the large patio. In the background the two lines formed by the white masonry of the arches and the shadow of the openings met at an angle. A short way off, a group of the Zapata soldiery stood observing us from the sentry chamber; others peered from between the columns of the massive white arches. What was the attitude of these men? Meek or suspicious? At the time, they aroused in me curiosity more than anything else, because of the setting of which they formed a part. That place,

which I had seen so many times and which always seemed the same, gave me on that occasion, practically empty as it was, and in the hands of a band of half-naked rebels, the effect of something new and strange.

We did not go up the main stairway, but used the staircase of honor. Eufemio walked ahead of us, like a janitor showing a house for rent. He was wearing the tight trousers with a broad fold down the two outside seams, a cotton blouse tied at the belly, and a huge broad-brimmed hat; as he mounted step after step, he seemed to symbolize the historic days in which we were living, in the contrast of his person, not meek, but uncouth and clumsy, with the cultivation and refinement presaged by the staircase. A flunky, a coachman, an official, an ambassador would have been in place there; each would have had the dignity, small or great, that went with his position, and that had its place in the hierarchy of dignities. Eufemio looked like a stableboy who was trying to act like a president. When his shoe touched the carpet, there was a clash between carpet and shoe. When his hand rested on the banister, there was an immediate incompatibility between the two. Every time he moved his foot, his foot seemed surprised at not getting tangled up in brush and undergrowth. Every time he stretched out his hand, it seemed to feel in vain for a tree trunk or boulder. One only had to look at him to see that everything that should have formed his setting was lacking, and that everything that surrounded him was superfluous as far as he was concerned.

But at this moment a terrible doubt assailed me. What about us? What kind of impression would the three of us who followed Eufemio have made on anybody who saw us? Eulalio and Robles in their stetson hats, unshaven and with their unmistakable plebeian aspect, and I with that everlasting air of the civilian in Mexico who at the hour of violence goes into politics, a mere instrument assuming the attitude of intellectual adviser to a successful military leader, at best—at worst, of criminals passing themselves off as leaders?

After we had ascended the stairs, Eufemio took great pride in showing us one by one the different rooms of the palace. Our steps alternately were echoed on the waxed floors, so polished that we could see ourselves dimly reflected in them, broken by the different colors of the marquetry, or were hushed by the velvet of the carpets. Behind us we could hear the soft slapping of the sandals of the two soldiers who followed us at a short distance through the empty rooms. It was a meek, gentle sound. Sometimes it ceased for a long time while the two soldiers stopped to look at a picture or examine a piece of furniture. Then I would turn back to look at them through the long perspective of the rooms. They formed a double figure, strangely quiet and remote, as they stood close to each other, looking at things in silence, their heads with their lank heavy hair uncovered, and their palm-leaf hats humbly

clasped in both hands. Something sincere and worthy of respect was unquestionably represented by their rapt, embarrassed, almost religious humility. But we, what did we represent? Was there anything fundamentally sincere and serious in us, who were making joking comments on everything we saw, and had not bothered to take off our hats?

Eufemio made some remark about everything we passed, and his observations were often primitive and ingenuous. They revealed a cheerful, childlike conception of the gubernatorial functions. "This is where the government meets to talk." "This is where the government eats." "This is where the government has its dances." It was evident that he supposed we had never seen a tapestry nor had the slightest idea of the uses of a sofa or an armchair or a corner table, and he went along illuminating us. He said everything in such good faith that it positively touched me. When we reached the presidential chair, his tone became triumphant, almost ecstatic. "This is the chair." And then in a burst of enviable candor he added: "Ever since I've been here, I come every day to look at it, just to get used to it. Because—can you imagine in it?—I always used to think when I heard them talk about the President's seat that they meant his saddle." Eufemio laughed heartily at his own ignorance and we laughed too.

For some time Eulalio had been aching to take a dig at General Zapata, and he saw his opportunity. Turning toward Eufemio and putting a hand on his shoulder, he fired this arrow in his gentle, modulated voice:

"Not for nothing is one a good horseman, partner. The day this seat becomes a saddle, you and your friends can all be presidents."

The smile disappeared from Eufemio's face as if by magic, and a gloomy, sinister look replaced it. Eulalio's witticism had been too cruel and perhaps too apt, and it had flicked him on the raw.

"Well," he said a few seconds later, as though there were nothing more worth seeing, "let's go downstairs now and see the stables. Then I'll take you to the rooms where my men and I are quartered."

We went over the stables from one end to the other, though with greater satisfaction on Eufemio's part than on ours. Amidst the array of collars, bridles, bits and halters—all smelling of grease and leather—he displayed an amazing store of knowledge. And the same with the horses; he knew all about breeding them, training them and showing them. His enthusiasm for these things took his mind off the incident of the chair, and then he led us to the quarters he and his men occupied in the palace. Eufemio—and in this he gave evidence of his sincerity—had found rooms to his taste in the poorest, most out-of-the-way rear court. He seemed well aware of how miserable his ac-

commodations were, and to forestall criticism, he quickly explained why he had chosen them.

"I picked this place because I've always been poor and I didn't feel right in better rooms."

Really the place was abominable. I thought I should smother as I went in. The room was not large and had only one door and no windows. There must have been from fifty to a hundred officers from Zapata's army there, of all ranks, when we came in. The majority were standing up, side by side, or in groups with their arms around each other. Others were sitting on the table, and some were lying on the floor in the corners and along the wall. Many of them had a bottle or a glass in their hand. The air was foul and sour and a hundred odors were mingled with the heavy pall of smoke. Everybody was drunk, some more, some less. A soldier stood by the door to keep it shut against the light or against inquisitive eyes. Two small electric lights glimmered feebly through the asphyxiating fog.

At first nobody paid any attention to us. Then as Eufemio went from group to group, whispering something in a low voice, they began to look at us without suspicion and even make certain signs of welcome. But they were faint, almost imperceptible expressions. We had, beyond question, fallen into a world so different from our own that our mere presence was a source of perturbation in spite of everything they and we did to overcome this. With the exception of a few, they avoided looking straight at us and watched us instead out of the corner of their eyes. Instead of talking with us they whispered among themselves. And every now and then they would turn their backs to take a long swallow from their bottles or empty their glasses.

Eufemio and those around him invited us to have a drink.

"Here, let's have some glasses," shouted Eufemio. Timid hands reached out to set five or six dirty glasses on the edge of the table. Eufemio set them in a row and poured out fresh drinks of tequila on the dregs at the bottom of the glasses.

We drank in silence. Eufemio poured out more tequila. We drank again. Once more Eufemio filled up the glasses. . . .

As we drank, Eufemio began to warm up. At first he became happy, jovial, and then thoughtful and gloomy. At about the fifth or sixth glass he happened to remember Eulalio's joke about the presidential chair.

"This comrade," he said, addressing his men, "thinks that Emiliano and I, and others like us, will be presidents the day they saddle horses with seats like the one upstairs."

There was a profound silence, broken only by Eulalio's sarcastic laugh.

Then the rustle of voices began again, but there was a vague, new note in it, excited and menacing. Nevertheless Eufemio went on serving tequila as though nothing had happened. Once more the glasses were handed round and we drank upon each other's sticky leavings. But at this point Robles began to look at me hard and then, almost imperceptibly, make signs to me with his eyes. I understood; draining my glass, I took leave of Eufemio.

An hour later I was back at the palace, and Robles's entire guard was with me; but just as we came up to the entrance, I saw Eulalio and Robles calmly walking out the same door through which we had entered in the early afternoon.

"Thanks," said Eulalio when he saw me. "Fortunately we don't need the soldiers now. They were so busy drinking that they could not waste time fighting with us. But, anyway, the precaution was thoughtful. What amazes me is how you and Robles understood one another without saying a word."

Mexico Has Been Turned into a Hell

William O. Jenkins

One of the first major battles of the ugly, factionalized war that broke out after the convention of 1914 was fought in the city of Puebla, some sixty miles southeast of Mexico City. The city was taken easily by the Zapatista forces in December 1914 when the Constitutionalists abandoned it. The Constitutionalists, intent on retaking the city, invaded in force in early January 1915. U.S. Consul William O. Jenkins here paints a vivid picture of the ferocity which would characterize this phase of the revolution, known to historians as the "war of the factions." His jaundiced view of Mexicans in general, and of revolutionaries in particular, were typical of many foreign observers, who were quick to find the remedy for Mexico's woes in foreign intervention and who appeared to believe that Mexicans would welcome such a violation of their sovereignty.

William O. Jenkins (1878–1963) was a prominent and controversial figure in Mexico's twentieth-century history. A native of Shelbyville, Tennessee, in 1901 he moved to Mexico where he soon proved himself a shrewd—and reportedly ruthless—businessman. He built up a string of textile and stocking factories in various parts of the country and was named U.S. Consul for the Puebla region. While he was clearly unhinged by the events he describes below, Jenkins did not abandon his interests in Mexico, but rather found ways to profit from the chaos and violence of the revolution, largely by loaning money to desperate landowners and later foreclosing on them. By the end of the war, he had become the dominant figure in the Mexican sugar industry. His close ties to influential political figures—notably, the notorious General Maximino Avila Camacho, the political boss of Puebla during the 1930s—helped him to acquire many other interests, ranging from popsicle-making to a nearly complete monopoly on Mexico's movie theaters. In 1960, Time *magazine declared him to be the richest man in Mexico. Perhaps Jenkins's greatest notoriety came in 1919, when he was kidnapped and held for ransom by Mexican rebels. When the kidnappers released him, he was immediately arrested by the government and charged (probably falsely) with engineering his own kidnapping. The episode caused a brief flare-up in tensions between Mexico and the United States. Jenkins is mostly remembered in Mexico today for his vast fortune and for the Mary Street Jenkins Foundation, founded in the 1950s*

in honor of his late wife, which continues to fund hospitals, universities, and other philanthropic causes.

Puebla, Mexico. January the 7th. 1915.

Hon. Arnold Shanklin, American Consul General, Temporarily in Veracruz

Sir:

. . . The general attack was begun early on the 5th., and on the opposite side of town from my house. I saw many large bodies of Zapatistas evacuating the city without a fight . . . but it is said that many of the Zapatistas got surrounded in the city and had to fight their way out. At any rate, there was some severe fighting in the streets of the city, beginning as I have said on the opposite side of the city from my house, and gradually getting nearer, as the Zapatistas fought their way out on this side. In front of the Consulate, there was an extremely prolonged battle, lasting for more than an hour, for usually the fighting was done on the run, and no stand was made, but evidently some one got cornered in front of the Consulate, for the firing was constant for at least an hour. When it finally terminated here, it was practically over throughout the whole city, or at least I heard very few shots after that. The factory was working at the time, and of course was full of the female operators whom I employ in my knitting mill, about three hundred at the time. I was careful to get them all under cover, and no one was hurt. Of course the front of the building was struck many times, and the window glass broken up, but that is only natural considering the number of shots fired, and the poor marksmanship of these soldiers. . . .

After the firing ceased and allowing a sufficient time to elapse to not be in danger, I went out and there were 27 dead men in front of the house and one wounded. I immediately sent the wounded man to the hospital, and upon examination of the dead, found that many of them had been evidently shot after being hurt and unable to move, for their heads were blown open in many cases, sometimes stuck with knives, and everything showing that the wounded had been unmercifully finished up, after being helpless. Also I noticed many wounds made with the expansive bullets and picked up pieces of these bullets as well.

In the afternoon, when the patrols of the Carrancistas were going about over the city, examining the dead etc., I was shocked to be told that it was reported that the shots which had killed these men had been fired from my house. I immediately denied such a report, and paid no further attention to

it, but about five o'clock in the afternoon, I was sitting in my office, and heard a scandal at the door, and went there only to find a crowd of drunken soldiers, abusing the doorkeeper, striking him, and firing at him twice, which he fortunately escaped, and they at once began with their abuse at me, saying that I had killed their comrades etc. etc., threatening to shoot me at once, and using all manner of abuses and indignities. I pretended to summon the authorities, but was immediately put under arrest, and threatened with instant death, and together with my brother-in-law, and the doorkeeper we were carried off through the street between files of these drunken dogs, to their cuartel [military headquarters]. We were there placed in an open lot with the horses and soldiers and threatened with immediate execution if we attempted to run away. I assure you that I had no thought of attempting it, and only prayed that we would be spared the shooting if we made no attempt to run away.

Before leaving the house, I explained to them that this building was the American Consulate and that I was the Consul, but was informed that it made no difference to them what I was, nor what the house was, as I had to pay for the death of the men in front of my house. I explained to them that I could prove by three hundred witnesses of their own people that no shots had been fired from my house, that I took no part in the matter, etc. etc., but it was like arguing a matter before a herd of swine, as they would listen to nothing, and amid insults and abuses we were carried to the cuartel.

After arriving there, I finally managed to get a talk with the captain, for it must be noted that the men who had arrested us were privates, and a sergeant or so, all equally abusive. I explained to the Captain who I was, and why I was arrested, and finally got him to return to the house with me, so that I could show him why their accusation was completely false. I was not released however, but carried back to the lot and confined there for about three hours, until a Coronel came, who immediately put us at liberty, and said that if our presence was necessary the next day, he would advise me. He assured me that I would not be molested any further and I returned home. . . .

Early the next morning (Yesterday, Jan. the 6th) I was awakened by a loud knocking at the door, and upon going toward the door, encountered about thirty soldiers, headed by another crazy sergeant, and was informed that I was under arrest, and to accompany them at once. I was not even allowed to dress properly, but was made to accompany them throughout all the house searching even the rooms where my wife and daughters were in bed, and upon venturing to inquire by whose orders this was being done, was significantly informed that their rifles were their orders, and not to question them. My brother-in-law was not taken at once, though his room was searched, and

I was again hurried down through the streets with six employees who were around the front door, to another place of confinement. These were different soldiers from the afternoon previous, but even more abusive than the other if possible. Upon arriving at their cuartel, which was full of the rest of their company, I was met with the vilest invective, curses known only to Mexicans, abuses and even blows, and it was with difficulty that we were conducted to the cell where we were to be confined. Upon seeing that my Brother-in-law was not with me, he was immediately sent for, but in the meanwhile it was decided that I should be immediately shot for aiding the Zapatistas the previous day. It was impossible to explain that I was innocent, and had nothing to do with the battle in any way, and I was hastened from the room where, confined to the Patio, and in spite of my protestations of innocence, and even pleading, I was made to stand against a stone pillar, and the whole crowd of insane fiends were preparing to shoot me. I asked permission to write a note of farewell to my wife, but was met by increased insults, and had given up all hope on earth of being saved when a captain, evidently belonging to another regiment, passed by, and asked the sergeant or cabo [corporal] who was in charge, what they were doing and why they were doing it, and upon being told, I went to him and told him who I was, that I was absolutely innocent of any charge, but was being murdered like a dog without even listening to hundreds of witnesses who would swear to my absolute innocence. Upon asking the sergeant why they were shooting me and on whose orders, it developed that they had no order at all, except a general order to shoot snipers from the General, but they had taken it on themselves to judge me guilty without any especial order, or trial whatever. Seeing in this captain at least a ray of hope, I besought him to procure a stay of execution, or rather murder I should call it, until the General's attention was called to it, and he in his turn explained to the Sergeant that it would be a dangerous matter to thus shoot the American Consul without a special order to do so. In spite of the protestations of all the soldiers, and their efforts to prevent it, this captain personally conducted me back to the cell, and a little later, I was conducted to another building, and confined there with other prisoners. This was very early in the morning, and until about 12:30. I was released through the efforts of the British Consul, Mr. W.S. Hardaker, who had upon hearing from my wife what had happened hastened to Gen. F[rancisco] Coss and Gen. Alvaro Obregon, who were commanding the Carrancista troops, and explained to them my situation and peril. Immediately on being informed, Gen. Obregon, who is in charge of the entire military force here, sent for me, and released all the men who were imprisoned with me, as well as my Brother-in-law who had also been imprisoned in

another place, and gave me offers of all protection and guarantees, assuring me of his sincere regret of the occurrence, and offering to punish those who were guilty of such an act. He was extremely kind about it, which I appreciated very much, but I was unable to forget that but for a miracle I would have been shot down in cold blood by his irresponsable [*sic*] men, even though he himself had nothing but kind intentions to give protection to all. . . . These [Mexican soldiers] understand nothing. They are animals without hearts, conscience or intelligence. Their Generals may be honest men, I don't know, but the soldiers know no obedience, and are completely and utterly irresponsible, without having any other aim in war than robbery and destruction. Liberty, for which they claim to be fighting, is to them, License to rob and destroy. They know no ideals, and are incapable of comprehension. I have known this all along, but never have I so completely appreciated it as now, when I have passed through this terrible ordeal. It has made an old man of me in a day. I have lost all interest in everything and only think of getting away from this God-forsaken country, to where a man can sleep in peace. I cannot rest here but am looking all night into a thousand rifles pointed at me by as many howling devils, and undergoing the tortures of all doomed men. If I had committed a crime, and was being executed for it, I believe that I could face the firing squad with some degree of equanimity, knowing that I was only receiving my just due, or if I had to die for my country, I could do it in the knowledge that I was complying with my duty, but to be subject to assassination, to murder, such as this, and knowing that as long as this state of affairs lasts, we will all continually be subject to the same thing, [is] why, Mr. Shanklin, it has taken the very life out of me. Every sound startles me, because I have no assurance but that at any time a crowd of these devils will come and shoot me in my own room in spite of all the orders of the Generals in Mexico. There is no discipline among them. They know no order. Every common private is a law unto himself. Not only with the Carrancistas, but the Zapatistas are even worse.

As you know I have been in Mexico a long time, about fifteen years. I have worked hard and have built up a great business, completely covering the whole Republic in my line, and have made a fortune, but I am anxious to abandon it all, and get out where I can breathe free once more. . . . Mexico has been turned into a Hell, and gets worse every day, for little by little its resources are being destroyed, its riches being wasted in a senseless war, and the time is very near when there will be famine and thousands will die for lack of food. Many calculate that this will come in six months. Certainly in another year. Knowing these people as I do, I don't want to face the consequences that a famine is sure to bring, for then it will be like turning wild animals together, and no

life will be respected for a moment longer than the opportunity comes to destroy it. The country is completely demoralized, and the soldiers have long since lost all conception of personal privilege or property rights, and accept as authority only some one whom they fear. . . .

. . . You have always been extremely discreet in your conversations with me as regards any criticism about any action or policy of our country as regards Mexico, and I may be overstepping the bounds of Consular propriety to ask you, if you can understand why our Government continues to allow munitions of war to be given into the hands of these irresponsible people to be used not only in murdering each other without cause or reason, but in destroying the lives of foreigners as well, and even in shooting the own [*sic*] representatives of our country, for it is no fault of the ammunition or the men who had it, that I was not murdered yesterday.

It is a cold blooded traffic in men's lives, and nothing more, and I can not possible [*sic*] understand how it can be countenanced by our Government. If the war was for a cause, or a reason, if there was any solution in sight, if it was for men's liberty, or a heritage for their children, we would all of us, who know Mexico so thoroughly, say that was for the best, but it has degenerated now into a war of pillage and destruction and the greatest evils which it started out to cure and the reforms it was to establish have been lost sight of in the maze of changes that have taken place, and the longer it is allowed to go on, the worse it will become.

I was for years violently opposed to any Intervention on the part of our Government in Mexican affairs, because I thought that the Mexicans should be allowed to settle their internal affairs in their own way, but the matter has now reached such a stage, that I am very much afraid there is no other solution. The element of Mexican citizenship which could be counted on to bring about the needed reforms in the proper way have [*sic*] long since been eliminated from the scene of action, and we have now the country governed by illiterate men, without the least capacity for helping the country in this dire need, but only capable of ruling a sufficient number of men to keep them in the fight. When I was in Mexico on Dec. the 23rd, I had an interview with President Eulalio Gutierrez, and found him a miner who worked for me in 1905 and 1906 in the state of Zacatecas, a man utterly incapable of even comprehending the position which he fills, much less understanding the thousand and one difficult problems that he has to face. It is useless to tell you, for you already know it, that he is a mere figurehead, and will serve no other purpose than to probably cause trouble when he is separated from his position. He is a good miner to earn two or three pesos per day, or to even manage a bunch

of 20 or 50 peons, as he did when I knew him, but ridiculously incapable of his present exalted position.

I am therefore coming to the opinion that it will be a positive necessity for Mexico to have some assistance in straightening out this tangle, for otherwise it will gradually assume a state of anarchy that will ultimately become unbearable. . . .

Pancho Villa

John Reed

In the northern part of Mexico, a style of revolution arose that contrasted sharply with that of the settled, religious, generally conservative peasants of Morelos. Here, peasants, cowhands, miners, and petty merchants took up arms with abandon: in the unforgettable portrait painted by Mariano Azuela, the first important novelist of the Mexican revolution, the northern rebels fought "as if in that unrestrained running they were trying to take possession of the whole land"[1] *and to redress the humiliations of their former lives. No one better exemplifies this spirit than the legendary northern leader, Francisco "Pancho" Villa, who is portrayed here by the American journalist John Reed (1887–1920).*

Reed's work was tremendously popular and influential in molding world opinion regarding the Mexican revolution, and Villa in particular (after reading his work, Woodrow Wilson expressed great admiration for Villa). John Reed was a left-wing writer who made the most of his short life by chronicling the American labor movement, the Mexican revolution, and, most famously, the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. Only twenty-six years old in 1913, Reed approached his subject with a rare boldness, traveling alone and unprotected through revolutionary Mexico, living and fighting with the ordinary soldiers, and cultivating a relationship of mutual respect with Villa. His unrestrained admiration for the revolutionary seems somewhat naive in retrospect, though he clearly represented the romantic tendencies of his generation in viewing Villa as a noble savage, a primitive socialist, capable of reinventing Mexico while igniting hopes for change in other climes. While readers should be cautioned against Reed's tendency to over-romanticize his subject, it is worth noting that later writers—most notably, the historian Friedrich Katz, whose monumental biography of Villa was published in 1998—bear out many of Reed's main points.

The Rise of a Bandit

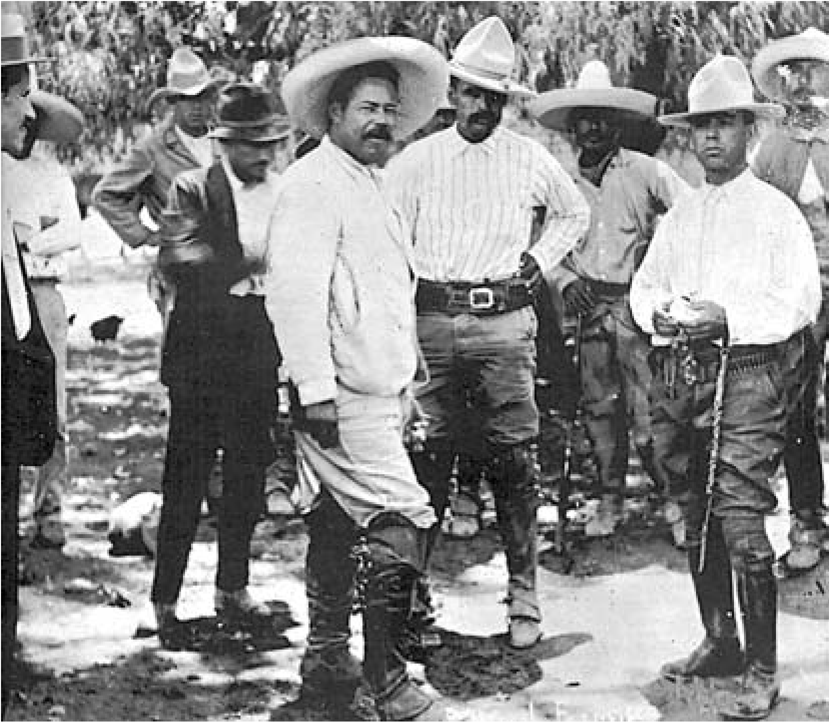
Villa was an outlaw for twenty-two years. When he was only a boy of sixteen, delivering milk in the streets of Chihuahua, he killed a government official and had to take to the mountains. The story is that the official had violated

his sister, but it seems probable that Villa killed him on account of his insufferable insolence. That in itself would not have outlawed him long in Mexico, where human life is cheap; but once a refugee he committed the unpardonable crime of stealing cattle from the rich *hacendados*. And from that time to the outbreak of the Madero revolution the Mexican government had a price on his head.

Villa was the son of ignorant peons. He had never been to school. He hadn't the slightest conception of the complexity of civilization, and when he finally came back to it, a mature man of extraordinary native shrewdness, he encountered the twentieth century with the naïve simplicity of a savage.

It is almost impossible to procure accurate information about his career as a bandit. There are accounts of outrages he committed in old files of local newspapers and government reports, but those sources are prejudiced, and his name became so prominent as a bandit that every train robbery and holdup and murder in northern Mexico was attributed to Villa. But an immense body of popular legend grew up among the peons around his name. There are many traditional songs and ballads celebrating his exploits—you can hear the shepherds singing them around their fires in the mountains at night, repeating verses handed down by their fathers or composing others extemporaneously. For instance, they tell the story of how Villa, fired by the story of the misery of the peons on the Hacienda of Los Alamos, gathered a small army and descended upon the Big House, which he looted, and distributed the spoils among the poor people. He drove off thousands of cattle from the Terrazzas [*sic*] range and ran them across the border.[2] He would suddenly descend upon a prosperous mine and seize the bullion. When he needed corn he captured a granary belonging to some rich man. He recruited almost openly in the villages far removed from the well-traveled roads and railways, organizing the outlaws of the mountains. Many of the present rebel soldiers used to belong to his band and several of the Constitutionalist generals, like Urbina. . . .

His reckless and romantic bravery is the subject of countless poems. They tell, for example, how one of his band named Reza was captured by the rurales and bribed to betray Villa. Villa heard of it and sent word into the city of Chihuahua that he was coming for Reza. In broad daylight he entered the city on horseback, took ice cream on the Plaza—the ballad is very explicit on this point—and rode up and down the streets until he found Reza strolling with his sweetheart in the Sunday crowd on the Paseo Bolivar, where he shot him and escaped. In time of famine he fed whole districts, and took care of entire villages evicted by the soldiers under Porfirio Diaz's outrageous land law. Everywhere he was known as The Friend of the Poor. He was the Mexican Robin Hood.



Pancho Villa. (Reprinted by permission of Fototeca del INAH, Mexico.)

In all these years he learned to trust nobody. Often in his secret journeys across the country with one faithful companion he camped in some desolate spot and dismissed his guide; then, leaving a fire burning, he rode all night to get away from the faithful companion. That is how Villa learned the art of war, and in the field today, when the army comes into camp at night, Villa flings the bridle of his horse to an orderly, takes a serape over his shoulder, and sets out for the hills alone. He never seems to sleep. In the dead of night he will appear somewhere along the line of outposts to see if the sentries are on the job; and in the morning he returns from a totally different direction. No one, not even the most trusted officer of his staff, knows the last of his plans until he is ready for action. . . .

A Peon in Politics

Villa proclaimed himself military governor of the State of Chihuahua, and began the extraordinary experiment—extraordinary because he knew nothing about it—of creating a government for 300,000 people out of his head.

It has often been said that Villa succeeded because he had educated advisers. As a matter of fact, he was almost alone. What advisers he had spent most of their time answering his eager questions and doing what he told them. I used sometimes to go to the Governor's palace early in the morning and wait for him in the Governor's chamber. About eight o'clock Sylvestre Terrazzas, the Secretary of State, Sebastian Vargas, the State Treasurer, and Manuel Chao, then Interventor, would arrive, very bustling and busy, with huge piles of reports, suggestions and decrees which they had drawn up. Villa himself came in about eight-thirty, threw himself into a chair, and made them read out loud to him. Every minute he would interject a remark, correction or suggestion. Occasionally he waved his finger back and forward and said: *"No sirve"* ["This won't do"]. When they were all through he began rapidly and without a halt to outline the policy of the State of Chihuahua, legislative, financial, judicial, and even educational. When he came to a place that bothered him, he said: "How do they do that?" And then, after it was carefully explained to him: "Why?" Most of the acts and usages of government seemed to him extraordinarily unnecessary and snarled up. For example, his advisers proposed to finance the Revolution by issuing State bonds bearing 30 or 40 percent interest. He said, "I can understand why the State should pay something to people for the rent of their money, but how is it just to pay the whole sum back to them three or four times over?" He couldn't see why rich men should be granted huge tracts of land and poor men should not. The whole complex structure of civilization was new to him. You had to be a philosopher to explain anything to Villa; and his advisers were only practical men. . . .

No sooner had he taken over the government of Chihuahua than he put his army to work running the electric light plant, the street railways, the telephone, the water works and the Terrazzas flour mill. He delegated soldiers to administer the great haciendas which he had confiscated. He manned the slaughterhouse with soldiers, and sold Terrazzas's beef to the people for the government. A thousand of them he put in the streets of the city as civil police, prohibiting on pain of death stealing, or the sale of liquor to the army. A soldier who got drunk was shot. He even tried to run the brewery with soldiers, but failed because he couldn't find an expert maltster. "The only thing to do with soldiers in time of peace," said Villa, "is to put them to work. An idle soldier is always thinking of war."

In the matter of the political enemies of the Revolution he was just as simple, just as effective. Two hours after he entered the Governor's palace the foreign consuls came in a body to ask his protection for 200 Federal soldiers who had been left as a police force at the request of the foreigners. Before answering them, Villa said suddenly: "Which is the Spanish consul?" Scobell,

the British vice-consul, said: "I represent the Spaniards." "All right!" snapped Villa. "Tell them to begin to pack. Any Spaniard caught within the boundaries of this State after five days will be escorted to the nearest wall by a firing squad."

The consuls gave a gasp of horror. Scobell began a violent protest, but Villa cut him short.

"This is not a sudden determination on my part," he said; "I have been thinking about this since 1910. The Spaniards must go."

Letcher, the American consul, said: "General, I don't question your motives, but I think you are making a grave political mistake in expelling the Spaniards. The government at Washington will hesitate a long time before becoming friendly to a party which makes use of such barbarous measures."

"Señor Consul," answered Villa, "we Mexicans have had three hundred years of the Spaniards. They have not changed in character since the Conquistadores. They disrupted the Indian empire and enslaved the people. We did not ask them to mingle their blood with ours. Twice we drove them out of Mexico and allowed them to return with the same rights as Mexicans, and they used these rights to steal away our land, to make the people slaves, and to take up arms against the cause of liberty. They supported Porfirio Diaz. They were perniciously active in politics. It was the Spaniards who framed the plot that put Huerta in the palace. When Madero was murdered the Spaniards in every State in the Republic held banquets of rejoicing. They thrust on us the greatest superstition the world has ever known—the Catholic Church. They ought to be killed for that alone. I consider we are being very generous with them."

Scobell insisted vehemently that five days was too short a time, that he couldn't possibly reach all the Spaniards in the State by that time; so Villa extended the time to ten days.

The rich Mexicans who had oppressed the people and opposed the Revolution, he expelled promptly from the State and confiscated their vast holdings. By a simple stroke of the pen the 17,000,000 acres and innumerable business enterprises of the Terrazzas family became the property of the Constitutionalist government, as well as the great lands of the Creel family and the magnificent palaces which were their town houses. Remembering, however, how the Terrazzas exiles had once financed the Orozco Revolution, he imprisoned Don Luis Terrazzas Jr. as a hostage in his own house in Chihuahua. Some particularly obnoxious political enemies were promptly executed in the penitentiary. The Revolution possesses a black book in which are set down the names, offenses, and property of those who have oppressed and robbed the people. The Germans, who had been particularly active politically, the

Englishmen and Americans, he does not yet dare to molest. Their pages in the black book will be opened when the Constitutionalist government is established in Mexico City; and there, too, he will settle the account of the Mexican people with the Catholic Church. . . .

The Human Side

Villa has two wives, one a patient, simple woman who was with him during all his years of outlawry, who lives in El Paso, and the other a cat-like, slender young girl, who is the mistress of his house in Chihuahua. He is perfectly open about it, though lately the educated, conventional Mexicans who have been gathering about him in ever-increasing numbers have tried to hush up the fact. Among the peons it is not only not unusual but customary to have more than one mate.

One hears a great many stories of Villa's violating women. I asked him if that were true. He pulled his mustache and stared at me for a minute with an inscrutable expression. "I never take the trouble to deny such stories," he said. "They say I am a bandit, too. Well, you know my history. But tell me; have you ever met a husband, father or brother of any woman that I have violated?" He paused: "Or even a witness?"

It is fascinating to watch him discover new ideas. Remember that he is absolutely ignorant of the troubles and confusions and readjustments of modern civilization. "Socialism," he said once, when I wanted to know what he thought of it: "Socialism—is it a thing? I only see it in books, and I do not read much." Once I asked him if women would vote in the new Republic. He was sprawled out on his bed, with his coat unbuttoned. "Why, I don't think so," he said, startled, suddenly sitting up. "What do you mean-vote? Do you mean elect a government and make laws?" I said I did and that women already were doing it in the United States. "Well," he said, scratching his head, "if they do it up there I don't see that they shouldn't do it down here." The idea seemed to amuse him enormously. He rolled it over and over in his mind, looking at me and away again. "It may be as you say," he said, "but I have never thought about it. Women seem to me to be things to protect, to love. They have no sternness of mind. They can't consider anything for its right or wrong. They are full of pity and softness. Why," he said, "a woman would not give an order to execute a traitor."

"I am not so sure of that, *mi General,*" I said. "Women can be crueler and harder than men."

He stared at me, pulling his mustache. And then he began to grin. He looked slowly to where his wife was setting the table for lunch. *"Oiga,"* he

said, "come here. Listen. Last night I caught three traitors crossing the river to blow up the railroad. What shall I do with them? Shall I shoot them or not?"

Embarrassed, she seized his hand and kissed it. "Oh, I don't know anything about that," she said. "You know best."

"No," said Villa. "I leave it entirely to you. Those men were going to try to cut our communications between Juarez and Chihuahua. They were traitors—Federals. What shall I do? Shall I shoot them or not?"

"Oh, well, shoot them," said Mrs. Villa.

Villa chuckled delightedly. "There is something in what you say," he remarked, and for days afterward went around asking the cook and the chambermaids whom they would like to have for President of Mexico. . . .

It seems incredible to those who don't know him, that this remarkable figure, who has risen from obscurity to the most prominent position in Mexico in three years, should not covet the Presidency of the Republic. But that is in entire accordance with the simplicity of his character. When asked about it he answered as always with perfect directness, just in the way that you put it to him. He didn't quibble over whether he could or could not be President of Mexico. He said: "I am a fighter, not a statesman. I am not educated enough to be President. I only learned to read and write two years ago. How could I, who never went to school, hope to be able to talk with the foreign ambassadors and the cultivated gentlemen of the Congress? It would be bad for Mexico if an uneducated man were to be President. There is one thing that I will not do—and that is to take a position for which I am not fitted. . . ." On behalf of my paper I had to ask him this question five or six times. Finally he became exasperated. "I have told you many times," he said, "that there is no possibility of my becoming President of Mexico. Are the newspapers trying to make trouble between me and my Jefe? This is the last time that I will answer that question. The next correspondent that asks me I will have him spanked and sent to the border." For days afterward he went around grumbling humorously about the *chatito* (pug nose) who kept asking him whether he wanted to be President of Mexico. The idea seemed to amuse him. Whenever I went to see him after that he used to say, at the end of our talk: "Well, aren't you going to ask me today whether I want to be President?" . . .

The Dream of Pancho Villa

It might not be uninteresting to know the passionate dream—the vision which animates this ignorant fighter, "not educated enough to be President of Mexico." He told it to me once in these words: "When the new Republic is estab-

lished there will never be any more army in Mexico. Armies are the greatest support of tyranny. There can be no dictator without an army.

"We will put the army to work. In all parts of the Republic we will establish military colonies composed of the veterans of the Revolution. The State will give them grants of agricultural lands and establish big industrial enterprises to give them work. Three days a week they will work and work hard, because honest work is more important than fighting, and only honest work makes good citizens. And the other three days they will receive military instruction and go out and teach all the people how to fight. Then, when the Patria is invaded, we will just have to telephone from the palace at Mexico City, and in half a day all the Mexican people will rise from their fields and factories, fully armed, equipped and organized to defend their children and their homes.

"My ambition is to live my life in one of those military colonies among my *compañeros* whom I love, who have suffered so long and so deeply with me. I think I would like the government to establish a leather factory there where we could make good saddles and bridles, because I know how to do that; and the rest of the time I would like to work on my little farm, raising cattle and corn. It would be fine, I think, to help make Mexico a happy place."[3]

Notes

1. *The Underdogs,* translated by Frederick H. Fornoff (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992), 40. *Ed.*
2. Luis Terrazas (the misspelling is in Reed's original text) was a prominent Apache fighter in the northern state of Chihuahua, who rose to become one of Mexico's wealthiest and most powerful regional caudillos. Together with his son-in-law, Enrique Creel, Terrazas achieved near-total political and economic dominance in the state, a fact that is generally regarded as a major provocation of the revolution in Chihuahua. *Ed.*
3. In 1920 a new coalition led by Alvaro Obregón overthrew the government of Venustiano Carranza. The new government sought to ensure Villa's loyalty by providing him with a large, remote estate in Chihuahua for his retirement. He ran the estate very much like one of the idyllic military colonies he described to Reed. His retirement was short-lived, however, for he was gunned down on the streets of Parral in 1923, most certainly by supporters of his former Constitutionalist rivals, Obregón and Plutarco Elías Calles. *Ed.*

La Punitiva

Anonymous

On March 9, 1916, Francisco Villa led five hundred guerrilla troops across the U.S. border to attack the small border town of Columbus, New Mexico, killing seventeen Americans. The attack was in retaliation for U.S. diplomatic recognition of Villa's rival, Venustiano Carranza, as the legitimate government of Mexico. The attack caused considerable outrage in the United States, and since it was a presidential election year, it appeared some response was called for. On March 15, President Woodrow Wilson authorized the second major military intervention in the Mexican revolution (the first was the occupation of Veracruz in 1914): he sent a "punitive expedition" of six thousand (later increased to ten thousand) troops into Mexico with orders to capture Villa and disperse Villista bands operating near the border. The mission, led by General John J. ("Blackjack") Pershing, failed miserably and was withdrawn in February 1917. The details as given in the following corrido *were largely erroneous, but the sense of outraged and bellicose nationalism caused by* "la punitiva" *was clearly genuine. Indeed, Villa remains a beloved nationalist icon and secular saint in his native Chihuahua and among* mexicanos *along the border.*

In our Mexico, on the 23rd of February,
Carranza let the Americans cross over:
20,000 men, and 200 airplanes
were looking for Villa throughout the country.

Carranza tells them earnestly,
if they are men enough and know how to track him down:
"I give permission for you to find Villa
and you can also learn how it is to die."

When the Texas "blondies" arrived
exhausted from so much walking,
after seven hours on the road,
the poor souls wanted to go back home.

The American Punitive Expedition in Mexico. (Anita Brenner and George R. Leighton, *The Wind That Swept Mexico: The History of the Mexican Revolution of 1910–1942* [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971], photo no. 12.)

The expeditionary searches began
and the airplanes started to fly,
they took several directions
looking for Villa in order to kill him.

When Francisco Villa saw the punitive forces
he immediately got ready, too,
he dressed as an American soldier,
and he also transformed his troops.

When the planes saw the flag
that Villa had painted with stars
they made a mistake and came down,
and Villa took them prisoners.

Francisco Villa no longer rides a horse
and his people need never ride again:

Francisco Villa is now the owner of airplanes
which he very easily acquires.

Because we are so few Mexicans
the "blondies" say they can finish us off,
it doesn't matter if they bring a thousand cannons
because they end up leaving them in the hills.

When they entered the State of Chihuahua
all of the people were just amazed
to see all those American soldiers
that Pancho Villa left hanging from the poles.

When the "blondies" entered the city of Parral
asking for flour, crackers, and ham,
men, women, and children would tell them,
"There's only gunpowder and cannon balls."

They say death stalks in Mexico,
and that people there kill each other every day;
as long as there is one Mexican alive
our flag will be waving in his hand.

Francisco Villa was a fighting man
and his artillery was always prepared,
they would have burned the last cartridge
in defense of our nation.

Just what were the Americans thinking,
that combat was like dancing a *carquís*?
With their faces covered with shame
they returned to their country once again.

It doesn't matter that the "blondies" have
battleships and vessels by the score,
and airplanes and armored cars
if they don't have what it really takes.

Pedro Martínez

Oscar Lewis

Between 1943 and 1963, anthropologist Oscar Lewis conducted extensive tape-recorded interviews with the members of a peasant family from the village of "Azteca" (actually, Tepoztlán, Morelos). The resulting volume, Pedro Martínez, *is quite likely the most detailed autobiography ever produced by a Mexican peasant family. In the following excerpt, the family patriarch, Pedro Martínez, provides a rambling account of his revolutionary years as an active Zapatista combatant, while his wife Esperanza contributes an interesting counterpoint on the hardships suffered by the families the soldiers left behind.*

Pedro

In 1910, the action was in the north. It was still possible to work, then. So, once again, there I go to the *haciendas* looking for work. But the foremen didn't do anything to us any more. They were afraid, now, and besides we didn't take it any more.

Well, there we were one day and it was time for lunch. We were all hunting for wood to make a fire. We had only cold *tortillas* to eat while those who belonged there, the permanent hands of the *hacienda,* had coffee and two pieces of bread. They would swallow it down as fast as they could and get back to work. When the call came to get to work, they were ready, but we were still gathering wood to make the fire to heat the *tortillas.* The foreman shouted, "Come on, up on your feet."

"But we haven't had lunch yet."

"What's that to me? Come on, on your feet. Time is up."

But nothing doing. Everybody said we wouldn't go back to work until we had eaten. There were about sixty of us in a big circle. So the foreman said, "Oh, so you won't, eh?" And he rode his horse into the circle and trampled the *tortillas* we were warming. The horse was about to step on one of the men but he grabbed it by the bridle. The foreman raised his whip to hit him. Then

we stood up, all of us. We dropped the *tortillas,* napkins and everything, and each of us picked up a stone. In a single voice we said, "We are going to kill this one. What can they do to us? We are many."

"Are you going to let go?" said the foreman. But the man didn't let go. The foreman started to reach for his pistol, but he saw us all with stones. And we said, "Go ahead, go ahead. Draw your pistol. What are you waiting for?" And we said to the one who had his horse by the bridle, "Don't let go, don't let go!"

The foreman didn't touch his pistol now. Then we let him know that we were on the point of quitting, that we had not sold ourselves to anyone. "We're going now. Get out of here before we cut you to pieces." He left.

Then the whole gang said, "Let's go and leave the tools so we all have a right to our pay." They still owed us for three days. Then everybody said that all they do was take the shirt off our backs. We said, "If they try to do anything to us, we'll make mincemeat out of them all. Don't give in!"

The manager came, wearing boots up to here. He saw us all at the ticket tent. "Fellows! Why aren't you working?"

"Because the foreman did this, that, and the other to us."

"No, look, boys, go on and yoke up and I'll pay you the full day. And as far as that damned foreman is concerned, I'll take care of him." He went to leave his horse and came back. He didn't even stop to take off his spurs but went right to the tent. The foreman was there, making out the tickets, when he lit into him. He treated him like a dog and fired him. . . .

There was justice then! Not like now . . . In those days, it was the *caciques* in our own village who oppressed us most. They had money and rode fine horses and were always the officials. They took advantage of poor girls. If they liked a girl, they got her—they always enjoyed fine women just because of the power they had. One of the head *caciques* died at eighty in the arms of a fifteen-year-old girl. Another, José Galindo, had yokes of oxen and hired many peasants. He gave the men *tortillas* and sent them to the fields, then he would go to their homes, just for a little while, to be with the wives. These rich men worked hand-in-hand with the Díaz government and if someone complained he would be punished. . . .

The Revolutionaries entered Azteca for the first time exactly on March 17, 1911. There weren't many of them, only about thirty, led by Lucio Moreno. They wore their sombreros on the back of their heads and held their muskets in their hands as they rode in.

I was on the road at the time, almost at the entrance to the village. With the help of my neighbors, I was carrying my wife to the *temazcal* for a steam bath because she had given birth to our first child. You see, it is the husband's obligation to bring the water, to heat the stones in the bathhouse, and then to

slowly, carefully, carry her there on his back with a tumpline. So that's where I was when we heard them coming. Naturally, they took us by surprise.

Moreno and his men had come to kill a few people and I was already resigning myself. I said, "Well, they will kill me because of my wife but I will not leave her." I took her into a yard and crouched down behind the wall. "Now, how will I get out? If I run, the more likely they will kill me. Better let them find me here with my wife."

Well, I stayed there and some of them rode in and didn't say anything to me. They went on riding fast, with their muskets high, running, running, until they reached the first corner of the main street. They shouted, "Long live the Virgin of Guadalupe! Long live Francisco I. Madero!" and rushed to the *palacio* and began to burn it. . . .

Everything continued to burn there because they threw gasoline on it. At that time I didn't even know what gasoline was. After that, Lucio Moreno's men remounted and left for Elotepec. No fight took place. Nothing!

The next day when we went to the *hacienda* to work, the foremen asked us what happened. "Have they entered Azteca? Did they enter already?" they wanted to know.

"Yes, they were there."

"And how many of them were there?"

"Hmm, well, about three thousand or so." That's what we told them!

"*Caramba!* And what did they do?"

"Nothing. That is, not to us. It's the *caciques* they are after. They all ran away, all the *caciques.*"

"And are they well armed?"

"*Uuy!* well armed, nothing but shotguns and plenty of ammunition!"

"*Újule!* Then we are really in trouble. Look, if anything happens come and warn us."

"Sure, sure, don't give it another thought. I'll come." Of course, I wasn't going to come! Why should I?" . . .

Things got tighter as time went by. Everybody left, even the chickens! Everything was lost. I was left to the four winds. At the end of 1912, going into 1913, they didn't let us work on the *haciendas* any more. So I went back to doing what I did before, making rope. But the thick rope didn't sell then, only lariats. With that we supported ourselves. I also began to plant in the hills, and that was all. That was my whole life now, planting the *tlacolol* [subsistence crops on the steep, rocky hillsides]. My wife did the same. "How else?" she said. "You can't work on the *haciendas* now."

It reached the point where martial law was declared. There was no way of getting out now. At the end of 1913, and into 1914, you couldn't even step out

of the village because if the government came and found you walking, they killed you.

And the troops dug everywhere, looking for buried coins, because in my village there was a lot of money buried. Think of it, even the very poor were saving then. If a *peso,* one of those great big old silver ones, fell into their hands, they wouldn't change it and spend it but would go and pawn it to a rich man, if they needed a little money. Later they would get the *peso* out of hock and bury it. So the soldiers, the *carrancistas,* did a lot of digging.

That was when my second child, Manuel, was born. He died when he was eight months old. I was hiding in the hills when the troops took all the women to Cuernavaca. They came to take out my wife, though she was still in bed. She hadn't yet got back her strength when they made her walk from Azteca to Cuernavaca.

I was young then and we men were angry because they took away our families. About two hundred of us got together and we were thinking of rebelling and attacking the train because they said our families were going to be taken to Mexico City. We had all decided to rebel against the government, but no, we hadn't eaten for two days and we went to look for food in the village. *Uuy!* What destruction we found there. Corn was scattered in the streets . . . the *carrancistas* had destroyed everything.

Somehow we found food. Then we heard the cry, "Here come the women! They freed them in Cuernavaca and now they are returning." Esperanza was with my mother-in-law, carrying the baby. There I go running to meet them. They were unharmed but because she had walked to and from Cuernavaca, my wife had a relapse and became ill.

Then some soldiers entered my uncle Crescenciano's house to take away his daughter Berta. He was blind and mean but he was very brave. He grabbed a stick and hit whomever he could. While he was clubbing them and they were kicking him, my cousin Berta ran away with the neighbors. She wasn't violated but they practically killed my uncle. He went to Cuautla after that and died there. Later, Berta went off with the colonel. What else could she do, now that she had no one? . . .

The first village to be burned was Santa María, in 1913. I was at home when it happened and I went to see it three days later. It was entirely destroyed. The *carrancistas* had burned everything. The dead were hanging from the trees. It was a massacre! Cows, oxen, pigs, and dogs had been killed and the people, poor things, went about picking up rotten meat to eat. All the corn and beans were burned. It was a terrible pity.

The people of Santa María began to come to Azteca and that's when the typhus epidemic started there. Two families came to my house and soon my

entire barrio was sick. In every house there was fever and it spread through the village. My house looked like a hospital; all the sick people came to stay and then, *újule,* I got it and my wife, too. As my mother was dead, we went to my wife's mother so she could take care of us. My brother-in-law was there and he got angry because we brought the sickness. But what else could I do? I left my wife with her mother and went to my sister, who was living in the hills. She would give me a *taco,* for with my wife sick what was I going to eat? There, my other brother-in-law got angry because I carried the sickness to them. But I decided to be comfortable and I said, "Someone must support me until I recover!"

Well, both brothers-in-law and my mother-in-law got sick. She even died. Between the epidemic and the *carrancistas* we were nearly wiped out! Two weeks later, the soldiers came and burned my house. They wanted to kill me but they saw how I was and asked my wife what I had and she said, "The fever." Then they were afraid and left me alone. They took us out and set fire to the house. It was made of cane and they threw on some hay and lighted it and reduced it to nothing. That day they burned the village and threw out people everywhere. Even the municipal building was burned down.

Before we left my house my wife said, "let's put out the fire." And I said, "If I am going to die, let it burn up. Let's go." We left it burning and went to the hills, along with all the neighbors whose houses were burned. While we were running away, Carranza was bringing in more soldiers and telling them they could do whatever they pleased in the State of Morelos because it was Zapata's state. They could sack and kill, and all civil guarantees were suspended. He gave the order to destroy us and they killed and hanged everyone, even dogs, pigs, and cattle. That's why it makes me angry when they celebrate a fiesta for him now. When I see Carranza's picture it nauseates me. I cannot bear to see it because of the ugly way he mistreated us then.

We lived in the hills for about three months. I built a little shelter for my wife and me and the baby. It was the rainy season and we had a little corn, so we managed until we dared go down to the village again. By then we lived wherever we could. . . .

The Madero Revolution was almost over, and I still hadn't joined in the fighting. Madero was already President when Emiliano Zapata began to be heard of. It was in 1913 when his name was talked about, but we just criticized. Then you began to hear about Emiliano Zapata everywhere. It was Zapata this and Zapata that. But we said that he was only a peasant, not an intellectual man. . . .

I liked Zapata's plan and that's why, when he came to my village, I went to him. I still hadn't joined but I went up in the hills with *tortillas* and water.

Instead of going to my *tlacolol* I went to see Zapata in his camp. He was in a little house but they wouldn't let me go in. They were suspicious. There were two guards right in front of the door. I stood at a distance, watching. He was sitting inside with his general staff. And he calls out to me, "What do you have there, friend?"

"Nothing, *señor.* Just my *tortillas.*"

"Come in."

So there I go and now the others didn't stop me. He was a tall man, thin, and with a big mustache. . . . He had a thin high voice, like a lady's. He was a *charro* and mounted bulls and lassoed them, but when he spoke his voice was very delicate.

"Let's see your *tortillas.* Take them out."

And I gave them all to him. How he liked my *tortillas*! He and his staff finished them off.

"And what do you have in your gourd? *Pulque?*"

"No, *señor,* water." And he drank it.

What I wanted was to speak with Zapata, to sit with him. I had ideas although I still couldn't read. . . .

After that I joined Zapata and was with him through 1914, 1915 and 1916. Luckily, I wasn't a *maderista,* I was a *zapatista.* I took up arms to go south with him. I said to myself, "I can't stand this any more. It's better that I go." My wife stayed behind.

Now we knew what we were fighting for—Land, Water, Forests and Justice. That was all in the plan. It was for this reason that I became a Revolutionary. It was for a cause! Many joined just to get rich, to steal whatever they could. Their sons are rich now, because the fathers robbed. When a plaza was captured, they would sack the houses and give half the loot to their officers. But others were true revolutionaries and joined to help Zapata.

In my judgment, what Zapata was fighting for was just. Porfirio's government took everything away from us. Everything went to the rich, the *hacendados,* those with the power were the masters, and we had nothing. We were their servants because we could not plant or make use of any lands that did not belong to the *hacienda.* So they had us subjugated. We were completely enslaved by the *hacendados.* That is what Zapata fought to set right.

I joined the Revolutionary ranks because of the martial law in Morelos, declared by Carranza. If they found you sitting in your house, they would shoot you. If they found you walking, they would shoot you. If they found you working, they would shoot you. That was what they called martial law. There was *no* law! Naturally, when I saw this, I said to myself, "Rather than

have them kill me sitting, standing or walking, I'd better get out of here." And so I went to war along with the *zapatistas*.

Esperanza

I was not afraid when the Revolution began because I didn't know what it was like. After I saw what it was, I was very much afraid. I saw how the federal troops would catch the men and kill them. They carried off animals, mules, chickens, clothes. The women who came with the soldiers were the ones who took away everything.

The government soldiers, and the rebel soldiers too, violated the young girls and the married women. They came every night and the women would give great shrieks when they were taken away. Afterward, at daybreak, the women would be back in their houses. They wouldn't tell what happened to them and I didn't ask because then people would say, "Why do you want to know? If you want to know, let them take you out tonight!"

For greater safety, we would sleep in the *corral*. Our house was very exposed because the street is one of the main entrances to the village and the soldiers would pass that way. Pedro took us to a relative's house further into the village. There the soldiers never entered. The *zapatistas* were well liked in the village, because although it is true they sometimes carried off young girls, they left the majority of women in peace. And after all, every one knew what kind of girls they took. The ones who like that sort of thing!

Sometimes the *zapatistas* would come down to the village and send someone from house to house to ask for *tortillas*. At other times, the government troops did the same thing. We always gave them whatever they asked for. After all, what else could we do? But the government men were the ones who behaved the worst and did us the most harm.

One time the government called all the women together in the village plaza. I was in bed. My baby had been born a month before. Sick as I was, they made me get up and go. When they had us all there, they told us to go and grind corn and make *tortillas* for the soldiers and then come to sleep with them that night. We ground the corn and delivered the *tortillas* and went off into the hills. Sleep with the soldiers! Not for anything would we have stayed for that!

My mother remained in the village with my brother because he had corn and beans to guard. Sometimes Pedro would leave me with my mother and he would go back to the hills and come down at night. One day my mother died. She died at three o'clock one afternoon and we buried her at six o'clock

because they were saying, "The government is coming." We didn't make a coffin for her, poor thing. We just wrapped her in a *petate,* put a board on either side of her and buried her. Pedro was angry when he came home that night and learned that I had already buried her.

I didn't feel my mother's death, probably on account of it being a time of revolution. Since we were always on the run from the government, I didn't grieve so much over her. After my *mamá* was gone, Pedro took me with him to the hills.

There was no work here any more and Pedro had nothing to do. There was no way to earn money for food. But I didn't want him to go as a *zapatista.* I would say to him, "Even if we don't eat, Pedro." He would answer, "What are we going to live on? If one works, the government grabs and kills him." That's why when someone cried, "Here comes the government!" Pedro would take his *sarape* and make for the hills.

One day Pedro appeared, carrying his rifle. He told me, "Well, I've done it. I've joined up." He had become a *zapatista* because they offered to give him food. I got very angry but he said at least he would have something to eat and furthermore they would pay him. Then he told me he would have to go to Mexico City with the rebels and he promised to send me money.

He went with the *zapatistas* and left me without a *centavo.* There I was with nothing and I had two children to support, the girl of two years and the boy of two months. Also, I had in my care Pedro's cousin who was about eight years old. I cried in anguish because I didn't know what to do. . . .

Pedro

Ever since [the Revolution], I bear testimony that God saved me from all dangers. Because I was a believer, that's why. Having always been a very pious Catholic, whenever I went into action I would commend myself to God and nothing ever happened to me, not even a scratch. Not then or since. Yes, I came out of the war with a lot of experience. I have been in some very tight spots, at that time and later, too, in politics. All my former political opponents are gone, all gone. And so I am a living testimony that the one who entrusts himself to God will be protected from everything. . . .

We still kept fighting. I would leave my wife in a nearby village and would go to join the battle. We had many combats over here near Santa María, and still more over toward Yautepec. Marino Solís, the general from my village, was in charge at that time. It was my colonel, Leobardo Galván, who joined us up with General Marino. Sometimes we were ahead and sometimes the *carrancistas* were. There were heavy losses, men and horses too. Fleeing all the

time! Yes, sir, to the south. After they drove us out of Santa María, we went to Tejalpa. After a few days in Tejalpa, we went on to Jiltepec. One week in Jiltepec and then to San Vicente, where we hung around for a month.

The people were tired. They didn't want to fight any more. I remember well when Zapata came to San Vicente. He had been driven out of Cuernavaca and he said to us, "If you don't want to fight any more we'll all go to the devil! What do you mean, you don't want to fight?"

Everyone was quiet. They didn't respond. "Bah!" he said. "Then there's nothing I can do." We were exhausted, sleepy, tired, and the *carrancistas* kept chasing us, almost to Jojutla, near the border of Guerrero. Marino went to the general headquarters in El Higuerón and got together five or ten thousand men. He said, "Who wants to go with me? Let's go and break up their base! Our situation is desperate. We are at the state boundary. Where else can we go? Now let us go back!" Then he opened fire and his men cleared a path all the way back to the *municipio* of Azteca and made camp in the hills of Tlayacapan. There his brother Teodoro, who was in hiding, joined him. Marino was very brave. During the night they met the *carrancistas* and overthrew them all. He killed so many in Yautepec they piled up like stones. Later, he finished off practically all the *carrancistas* of the north because they ate mangoes and got sick and while they were stretched out Marino went in and just had to take aim and *zas, zas,* he finished them. That's why they named him General Mango. At that time, the peasants brought their mangoes to Yautepec. There was nothing to eat so people ate mangoes. A detachment of *carrancistas* was there, and when the peasants entered the city carrying their net sacks the soldiers took away their fruit and ate it. In a few days, *zas,* the entire army was shivering with chills, they were all dying of malaria. All of them! And what doctor was there then? What medicine? The streets were full of corpses and the women who followed their men in the army searched among the bodies to find their dead. But I didn't see any of that because by that time I wasn't in the army any more.

Meanwhile, Zapata followed the lines to Yautepec and went as far as Tizapán. He had cannons and machine guns but he lost them all. That was the last big battle of the war, there in Tizapán, in 1916.

That's where I finally had it. The battle was something awful! The shooting was tremendous! It was a completely bloody battle, three days and three nights. But I took it for only one day and then I left. I quit the army and left for Jojutla, without a *centavo* in my pocket. I said to myself, "It's time now I got back to my wife, to my little children. I'm getting out!"

That's why I left the army, for my wife. How I loved my wife! I didn't leave because I was afraid to fight but because of my wife, who had to find food for

herself and the children. I said to myself, "No, my family comes first and they are starving. Now I'm leaving!" I saw that the situation was hopeless and that I would be killed and they would perish. . . .

I worked in Guerrero for three years, as a plowman. They grew tomatoes and *chile* peppers there. I also planted corn for myself on the hillside. Then one of my babies died of a scorpion sting. It was a boy, too, twenty-two months old. We were making rope and had gone to eat when the scorpion stung him. It happened at about ten in the morning and he died at seven that night. We went to Buena Vista to bury him the next day. It was about two hours walk to Buena Vista. After that I joined up with another work gang and stayed with them a year, cultivating *chile* peppers.

Of our three children, now we had only the little girl María left, and she was sick, too. María was our first child and our favorite while she was the only one. My wife loved her as much as I did, and because we were ignorant you might say we were responsible for her death. Like fools, we didn't know how to take care of children so we gave her all she wanted to eat. We gave her bread every little while, bread and meat. I gave her all my meat . . . meat was cheap then. It was always, "Come, this is for my daughter for I love her so much." With that we practically killed her because her stomach went bad. She became sick with *ético* [a wasting disease accompanied by chronic diarrhea]. She lasted a long time, until she was seven, but she never got better. And the Revolution made things worse. After that we had no way to cure her. There were no doctors and she died. They say she died because we loved her too much.

On the same day my little daughter died a battle broke out in Buena Vista between the turncoats and the fleeing *zapatistas*. . . . The shooting went on for days so when it was time to bury my little girl we couldn't go to the cemetery in Buena Vista. We had to go to Tlaxmalaca and that's where we buried her.

And so we had no one left then. But the following year, in 1917, my daughter Conchita was born. She was like a first child and we favored her a lot. She would throw things and we couldn't do anything with her. That's the way she was, very bad-tempered. When we left Guerrero she was about two years old. We had been there three full years. In all that time I had no other women, absolutely none. I couldn't because I didn't earn enough. But I didn't suffer the hunger people in my village were suffering. . . .

Esperanza

[After my children died] I remained all alone. . . . The death of the children affected Pedro, but it is not the same as with a woman. He cried a little but

the grief soon passed. I believe men don't feel, or they feel very little. I feel deeply. Three months went by after their death and I was still crying and crying. I kept remembering how they were . . . the way they walked, the clothing they had . . . I even wanted to sleep in the cemetery and stay there all the time looking at the piece of earth that covered them. And he, when he saw that I was crying, would scold me and that made me angrier and more resentful. . . .

I was like a new person after I started to have children again. I was no longer sad and lonely. . . . It made me so happy when Conchita was born. We loved her very much and it was as if she had been our first born. We spoiled her a lot as it was five years before the following child was born. We spoiled her, but we also beat her when she cried. . . .

We came back from Guerrero because Pedro did not want to stay there any longer. He said, "We have our own house in Azteca and that is where we belong."

I was sick, too. I think it was from "cold" as they did not bathe me in the *temazcal* [traditional steambath] after I had Conchita and I didn't always have "hot" food to eat. Pedro would go out to sell the tomatoes he had planted. He would leave me sick and alone. . . .

My trouble was that my abdomen hurt me very much. I was skin and bones and had fevers every day. Pedro had a lot of people look at me, but nobody cured me. He said to me, "As soon as I have the harvest in, we will go to Azteca. They will cure you there." That is the reason we went.

When we got to Azteca, he had a woman look at me. "It's because you are pregnant," she said. "That's why your belly is big. I was here for about five months and nothing changed. So then Pedro said, "The thing is that you are not pregnant at all." And he took me to another curer. This one said that I had "cold" in the belly. . . . I was sick and that was the reason I wasn't having children. . . . She gave me a medicine to take and smeared greases all over my body, oil of camomile, oil of rosemary, and others. . . . Then, when I was better, my aunt Gloria said to me, "Silly girl, now that you are cured, you are going to have another baby." . . .

I wanted to be cured as I never felt right. But I didn't want any more children. I have always had a horror of having children. The thought of being pregnant would frighten me and sometimes it would make me angry because I was the one who was going to suffer. I cried and cried every time I felt that I was pregnant. . . .

At night, when my husband took me I became angry because of the danger he put me in. But when I didn't want Pedro to come near me he scolded, saying, "You don't want me because you have some other man." So I had to let him and then I would be pregnant again.

I know that what happens is God's will, so I say, if children come, good, if not, so much the better!

I was glad to be back in Azteca. The village was the same but a lot of people were missing because they had died of hunger. . . . Almost none of my people were still living. My brother was alive but he was far away in Puebla. His wife had died and so had his children. . . . When he came back later, it was just to die . . . he was very sick by then.

The Revolution was almost over when we came back from Guerrero and Pedro began to work in the fields [and] planted the *tlacolol*. . . . Five and a half years after Conchita's birth, Rufina was born. It didn't matter to us whether the child was a boy or a girl. Pedro said that it was all the same to him. "Whatever the ladle brings." All children mean money, because when they begin to work, they earn.

Juan the Chamula

Ricardo Pozas

Few accounts of the revolution better illustrate its intensely factionalized nature and the shallowness of the allegiances of common footsoldiers than the following "ethnological re-creation" of the life of a Chamula Indian by Ricardo Pozas, one of Mexico's most distinguished anthropologists. Pozas based his account on fieldwork conducted in the 1940s and 1950s among the Chamulas of Chiapas, a group of about sixteen thousand people who spoke the Tzotzil Maya language and who lived in rural settlements in the highlands around the regional center of San Cristóbal de las Casas. Even today, many Chamulas live principally from subsistence farming, supplemented by contract labor on lowland coffee plantations. They practice a culture that still owes much to pre-Columbian traditions.

The principal character in this account, Juan Pérez Jolote, first leaves home in order to escape the wrath of his abusive father. He is clearly puzzled by the world outside of his village and has little understanding of the meaning of revolution or the aims of the various factions he fights for. In short order, however, the revolution revamps his identity and redirects his fortunes.

They were looking for people to work on a farm called La Flor. I contracted to go, and when I got to La Flor the patrón told me: "I'm going to give you your meals and you'll sleep here next to the henhouse, so you can scare away the animals that try to steal the chickens at night." I slept there, and woke up when I heard a noise. Then I shouted so that the animals would run away. I worked at La Flor for about three months, and got to know three men from Comitán who had women with them to cook their meals. One of them asked me, "Are you going to keep on working here, José?"[1] "Yes," I said. "Then don't eat over there in the kitchen. You can eat better here with my woman," he said. . . .

The men from Comitán used to get drunk every payday. When they were drunk they exchanged their women among themselves, but the next day they were jealous.

Chamula Indian, Chiapas. (Reprinted by permission of Fototeca del INAH, Mexico.)

"You, you cabrón!"[2] one of them said. "You're screwing my wife."

"And you're screwing mine."

Then the third one came over. "You're screwing my woman, too."

And the fight began:

"Why don't we ask José Pérez if it isn't true?"

"He doesn't drink, and anyway I saw you, cabrón . . ."

They asked me if it was true.

"I don't know. . . . I don't sleep here, so I don't see what happens at night . . ."

"You mean you don't want to tell us."

That was right. I didn't want to tell them because I knew what would happen, but I'd seen the whole thing and the woman who cooked for me told me about it in the morning.

They fought with their machetes. The women and I were frightened and we just watched them. One of them was killed, and the other two and the three women ran away.

I didn't know what to do. "If I run away," I thought, "they'll say I killed him." So I stayed there, watching the blood run out of his wounds.

As soon as they knew that a man from Comitán had been killed, they went to tell the authorities in Mapa. The police came out to the farm to find out what happened, and they saw me there near the corpse.

"Who killed him?"

"I don't know."

"What do you mean, you don't know! You were right here with the rest of them. If you don't tell us we'll have to take you in."

"I don't know," I said. And without another word they fastened my hands with a rope and tied me to a post. . . .

They took the dead man away, and they took me to Mapa as a prisoner and I slept there in the jail.

Early the next morning we went on to Tapachula and they put me in the jail there. I was a prisoner for eleven months and two weeks. I wove palm leaves and they paid me one centavo for each armful. A man from San Cristóbal named Procopio de la Rosa advised me not to sell the woven palm but to make sombreros out of it. "If you weave five armfuls, that's only five centavos. But if you'll make the brims of the sombreros I'll pay you three centavos apiece." I could finish two brims a day, and I earned six centavos. . . .

Later on, Don Procopio told me, "I'm going to give you your palm from now on, so you can work on account." He was the one who sold the palm to everybody. He delivered the finished sombreros by the dozen to be sold outside. Then he taught me how to make sombreros that sold for a peso and a half. . . . I didn't suffer in jail because I learned how to make all these things. . . .

When they first put me in jail I could understand Spanish well enough but I couldn't pronounce the words. I learned how to make things by watching because there wasn't anybody who knew how to speak my language, and little by little I began to speak Spanish.

While I was in jail we learned that the Government [Huerta's] was in danger of losing because they killed the President [Madero]. It was looking for people for the army so it could defend itself. Two of the prisoners wrote letters to the Government, and it told them that if they wanted to be soldiers they should put in a request. The rest of us didn't say anything, because we didn't know if we wanted to be soldiers or not, but the government didn't accept just the two who wrote letters, it accepted everybody in the jail. Even the invalids got out along with the others.

The soldiers came for us at four in the morning, and the man in charge said, "All prisoners get their belongings together. You're all going to be free." But they took us to the station and put us into a boxcar, the kind that's used

for cattle and bananas. The soldiers guarded us on all sides, and two of them stood at the door of the car, poking us with their pistols and saying, "Come on, get in."

I brought five new sombreros along with me to sell on the way. We arrived at San Jerónimo and they took us off the train and put us in a barracks. They took my sombreros away from me to start a fire so they could make coffee. They gave a close haircut to everyone who had long hair. They took our extra clothing away if we had any, and gave us coats with long sleeves.

The next day we went on toward Mexico City. I could hear them naming the different places we passed: Orizaba, Puebla . . . We arrived at San Antonio, where there was firewood. They took us out of the cars to rest, and built a fire so we could warm ourselves. It was the season when the corn is ripe. After we ate, they put us back in the cars and we went on until we reached the Mexico City station. They took us to the army post called La Canoa, and the next day they signed us up. . . .

They took us to a different barracks and made us take off all our clothes. Then they examined us. Those who had ringworm . . . weren't any use as soldiers because the Government didn't want them. It also didn't want anyone with boils or tumors. The only ones they kept were the ones with clean skins, and since I've always had a clean skin, without any sores, they didn't let me go free.

They began to pay wages to those of us who were left: twenty-five centavos a day and our meals. After a few days they gave each of us a pair of huaraches, and then a pair of shoes. Later they gave us kepis, and Mausers with wooden bullets, and now that we were in uniform they paid us fifty centavos a day and our meals.

The training started at four in the morning. The corporals, sergeants, lieutenants, and captains made us form ranks and learn how to march. At six o'clock we all drank coffee. There were a hundred and twenty-five of us, and we were from many different villages because there's a jail in every village. They called us the 89th Battalion.

A few days later they taught us how to handle our guns and how to shoot. We formed ranks, some of us in front and the rest behind, and when they shouted the command we had to throw ourselves flat on the ground. At other times they ordered some of us to kneel and the others to remain standing. They lined up some of our own men in front of us, and said, "This is the enemy. We're going to practice what you'll have to do in battle. Ready! Aim! Fire!" We pulled the triggers, there was a loud noise, and the little pieces of soft wood popped out of the Mausers. We were just training, so the bullets weren't real. . . .

Finally they gave us real bullets, fifty to each man, and we began to earn a peso a day. After they gave us the real bullets we didn't fire any more, we just practiced the way they taught us before.

A little later we went out to fight Carranza. Before we left, a priest came to the post and they told us to form ranks. He stood up on a chair, we all knelt down, and he said, "Well, men, I'm here to tell you that we're going into battle tomorrow or the day after, because the enemy is getting close. When you're out there fighting, I don't want you to mention the devil or the demons. I just want you to repeat day and night the words I'm going to tell you: *Long live the Virgin of Guadalupe!* Because she's the patron saint of every Mexican, the Queen of Mexico, and she'll protect us against our enemies when we go into battle."

We left the next day. They loaded us into boxcars with our weapons, and told us we were going to Aguascalientes. We could hear artillery along the way, and when we looked out through the cracks we could see people running across the mountains. My comrades said, "It's going to be wonderful!" Some of them had guitars with them, and they played and sang because they were so happy.

We stopped in Aguascalientes, and then went on to Zacatecas. Then we just stayed there, because the train couldn't go any farther. They took us out of the cars and put us in a big house that was like a fort. We stayed there for several days. They got us up at four o'clock every morning and gave us a drink of aguardiente with gunpowder in it, to make us brave, and then gave us our breakfast. Those that had women with them were contented, they laughed and sang and played their guitars. "We're doing all right," they said, "and tomorrow we're going to the fiesta."

The time came to go out to fight. There was a mountain near Zacatecas with a little hill in front of it, and the artillery faced the mountain. The artillerymen dug a cave near their guns and cooked their meals in it.

At nine in the morning we crossed a wide field to climb up the mountain, and while we were crossing it we heard the General shout, "Spread out!" The bugle blew and we scattered across the field. The enemy was up there on the top of the mountain, because the bullets came down at us from above. We started to shoot too, but since we couldn't see where they were, and they could get a good aim at us, a lot of our men were killed. The artillery was firing at the mountain, and some other soldiers ran forward and climbed up the mountain from the side, and the enemy retreated a little.

That night we had to bring in the wounded, without even having drunk any water all day. One of them said to me, "Take me back to the artillery positions. I can't walk. And bring my Mauser." I got him to the artillery. My throat

began to hurt, and when I tried to drink some water it wouldn't go down. I couldn't eat anything, either, and I was deaf from the noise of the cannons.

They sent me to the post at Zacatecas, and then to Aguascalientes. I was in the hospital there for two days, and on the third day I was sent to the hospital in Mexico City, where I almost died from my earaches. First blood came out, then pus. I was in the hospital for several months, because they wouldn't let me leave until I was well again.

The people who were taking care of us began to say, "Who knows what'll happen to us, because they're going to come here to eat people, and we don't know what kind of people they like to eat."

The sick and wounded began to cry because they couldn't leave the hospital and run away, and those others were going to eat them. We heard it was the Carrancistas that were eating people.

A little later Carranza entered Mexico City. We could hear his troops go by in the street, shooting off their guns and shouting: "Long live Venustiano Carranza! Down with Victoriano Huerta! Death to Francisco Villa! Death to Emiliano Zapata!" They only cheered for Carranza. And we just looked at each other, there in the hospital, without being able to leave.

The next day the Carrancistas came to the hospital to visit the sick and wounded. They arrived with their officers, and after greeting us they asked, "How are you? What happened to you? Are you getting better? We're all friends now, that's why we've come to see you."

The men that had been crying spoke first: "They told us the Carrancistas eat people."

"What? . . . No, we're not cannibals."

"Then it isn't true that you're going to eat us?"

"Of course not!"

So the sick and wounded were happy. "Here's two pesos," the Carrancistas said, "and stop being afraid." They gave two pesos to each one of us.

I stayed in the hospital until I was cured. As soon as they let me go I went to Puebla and worked as a mason's helper, carrying lime and bricks. I also worked for some butchers, bringing the goats and sheep in from the haciendas to be slaughtered. They gave me my meals and a place to sleep, but they didn't pay me anything.

After two or three weeks I left Puebla and walked to Tehuacán de las Granadas. A butcher let me live in his house there. I'd already worked for butchers in Puebla, so I knew they were good people. I worked for him for five months.

The butcher's father used to go to the butcher shop at two in the morning to cut up the meat, and he always took me with him because he was deaf. When we went past the army post he couldn't hear the guard shout, "Who

goes there!" and he was afraid they'd shoot him if he didn't answer. I had to answer, "Carranza!" and they'd let us go past without stopping us. . . .

All they gave me was my clothing and my meals. I wanted to earn some money, so I went to the army post to talk with the captain. I said: "Captain, sir, I'd like to be a soldier."

"Good, good! What's your name?"

"José Pérez."

They gave me a shirt, a pair of trousers, and a kepis, and paid me a peso and half.

When the old [deaf] butcher found out I was a soldier, he came looking for me the next day. "Don't take him away from me," he begged the captain, "because I need him to help me. I've been good to him, too . . . I don't even criticize him. Ask him yourself."

"Is that true?" the captain asked me.

"Yes," I said. "I only left because I wanted to earn some money, but he's good to me and gives me food and clothing."

"Well, if he feeds and clothes you and doesn't hit you or anything, you ought to go back with him. What more do you want? Good food, good clothes . . . he's practically your father. You've got a home now. We don't know when we'll be called out to fight. Maybe we'll all be killed. I feel sorry for the old man because he was crying when he came in here. Go back with him, hombre." The captain gave me five pesos, and I went back with the deaf man.

But I only stayed in his house another week, because one day I met a woman who lived with one of my friends while we were fighting for Victoriano Huerta. She saw me in the street and said, "José, it's you! What are you doing here?"

"I'm just living here. Where's Daví?"

"He was killed in the battle. I'm going back home. I'll take you with me if you want. I've got enough money to pay your fare."

I went with her to Oaxaca. She told me she was going to stop there and not go any farther, but she told me I could get home from there without any trouble. We arrived at Oaxaca in the train and she took me to her house to spend the night.

I left the next morning, to go home. I started asking the way to San Cristóbal de las Casas, but nobody could tell me. I must have asked a hundred people at least, but they all told me they didn't know. Finally I got tired of walking around the city, so I went to the army post to sign up. They asked me my name and wrote it down, and I was a Carrancista again.

After I'd been in Oaxaca for about a week they sent all the soldiers in the post to Mexico City, and I had to go with them. First they sent us out to Cór-

doba, and then to a little village where the Zapatistas had come in to rob the houses. We stayed there for six months, guarding the village, and that's where I first had a woman.

They assigned me to a lieutenant, and when I was off duty I went to the plaza to drink *pulque*. It was sold by an old woman with white hair, and one day she asked me, "Do you have a woman?"

"No, señora, I don't."

"Then why don't you find one? This village is full of pretty girls."

"I know . . . but I don't know what to say to them."

"But you do want a woman?"

"Yes."

"And you've never had one?"

"No, señora, not yet."

"Let's go to my house."

"Good, let's go."

She gathered her things and took me to her house. She gave me something to eat, and after we finished eating she led me to her bed.

I went back to the barracks when we were all done. "Now that you know where my house is, you can come here whenever you want." . . .

She used to come to the post when she wanted me to go home with her. She'd ask the maid who worked in the kitchen, "Is José in?"

"I don't know. Go in and look for him."

She'd go in, and as soon as I noticed her I'd raise my hand to stop her, so she wouldn't speak to me in front of my friends. I was ashamed to have them see how old she was. I'd get up and go over to speak with her, and she'd say, "I'll be waiting for you tonight." And at night I'd go there.

At the end of six months they sent us to another village. The old woman who sold pulque stayed at home.

We went back to Córdoba and stayed there for a month, and then we went to Pachuca and stayed for two months. Next they sent us to Real del Monte, but we were only there for twenty days because the weather was too cold for us. We returned to Pachuca again and went out to another village, where the Villistas attacked us.

They entered the village at daybreak. We were all asleep, even the sentry, when the sound of gunfire woke us up. We all ran out and they started shooting at us. We had sixty-five men. Some of them were killed, some ran away, and twenty-five of us were taken prisoners by General Villa. They asked us why we'd become Carrancistas, and I said: "The Huertistas made us go with them, and when Carranza started winning we had to change sides."

"Where are you from?"

"I'm a Chamula."

The man who was questioning me, a lieutenant, turned to General Almazán and said, "These poor men were forced into service."

An old man with a big moustache said: "Well, what do they want to do now?"

I said, "I just want to be on your side."

"What about the rest of you?" they asked.

"Just what our friend said, to be on your side."

"All right. But look, if you try any tricks we'll shoot you."

"No, señor, we're telling you the truth."

"We'll see about that. We're going to send you straight into battle, to find out if you're really men."

They signed us up and gave us weapons and five pesos each, and that made us Villistas. . . .

The officers paid us all the money they had with them so we could buy what we needed, and when it ran out they began paying us with stamped slips of paper. These slips were only good in the village itself, and nobody else would accept them because they weren't worth anything. The leaders kept saying, "The money will get here in a day or two," but finally there wasn't anything left to eat in the village, and we couldn't buy anything outside because they wouldn't take the stamped slips.

General Almazán got us all together, privates and lieutenants and captains, and told us: "The Carrancistas have captured all the villages and haciendas. I'm leaving, because there aren't any more villages we can stay in. You can leave too, or stay here. Or if you want to join up with the Carranza forces in Tehuacán, you can do that."

We decided to go to Tehuacán, and left the village at night. We traveled across the mountains all night long, and when it was daylight we got some sleep and let the animals graze. The next night we started out again. We came to an hacienda near Tehuacán, and the leaders sent a note to the Carrancistas who were in the village. The note said that we wanted to join them, that we were a hundred and fifty Villistas who wanted to go over to Carranza. General Almazán had accompanied us as far as the hacienda, but when the messenger came back from Tehuacán with the answer, the General said to us: "Go ahead and give yourselves up, but I'm not going with you. If I did, they'd probably wring my neck." He left us that night, and in the morning we went on toward the village.

The Carrancistas came out to meet us, and we ran into them about a league

outside of Tehuacán. They all had their Mausers in their hands, aiming them at us, and we carried our own Mausers butt first to show we were surrendering. They marched us ahead of them to the barracks and took our rifles away from us at the gate, although they let us keep the rest of our things. Inside, they asked us where we'd been, and we told them about the different places we stayed at.

The next day they got us together and said; "Now that you've surrendered, what do you want to do? Do you want to be Carrancistas? If you don't, we'll let you go free, so you can go home and farm your lands."

I said, "I want to leave, I want to work in the fields."

"Where do you want to go?"

"To Veracruz," I said. Now that I could go free, I wanted to visit that town, and be a free man, not a soldier.

"You can go there, you can take the train. It won't cost you anything."

They gave me my ticket and twenty-five pesos, and above all they gave me my freedom. . . .

I worked [in Veracruz] for nine months. . . . When I got tired of working there I went to a different farm called San Cristóbal, where I worked for three months in the cornfields. I didn't like it there either, so I came back home. . . .

I went into the house and greeted my father, but he didn't recognize me. I'd almost forgotten how to speak *Tzotzil,* and he couldn't understand what I was saying. He asked me who I was and where I came from.

"You still don't know me? I'm Juan!"

"What? . . . You're still alive! But if you're Juan, where have you been? . . . I went to the farm twice to look for you."

"I left the farm and went to Mexico City to be a soldier." I was kneeling down as I said this.

"Did you really become a soldier?"

"Yes, papacito."

"Well, I'll be damned! But how come you didn't get killed?"

"Because God took care of me."

Then he called to my mother: "Come here and see your son Juan! The cabrón has come back to life!" . . .

And I stayed here, I lived in my own village again. The first night I woke up when my father started blowing on the embers of the cooking fire. I was afraid he'd come over and wake me up by kicking me. But he didn't, because I was a man now!

Notes

1. By this point in the story, Juan has taken to calling himself "José" in the hope of evading his father. *Ed.*
2. *Cabrón:* literally, a he-goat. A common insult in Mexico. *Ed.*

The Constitution of 1917: Articles 27 and 123

The ascendant Carranza faction, after defeating Pancho Villa in mid-1915, felt confident enough in its hold on power to undertake the writing of a new constitution for Mexico. The Constitutional Convention, which met in the city of Querétaro in late 1916, was dominated by relatively radical representatives who were determined to push social reform much further than their leader wished. The final document, which remains in force today, was most notable for championing a fresh concept of property. As in colonial times, the state was the ultimate owner of all of Mexico's land, water, and minerals. Private property—sacred and inviolable in liberal conceptions—was made conditional, something that the state could concede to individuals only so long as their activities did not violate the general well-being of Mexico's citizens. The state was expressly permitted to intervene in private property in the name of "public utility." This notion, most clearly expressed in Article 27, paved the way for one of the most sweeping agrarian reforms in the history of Latin America (one that remained on the books until the early 1990s), as well as for the expropriation of foreign-owned oil properties in 1938. Article 27 also attacked the right of the Catholic Church to own real property, becoming a factor in the religious civil war of the late 1920s. Article 123, meanwhile, was one of the most progressive labor codes in the world at the time of its promulgation. Of course, many provisions of the 1917 Constitution were honored only in the breach, but the document's impact on the course of twentieth-century Mexican history is beyond dispute.

ART. 27. Ownership of the lands and waters within the boundaries of the national territory is vested originally in the Nation, which has had, and has, the right to transmit title thereof to private persons, thereby constituting private property.

Private property shall not be expropriated except for reasons of public use and subject to payment of indemnity.

The Nation shall at all times have the right to impose on private property such limitations as the public interest may demand, as well as the right to regulate the utilization of natural resources, which are susceptible of appropria-

tion, in order to conserve them and to ensure a more equitable distribution of public wealth. With this end in view necessary measures shall be taken to divide large landed estates, to develop small landed holdings in operation, to create new agricultural centers with necessary lands and waters, to encourage agriculture in general and to prevent the destruction of natural resources, and to protect property from damage to the detriment of society. Centers of population that at present either have no lands or water or that do not possess them in sufficient quantities for the needs of their inhabitants shall be entitled to grants thereof, which shall be taken from adjacent properties, the rights of small landed holdings in operation being respected at all times.

In the Nation is vested direct ownership of all minerals or substances which in veins, layers, masses, or beds constitute deposits whose nature is different from the components of the land, such as minerals from which metals and metaloids used for industrial purposes are extracted; beds of precious stones, rock salt and salt lakes formed directly by marine waters; products derived from the decomposition of rocks, when their exploitation requires underground work; mineral or organic deposits of materials which may be used for fertilizers; solid mineral fuels; petroleum and all hydrocarbons—solid, liquid or gaseous.

In the Nation is likewise vested the ownership of the waters of territorial seas to the extent and in the terms fixed by the Law of Nations; those of lakes and inlets of bays; those of interior lakes of natural formation which are directly connected with flowing waters; those of the principal rivers or tributaries from the points at which there is a permanent current of water in their beds to their mouths, whether they flow to the sea or cross two or more States; those of intermittent streams which traverse two or more States in their main body; the waters of rivers, streams or ravines, when they bound the national territory or that of the States; waters extracted from mines; and the beds and banks of the lakes and streams hereinbefore mentioned, to the extent fixed by law. Any other stream of water not comprised within the foregoing enumeration shall be considered as an integral part of the private property through which it flows; but the development of the waters when they pass from one landed property to another shall be considered of public utility and shall be subject to the provisions prescribed by the States.

In the cases to which the two foregoing paragraphs refer, the ownership of the Nation is inalienable and may not be lost by prescription; concessions shall be granted by the Federal Government to private parties or civil or commercial corporations organized under the laws of Mexico, only on condition that the said resources be regularly developed, and on the further condition that the legal provisions be observed.

Legal capacity to acquire ownership of lands and waters of the Nation shall be governed by the following provisions:

1) Only Mexicans by birth or naturalization and Mexican companies have the right to acquire ownership of lands, waters, and their appurtenances, or to obtain concessions for the exploitation of mines or of waters. The State may grant the same right to foreigners, provided they agree before the Ministry of Foreign Relations to consider themselves as nationals in respect to such property, and bind themselves not to invoke the protection of their governments in matters relating thereto; under penalty, in case of noncompliance with this agreement, of forfeiture of the property acquired to the Nation. . . .

2) Religious institutions known as churches, regardless of creed, may in no case acquire, hold, or administer real property or hold mortgages thereon; such property held at present either directly or through an intermediary shall revert to the Nation, any person whosoever being authorized to denounce any property so held. . . . Places of worship are the property of the Nation, as represented by the Federal Government, which shall determine which of them may continue to be devoted to their present purposes. . . .

3) Public or private charitable institutions for the rendering of assistance to the needy, for scientific research, the diffusion of knowledge, mutual aid to members, or for any other lawful purpose many not acquire more real property than actually needed for their purposes and immediately and directly devoted thereto . . .

7) The centers of population that by law or in fact possess a communal status shall have legal capacity to enjoy common possession of the lands, forests, and waters belonging to them or that have been or may be restored to them. . . .

10) Centers of population that lack communal lands (*ejidos*) or that are unable to have them restored to them due to lack of titles, impossibility of identification, or because they had been legally transferred shall be granted sufficient lands and waters to constitute them, in accordance with the needs of the population; but in no case shall they fail to be granted the area needed, and for this purpose the land needed shall be expropriated, at the expense of the Federal Government, to be taken from lands adjoining the villages in question . . .

17) The Federal Congress and the State Legislature, within their respective jurisdictions, shall enact laws to fix the maximum area of rural property and to carry out the subdivision of the excess lands. . . .

18) All contracts and concessions made by former Governments since the year 1876, and that have resulted in the monopolization of lands, waters, and natural resources of the Nation by a single person or company, are declared

subject to revision, and the Executive of the Union is empowered to declare them void whenever they involve serious prejudice to the public interest.

ART. 123. The Congress of the Union, without contravening the following basic principles, shall formulate labor laws that shall apply to:

A. Workers, day laborers, domestic servants, artisans (*obreros, jornaleros, empleados domésticos, artesanos*), and in a general way to all labor contracts:

1) The maximum duration of work for one day shall be eight hours.

2) The maximum duration of night work shall be seven hours. The following are prohibited: unhealthful or dangerous work by women and by minors under sixteen years of age, industrial nightwork by either of these classes, work by women in commercial establishments after ten o'clock at night, and work (of any kind) by persons under sixteen after ten o'clock at night.

3) The use of labor of minors under fourteen years of age is prohibited. Persons above that age and less than sixteen shall have a maximum work day of six hours.

4) For every six days of work a worker must have at least one day of rest.

5) During the three months prior to childbirth, women shall not perform physical labor that requires excessive material effort. In the month following childbirth they shall necessarily enjoy the benefit of rest and shall receive their full wages and retain their employment and the rights acquired under their labor contract. During the nursing period they shall have two special rest periods each day, of a half hour each, for nursing their infants.

6) The minimum wage to be received by a worker shall be general or according to occupation. . . .

7) Equal wages shall be paid for equal work, regardless of sex or nationality.

8) The minimum wage shall be exempt from attachment, compensation, or deduction.

9) Workers shall be entitled to a participation in the profits of enterprises. . . .

11) Whenever, due to extraordinary circumstances, the regular working hours of a day must be increased, one hundred percent shall be added to the amount for normal hours of work as remuneration for the overtime. Overtime work may never exceed three hours a day or three times consecutively. Persons under sixteen years of age and women of any age may not be admitted to this kind of labor.

16) Both employers and workers shall have the right to organize for the defense of their respective interests, by forming unions, professional associations, etc. . . .

29) Enactment of a social security law shall be considered of public inter-

est and it shall include insurance against disability, on life, against involuntary work stoppage, against sickness and accidents, and other forms for similar purposes;

30) Likewise, cooperative societies established for the construction of low-cost and hygienic houses to be purchased on installments by workers shall be considered of social utility. . . .

An Agrarian Encounter

Rosalie Evans

In 1920, when President Venustiano Carranza tried to impose his successor in the presidency, he was overthrown by a military rebellion led by three strong personalities from the northern state of Sonora: Alvaro Obregón, who was president from 1920 to 1924, Plutarco Elías Calles, who held the office from 1924–1928, and Adolfo de la Huerta, who served as interim president in 1920. The "Sonoran Dynasty" is generally viewed as the end of the violent phase of the revolution, and the start of "reconstruction." The new national leaders made the first serious efforts to carry out some of the "promises of the revolution," one of the most notable of which was agrarian reform.

Early efforts in this area witnessed the rise of a uniquely compelling figure in Mexico's history, the agrarian cacique. In many parts of the republic, these local politicos pegged their fortunes to the agrarian issue, often using strong-arm methods to compel the federal government to seize and distribute hacienda lands. One such cacique—Manuel P. Montes, of the San Martín Texmelucan Valley of western Puebla state—met his match in Rosalie Evans, the owner of the two-thousand-acre hacienda San Pedro Coxtocán. The American-born widow waged a highly publicized, six-year fight against Mexico's agrarian reform before being ambushed and killed in August of 1924. In the following excerpt from a letter to her sister, Mrs. Evans recalls her first encounter with Montes. While Rosalie Evans was more obstreperous and uncompromising than most foreign property owners confronting revolutionary threats, her disdain for the "rabble" is typical enough.

San Pedro.

May 15, 1921.

About four I forced myself to dress and go in my little buggy to San Martin to see Don P——. At the moment of getting in the buggy I was stopped by the arch-devil of the valley, whom the Indians have elected as their "member of Congress," Manuel Montes being his name, so you will rejoice with me if he meets his death before I do mine.[1] He was dressed in a black frock coat, and a bull fighter hat; is short and square, with the cruelest little black eyes,

Agraristas in Puebla waiting to take possession of their land grant. (Reprinted by permission of Fototeca del INAH, Mexico.)

like a snake ready to strike. So dressed to impress, I suppose. With him another deputy with a stooping frame and a long beard, also to cause respect. Back of them the usual rabble, but only one man caught my eyes; he had a wooden leg.

He with the beard began a pompous address and handed me an order from Obregón and [Minister of Agriculture Antonio I. Villarreal] . . . which, to my utter astonishment, was entirely in my favor. I said, with real surprise: "This paper tells you to respect me and my property."

"Yes," replied he with the long beard, "but I bring an oral message from the Minister Villarreal to deliver over all your crop, at once, to these gentlemen (the rabble rout) and he will indemnify you afterward."

I said: "Do you think that on an oral order I would give you my crop?"—and the riot began.

Manuel Montes got leave from "Congress" to come down and speak to the people, so you can appreciate my danger and that of my men. It was he who had arranged the simultaneous killing of administrators that I told you of and who at eleven the same morning had made the people attack San Juan

Tetla—perhaps you will remember it, a place we once wanted to buy, now owned by [William O.] Jenkins and Arrismondi, brother of the administrator killed two years ago. Montes said that he would lead his people on San Pedro himself, and make the señora listen to reason. He leads all the strikes and, if you once let him speak, rouses the people to madness.

I determined that he should not speak on my place. He tried to harangue them and "all my rage arose," I am told, for really I did not realize it. I outspoke him, calling him a coward, assassin and my whole wicked vocabulary of insults. He trembled with rage, but I got my hand on my pistol and *he* ran—I standing up in the buggy, [hacienda administrator] Iago by the mule (which they tried to unharness). Montes was followed by the bearded hypocrite. They mounted their little ponies as fast as they could, calling to their people to take the crop by force. Iago had his pistol ready and whistled for the soldiers who were sleeping somewhere inside. There was much shouting and confusion, the man with the wooden leg making an awful stumping sound in front of the mule, when the boy captain of my soldiers ran into the midst of them crying out: "Insult me, not the señora. I will not fire yet, you are too *few* for *me*." (There were about twenty.) I saw we had won the day. They were not armed so I forbade firing, and "Satan fled murmuring" that he would be back in the morning.

I left the captain on guard. He really is a perfect little devil, about twenty-three, but does my bidding. He asked that I should bring him permission from San Martin to fire if necessary, so far he has only police authority. We then drove to San Martin. As usual, no support! We did not ask for more men, we had seven and with the three of us armed we were quite enough.

Note

1. Montes would meet a violent death in 1927. *Ed.*

Ode to Cuauhtémoc

Carlos Pellicer

*Poet Carlos Pellicer (1899–1977) was born in the southeastern state of Tabasco, where he learned to admire the tropics and the indigenous societies that had long inhabited them. He moved to Mexico City in 1914 and published his first poems in 1921. He was clearly influenced by "modernist" writers such as the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío and the Cuban poet José Martí, who wrote exuberantly about the glories of "Our America" (as Martí habitually referred to Latin America). Pellicer was very much in tune with the strain of "*indigenismo*" that surfaced during the Mexican revolution—that is, he celebrated Mexico's native cultures as the true soul of the nation and its greatest glory. His work includes unabashedly romantic elegies to his heroes, principally Simón Bolívar, the leader of South America's independence movement and a staunch Latin America nationalist, and Cuauhtémoc, the young Aztec emperor who tenaciously resisted European conquest and was eventually tortured and killed by his Spanish captors. The following poem, published in 1923, was the first of several poems Pellicer wrote in honor of Cuauhtémoc. It is a good example, not only of the exuberant* indigenismo *that progressive intellectuals sought to promote in alliance with the postrevolutionary state, but also of the tendency among the revolutionary generation to portray the United States as a soulless, acquisitive, and aggressive power.*

1.

Sir, your will was so beautiful
that during the tragic months of your empire
the rhythm of the great stars quickened.
The time of your most terrible sorrow
remains within me:
when you searched for allies
among the men of your race,
and your cry was lost in the jungles.
That moment of your solitary bitterness
remains within me,
and before your desolate grandeur

Carlos Pellicer was not the only member of the revolutionary generation to celebrate the heroic resistance of Cuauhtémoc. In this 1944 mural by David Alfaro Siqueiros, "Cuauhtémoc Against the Myth," the last Aztec emperor, standing atop a pyramid, hurls a flaming spear at the heart of a ferocious centaur representing the Spanish invader. In the background, Montezuma appeals to the gods, apparently immobilized by the myth of Spanish invincibility. (Tecpan de Tlatelolco, Mexico City)

I sing melodies of love and illusion,
I thunder a tragic symphony.
Before your august solitude
I unfurl my own, the solitude of a falling leaf.
Your religious upbringing
and your heroic, magnificent youth
make me a leaf that falls upon

the mountains and jungles,
proclaiming with great shouts
your grandeur, kicking awake all those who have forgotten
the prodigious course of your star.
The black arc stretched itself before the dawn
and the arrow sailed upward to pierce the last star.

II

We dedicate a mountain or a part of the sky
to the first of the Mexicans.
We delight at the magnificence of your actions.
You were handsome as the night and mysterious as heaven.
But your sorrow cannot be measured
by the orbit of the great planets,
or by the course of the sumptuous stars that shine upon our fears.
Your sorrow,
in the dark mirror of my eyes
begins to reveal to me
eternal anguish and eternal sorrow.
Cuauhtémoc was nineteen years old
when the Empire fell into his hands
like a wounded eagle.
Tenoxtitlán was the loveliest of all
the cities of the New World.
The divine Quetzalcóatl,
who was called Ku-Kul-Kan in the land of
the dear and pheasant,[1]
had announced,
many moons before,
that other men would come through the South.
Thus, he dreamed.

III

And so it is that today,
with the sun broken in my hands
I hear rolling in my destiny
as in a cactus thicket,
the curse of the gods piercing my mouth
and the holy ax of tragedy lashed to my hands.
Can no one free me from
this pain, great as a basalt wave?

Can no one give me back
the sweet hours of love and the joy
of singing in the fields?
Because my eyes now glow only with hatred
and my free hands
think only of vengeance,
hatred and vengeance.
Who can go back to watching the stars serenely
when it seems that fate must trample us
with its stone feet?
The civilized monarchies of my America fell.
Tenoxtitlán and Cuzco
were its sculpted heads.
The fine races fell
before the brutal blows of the conquerors
who overcame the archers with their
loud cavalry and wide-mouthed cannon.
The divine prophet Quetzalcóatl,
did he foretell the arrival of these intrepid destroyers?
Since then, a mournful star
flees over the plains and sinks behind the hills.
For four hundred years we have been servants and slaves!
Who can look sweetly to the heavens
when the people of my America
were forced to flee before the curses of the Europeans,
weak, ignorant and sick?
They branded men like beasts,
and throughout the countryside, and in the entrails of the mines,
they lived the cruelty, the misery, and the tedium
I see, feel, and mourn still today.
Who can gaze sweetly upon the
sweet mysteries of heaven
when ignominy and infamy would bury us again beneath their steely din?
The men of the North loot the continent and the islands at their whim,
and they help themselves to pieces of heaven.
Oh, destiny of inexorable and gigantic tragedy!
You cover the wall of my anguish
and divert the course of the arrow that aimed at some star.
I see your figure sketched in the shadow of fire.
Shall we succumb to your laws of gold and silver?

In the Antilles and Nicaragua
the sun wallows in mud and fear.
Our vain and absurd America
is rotting.
Oh! destiny of inexorable and gigantic tragedy!
Can no one stop you?
Will you return to put our feet to the flame?[2]
Will you return with brutal hands
from the land of the yankees, mediocre, orderly and fat?
Will you return amid explosions and machines
to steal, kill, buy up caciques with your inexhaustible loot?
Oh Sir! Oh great King! Tlacatecutli!
Oh solemn and tragic leader of men!
Oh sweet, ferocious Cuauhtémoc!
Your life is an arrow
that has pierced the eyes of the Sun and
still goes on flying through the sky!
But in the crater of my heart
burns the faith that will save your people.

Notes

1. That is, among the Maya of the Southeast. *Ed.*
2. Cuauhtémoc was tortured by the Spaniards, eager to learn the whereabouts of Aztec gold, by having his feet doused in oil and then set aflame. *Ed.*

The Socialist ABC's

Anonymous

During the 1920s, following the revolution's bloody military phase, several Mexican states carried out homegrown radical experiments, vying with one another for the title "Laboratory of the Revolution." The southern state of Tabasco, during the regime of governor Tomás Garrido Canabal (1922–1935), was a leading contender for that title. Much in the manner of Ché Guevara and the Cuban revolutionaries decades later, Garrido aimed to create a "new type of man," an abstemious and atheistic "man of the future." To accomplish this, he persecuted the Catholic clergy, prohibited alcoholic beverages, structured production and consumption in the state along cooperative lines, organized all citizens into "resistance leagues," formed a red-shirted paramilitary force, and adopted "rationalist" education in the state's schools. What follows are excerpts from a school primer published by the state's "Redemption Press" in 1929.

Man is a sociable being.

Anyone who isolates himself is an *egoist*.

Those who want to have everything for themselves, and who try to monopolize land and money in a few hands, impoverish the country and bring general discontent and misery to the majority.

The monopolizers of wealth exploit the workers and are humanity's worst enemies.

The worker needs to alternate between tools and books, between the workshop or field and the school, so that, cultivating his intelligence and forming his sensibilities, he will become a conscious being who thinks, feels and loves.

The worker who has cultivated his intelligence improves and dignifies both himself and his family.

The worker's ignorance is very dangerous, for it allows him to be victimized by the exploiters, priests, and alcohol.

Little Proletarian

I call you this because I know that your father is a proletarian, and you will be one also.

You lack much, and you and your family work hard for your food.

Although you are still young, you have already begun watering the soil with the sweat of your brow, and your hands are growing coarse from using heavy tools.

It is good that this is so: although small you are already manly, because as a child you still enjoy the feeling of being useful. To be useful is to be good for something, to do something, to give something, and it is the noblest aspiration one can have in life.

To be useful is to be happy.

There are very many proletarian families throughout the world who, despite their hard work, do not have what they need.

If you learn that the man who works is the man who produces, and that he has the right to enjoy the product of his labor, you will understand that there is no reason for proletarian families to suffer misery. Think about this: look around you, and you will see the cause of this injustice. Your labor and that of your family produce more than you can use; a small group lives at your expense and steals from you through deceit, and exploits you without your knowing it. It has been this way for a long time! Your ancestors endured it patiently, as did your parents; they have become indifferent and have kept their sorrow to themselves. But you were born in a century of freedom and compensation, you must win for the proletarian family the right to enjoy all that it produces.

The Society of Yesterday

Human beings need to associate in order to live.

The first union of human beings led to the formation of the family.

The grouping of families which lived in the same place, had the same customs and language, and were linked by ties of affection, resulted in the formation of society.

In our society, before the Revolution of 1910, an odious division of classes came into being. There was one class that enjoyed every consideration and which had the support of the government.

This was the privileged class.

The victims of the privileged class were the workers of the cities and of

the countryside; the latter were called *"mozos"* ["servants" or "boys"] and they lived in the saddest conditions you can imagine.

They were exploited without pity, and the greatest fortunes of Tabasco were built upon their excessive labor.

The greedy capitalists packed many tears and sorrows away in their strong treasure chests.

Their wild festivals and brilliant parties prevented them from feeling like human beings, and from understanding the battle that was raging within their suffering souls. Believing that things must be as they were, they grew more and more demanding; they were helped by the clergy in their unhealthy passion to exploit; they shared their riches with the clergy in exchange for absolution, and they were blind and deaf to the sorrow of the oppressed; and, assured that their sins would be forgiven, they grew more and more tyrannical.

It was within this society, organized so unjustly and completely lacking in the principles of love and justice that must exist among men, that the Revolution broke out; the struggle was joined against the regime which protected this state of affairs, and after several years and much blood, tears, and suffering, the Revolution triumphed.

With its triumph, the workers' freedom was secured, and they abandoned the farms where they had worked as servants for many long years.

The privileged class, being opposed to the change that had come about, abandoned their haciendas. They left the state, and they pooled their money with their fellow exploiters in other states, and they tried to form a counterweight to the Revolution.

They have not yet succeeded in their efforts. The Mexican people now understand that they must occupy the place of men and citizens in their country; they compare their lives today with their sufferings of yesterday, and they stand by their conquests and do not listen to those who try to disturb the peace that they enjoy today and that they will enjoy for many years. They are men who feel true fraternity and justice and are opposed to all tyrants and exploiters.

The New Society

The current society tries to organize itself without iniquitous exploitation and without shameful servility.

The goal is the dignification of the Mexican family, and we do all we can to achieve that goal.

The principles of solidarity, a spirit of cooperation, and feelings of equality, are inculcated in the school and propagated at civic and cultural meetings.

The leaders of this social transformation seek to organize men into a more just and humane society.

The ideal of the new societies is to derive individual rights from those of the collectivity.

The supreme aspiration is to create governments that respond to man.

Socialism is the system of organization that is best adapted to reaching these goals, ideals and aspirations.

The Good Citizen

Worker of the field and city:

If you want to feel the true happiness to which we all aspire, bear in mind your duties. Once these are carried out, you will understand your rights and how to retain them when someone opposes you.

The first duty that nature has imposed upon you, whether you are a son, a husband or a father, is to provide comfort to those who depend upon you; in order to be sure that your work is justly remunerated, that work must be of high quality, since no one pays for work that is poorly done or done only out of necessity. If you do shoddy work, you will be obliged to take whatever the boss sees fit to pay you, which will never be enough to account for your needs. If your work is done well, you have the right to set the price in accordance with your needs, and you will have enough to live with decency and ease.

When you have received the product of your work, take care not to spend it unwisely; adjust your expenses to your income, reserving a part of it for savings. Although that portion may be small, it is not insignificant, since the centavos form pesos, and with pesos one can attend to unexpected changes of fortune, such as unemployment, strikes, illness, or death, in which event savings will ensure the future of the family.

Do not ask for a loan, and do not stop eating in order to save money, since savings through debt or at the cost of hunger are not savings.

Be good, work, and economize, and happiness will come to you.

The Plagues of Humanity

Campesino:

Never linger in the doorway of a tavern, and never enter that den of perversion, because there you will only find degradation and misery for yourself and your children.

Think of your home before you cross its threshold; think of what you will

be leaving in the hands of the man who exploits your laziness and weakness—the bread of your selfless wife and your beloved children.

Think of how alcohol destroys your system, making you incapable of all human activities which are indispensable for you and your family to live; be aware that if you ruin your body, you enervate and pollute your spirit to the point of allowing it to degenerate into abjection and wretchedness.

Think of the shameful spectacle of the disheveled drunkard who falls down in the street and becomes the object of scorn or pity for passers by.

Reflect on the brutal scene one sees in the home of the drunkard when, disorderly and demented, he mistreats his tender and long-suffering wife and his innocent children with words and deeds.

Think of the sorrowful mornings your children will have when they ask for breakfast, only to find the cruel anguish of hunger because the tavern-keeper, whenever you go to the saloon, takes your wages so as to fatten his own children, while your children grow rickety and weak.

Know that the damage you do with liquor is not limited to yourself alone, but you pass it on to your children and they pass it on to your grandchildren, and thus you are forging a chain of misfortune for which you, and you alone, will be to blame.

Campesino, think, reflect, arm yourself with valor and energy, flee from the tavern and from vice, because this depresses and dishonors you and takes away the fruit of your labor.

Hate those who poison and despoil you!

The False Religions

Campesino:

If you need to have faith in something, have faith in yourself and in your labor. Nothing contributes to the success of an undertaking like perseverance and effort.

No mythical god, no supernatural cause, is capable of granting you the recompense for a job you have not done.

Do not think or hope for aid from gods who live in heaven. The only thing that can make you prosperous is the effort that you make to better your own position.

The only way to achieve welfare is through work. Work that is conscious, guided, and always striving toward perfection is what makes us prosper economically and lets us enjoy the satisfaction of having finished a job.

Do not have faith in false religions that teach you humility and force you to renounce your rights as a conscious citizen. Do not enter into religions that

Anti-religious demonstration in Villahermosa, Tabasco, late 1920s. Demonstrators appear to have placed priestly headwear on a cow, while a man holds a sign saying "Down with the Priests." (Reprinted by permission of Fototeca del INAH, Mexico.)

counsel you to be meek when other men belonging to superior classes exploit your labor and turn you from a man into a beast of production.

Reject the religions that offer you glory in heaven in exchange for your slavery here on the earth. Live on your feet, like a man among men! There are no superior castes!

Repudiate the religions that preach and maintain the division of human beings into castes. Man must not live to be exploited by other men. Socialism, the modern doctrine of social confraternity, advocates cooperation, not the exploitation of man by man.

Recall with horror those who admonished you to be meek when you worked fourteen hours a day and lived like a beast, often worse than some of the animals which belonged to the privileged people. The ones who counseled you thus were the infamous representatives of a false god, who would permit such foul injustices and cruelties.

Think that your only god is labor, because it redeems you; but work that de-

mands just recompense, work that is coordinated and organized by socialism, because it unites and strengthens the workers to demand their rights.

Work is an individual duty; it is also a social duty and a high moral duty, because the morality which prevails in modern society teaches that only the person who works should live, whether he works materially or intellectually, with brawn or brain; so long as, in the end, he works.

Have faith in work as a duty, and this belief will be your best religion.

The Ballad of Valentín of the Sierra

Anonymous

As the previous selection suggests, anticlericalism was a major theme in the Mexican revolution. Modernizing elites blamed the Roman Catholic Church for inculcating superstition and ignorance among the masses, and of meddling repeatedly in politics on behalf of reactionary elements. In 1926 President Plutarco Elías Calles began making serious efforts to enforce the anticlerical legislation contained in the 1917 Constitution. The most objectionable provision of that legislation, for Mexico's Catholic clergy, was one that required all clergymen to register with the government. In response to this initiative, the Church hierarchy called upon the clergy to shut down their operations and begin what was, in effect, a religious strike. In the west-central states of Michoacán, Zacatecas, and Jalisco, peasants took up arms against the government with the battle cry, "¡Viva Cristo Rey!" *("Long Live Christ the King!"). This bloody civil war, known as the* Cristero *Rebellion, raged for nearly three years. What follows is a* corrido, *a popular folk ballad that appears in scores of local versions, all of which reflect the sentiments of the* Cristeros, *particularly their loyalty to their village priests and comrades-in-arms. Without question the best known of the substantial repertoire of ballads devoted to the* Cristero *Rebellion, this* corrido *narrates the circumstances surrounding the 1928 death of one Valentín Avila in the sierra that joins the states of Jalisco and Zacatecas. Little is known of Avila's life or military career, though the manner in which he met his death has won this humble* cristero *virtual immortality.*

I'm going to sing some verses
About a friend from my *tierra* [locality],
About the brave Valentín,
Who was shot and hung in the sierra.

I hate to remember
That cold winter's afternoon
When it was his bad luck
To fall into the Government's hands.

Cristeros. (From Enrique Krauze, *Plutarco E. Calles: Reformar desde el origen* [Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1987]).

On the Fresno riverbank
Valentín met up with
The enemy *agraristas* of the valley
Who questioned him and took him prisoner. . . .

The federal general asked Valentín:
"How many men do you command?"
Valentín replied:
"The fifteen soldiers camped at the Rancho Holanda."

The general then asked him:
"How many men were in your company?"
"The eight hundred men
That Mariano Mejía brought through the sierra."

The general said to him:
"Valentín, tell me the truth.

If you tell me what I want to know
I'll give you two thousand pesos and your freedom."

Then the general said:
"I am prepared to grant you a pardon
If you will tell me
Where I might find the local priest."

Valentín promptly answered him:
"That I cannot say;
I'd rather you kill me
Than give up a friend." . . .

Before they shot him,
Before he went up the hill,
Valentín cried:
"O Mother of Guadalupe!
For your religion they will kill me." . . .

Fly, fly away, my little dove
Far from your mountain fastness.
Tell of these last rites
Paid to that brave man, Valentín.

Mexico Must Become a Nation of Institutions and Laws

Plutarco Elías Calles

President Alvaro Obregón fell victim to a Catholic zealot's bullet in 1928, after being elected to his second presidential term. His death raised the specter of a major political crisis, as ambitious politicians and military men primed themselves to fill the sudden power vacuum. Plutarco Elías Calles, the incumbent president, fully recognized the dangers of the moment, yet he remained remarkably calm. On September 1, 1928, he delivered before Congress the speech excerpted below, urging his fellow revolutionaries to seize the unwonted opportunity to effect a major transformation in the political life of Mexico. While Calles's apparent faith in the loyalty of the military was largely wishful thinking, and his repeated assertions of respect for the democratic process were hypocritical—he would himself dominate Mexican politics as behind-the-scenes strongman until 1934—the speech did indeed mark a crucial moment in the history of Mexican politics. It was a first step toward the creation of the National Revolutionary Party, which was supposed to be a broad and inclusive political vehicle, containing and channeling disputes toward constructive ends. The PNR *would morph into the Mexican Revolutionary Party (*PRM*) during the late 1930s, and finally become the Institutional Revolutionary Party (*PRI*) in 1946. The* PRI *would control the presidency and most important political offices for the remainder of the twentieth century.*

The death of the president-elect is an irreparable loss which has left the country in an extremely difficult situation. There is no shortage of capable men: indeed, we are fortunate to have many capable individuals. But there is no person of indisputable prestige, who has a base of public support and such personal and political strength that his name alone merits general confidence.

The general's death brings a most grave and vital problem to public attention, for the issue is not merely political, but one of our very survival.

We must recognize that General Obregón's death exacerbates existing political and administrative problems. These problems arise in large measure

Calles's stirring rhetoric was not enough to prevent a military insurrection from breaking out in 1929. In this photo, Calles (seated) is seen on a train platform in the state of Sonora personally leading the campaign to crush the rebellion. On the left, with dark jacket and hat, is General Lázaro Cárdenas, who would become president in the mid-1930s. Between Calles and Cárdenas, (leaning on doorframe) is General Saturnino Cedillos, political boss of San Luis Potosí, who would lead a rebellion against Cárdenas's government in 1938. (Reprinted by permission of Fototeca del Fideicomiso Archivos Plutarco Elías Calles y Fernando Torreblanca.)

from our political and social struggle: that is, they arise from the definitive triumph of the guiding principles of the Revolution, social principles like those expressed in articles 27 and 123 [of the Constitution], which must never be taken away from the people. At the start of the previous administration, we embarked on what may be called the political or governmental phase of the Mexican Revolution, searching with ever increasing urgency for ways to satisfy political and social concerns and to find means of governing appropriate to this new phase.

All of these considerations define the magnitude of the problem. Yet the very circumstance that Mexico now confronts—namely, that for perhaps the first time in our history there are no "caudillos"—gives us the opportunity to direct the country's politics toward a true institutional life. We shall move, once and for all, from being a "country ruled by one man" to a "nation of institutions and laws."

The unique solemnity of this moment deserves the most disinterested and patriotic reflection. It obliges me to delve not only into the circumstances of this moment, but also to review the characteristics of our political life up until now. It is our duty to fully understand and appreciate the facts which can ensure the country's immediate and future peace, promote its prestige and development, and safeguard the revolutionary conquests that hundreds of thousands of Mexicans have sealed with their blood.

I consider it absolutely essential that I digress from my brief analysis to make a firm and irrevocable declaration, which I pledge upon my honor before the National Congress, before the country, and before all civilized peoples. But first, I must say that perhaps never before have circumstances placed a chief executive in a more propitious situation for returning the country to one-man rule. I have received many suggestions, offers, and even some pressures—all of them cloaked in considerations of patriotism and the national welfare—trying to get me to remain in office. For reasons of morality and personal political creed, and because it is absolutely essential that we change from a "government of caudillos" to a "regime of institutions," I have decided to declare solemnly and with such clarity that my words cannot lend themselves to suspicions or interpretations, that not only will I not seek the prolongation of my mandate by accepting an extension or designation as provisional president, but I will never again on any occasion aspire to the presidency of my country. At the risk of making this declaration needlessly emphatic, I will add that this is not merely an aspiration or desire on my own part, but a positive and immutable fact: never again will an incumbent president of the Mexican Republic return to occupy the presidency. Of course, I have absolutely no intention of abandoning my duties as a citizen, nor do I intend to retire from the life of struggle and responsibility that is the lot of every soldier and of all men born of the Revolution. . . .

Historical judgment, like all a posteriori judgments, is often and necessarily harsh and unjust, for it overlooks the pressing circumstances that determine attitudes and deeds. I do not intend to review the history of Mexico merely to cast all blame on the men who became caudillos owing to the frustrations of our national life. Those frustrations—the inert condition of the rural masses, who have now been awakened by the Revolution; the sad, nearly atavistic passivity of citizens of the middle and lower classes, who fortunately have also been awakened—inspired those caudillos to identify themselves . . . with the fatherland itself. They styled themselves "necessary and singular" men.

I need remind no one of how the caudillos obstructed—perhaps not always deliberately, but always in a logical and natural way—the formation of strong alternative means by which the country might have confronted its internal

and external crises. Nor need I remind you how the caudillos obstructed or delayed the peaceful evolution of Mexico into an institutional country, one in which men are what they should be: mere accidents, of no real importance beside the perpetual and august serenity of institutions and laws. . . .

I would never suggest such a path if I feared, even remotely, that it could cause us to take a single step backward from the conquests and fundamental principles of the Revolution. . . . [I suggest this path] out of the conviction that effective freedom of suffrage must be extended even to groups representing the reaction, including the clerical reaction. This should not alarm true revolutionaries, for we have faith that the new ideas have affected the conscience of nearly all Mexicans, and that the interests created by the Revolution are now much stronger than those represented by the reaction, even if it were to be victorious. The districts where the political or clerical reaction wins the vote will, for many years at least, be outnumbered by those where the progressive social revolutionaries triumph.

Not only will the presence of conservative groups not endanger the new ideas or the legitimate revolutionary institutions; their presence will also prevent revolutionary groups from weakening and destroying themselves through internal squabbling, which is what happens when one finds oneself without an ideological enemy. . . .

We revolutionaries are now sufficiently strong—having achieved a solid basis in law, in the public consciousness, and in the interests of the vast majority of people—that we need not fear the reaction. We invite that reaction to take up the struggle in the field of ideas, for in the field of armed combat—which is the easier of the two forms of struggle—we have triumphed completely, as those groups representing liberal ideas of social progress have always done. . . .

I would not be behaving honorably if I did not point out the many dangers that could result from dissension within the revolutionary family. If such dissension should occur, it would be nothing new in the history of Mexico, which has at times abounded in shady, backroom political dealings that brought to power ambitious, unprincipled men who weakened and delayed the final triumph of progress and liberalism in Mexico, surrendering themselves, whether consciously or not, to our eternal enemies.

I have spoken of our political adversaries with special tolerance and respect, even going so far as to declare the urgency of accepting the representatives of every shade of the reaction into the Chambers of Congress if they win in perfectly honorable democratic struggles. Having said this, I should be permitted to insist that, if one day ambition, intrigue, or arrogance should fracture the revolutionary group that for so many years was united in the struggle for

a noble cause—that of the betterment of the great majorities of the country—then the conservatives will once again seize the opportunity to insinuate themselves. If this happens, it is almost certain that the reaction will not need to secure a direct military or political triumph. History and human nature permit us to foresee that there will be no shortage of disaffected revolutionaries who, upon failing to find sufficient support from the disunited revolutionary factions, would call insistently at the doors of our old enemies. This would not only endanger the conquests of the Revolution, but it would surely provoke a new armed social conflict that would be more terrible even than those the country has already suffered; and when the revolutionary movement triumphed, as it must triumph, after years of cruel struggle, Mexico would be bled dry and would lack the strength to resume the march forward from the point where it was interrupted by our ambitions and dishonor.

Finally, in my triple capacity as revolutionary, division general, and chief of the armed forces, I will address myself to the army. . . . We have an opportunity that is perhaps unique in our history. In the period that follows the interim presidency, all men who aspire to the presidency of the country, be they military men or civilians, will contend on the fields of honorable democracy. As I have so frankly pointed out, there will be many dangers for Mexico—dangers that imperil the revolution and the fatherland itself. Anyone who, during those anxious moments, abandons the line of duty and tries to seize power by any means other than those outlined in the Constitution, will be guilty of the most unforgivable criminal and unpatriotic conduct.

All members of the national army must be conscious of their decisive role in those moments. They must embrace the true and noble calling of their military career: to give honor and fidelity to the legitimate institutions. Thus inspired by the duties imposed upon them by their mission, they must reject and condemn all whispers and perverse insinuations from ambitious politicians who would seek to sway them. They must choose between doing their duty, and thereby winning the gratitude of the Republic and the respect of the outside world, and betraying the Revolution and the fatherland at one of the most solemn moments in its history. The latter course of conduct could never be condoned by society or history.

The Formation of the Single-Party State

Carlos Fuentes

An alternative, and decidedly more cynical, view of the political transformation wrought by President Calles and his fellow revolutionary leaders is found in Carlos Fuentes's novel, The Death of Artemio Cruz, *first published in Spanish in 1962. The novel is told largely in hallucinatory flashbacks, as Artemio Cruz—an idealistic revolutionary turned corrupt industrial magnate—lies on his deathbed. Cruz becomes a symbol of the generation of leaders who abandoned idealism in favor of wealth and power, leading Mexico toward moral bankruptcy. In this selection, the dying Artemio flashes back to a smoke-filled meeting of top leaders of the Sonoran dynasty, where the Machiavellian credo of the new official party is set forth. Fuentes (b. 1928) is undoubtedly Mexico's best-known living writer and intellectual.*

[1924: June 3]

. . . and that night you will talk with Major Gavilán in a whorehouse, with all your old comrades, and you will not remember what was said, or whether they said it or you said it, speaking with a cold voice that will not be the voice of men but of power and self interest: we desire the greatest possible good for our country, so long as it accords with our own good: let us be intelligent and we can go far: let us accomplish the necessary, not attempt the impossible: let us decide here tonight what acts of cruelty and force are needed now to make it possible for us to avoid cruelty and force later: let us parcel out well-being, that the people may have their smell of it; the Revolution can satisfy them now, but tomorrow they may ask for more and more, and what would we have left to offer if we should give everything already? except, perhaps, our lives, our lives: and why die if we thereby do not live to see the beneficent fruits of our heroic deaths? we are men, not martyrs: if we hold on to power, nothing will not be permitted: lose power and they'll fuck us: have a sense of destiny, we are young and we glitter with successful armed revolution: why have we fought, to die of hunger? when force is necessary, it is

justified: power may not be divided: and tomorrow? tomorrow we will be in our graves, Deputy Cruz, leaving those who follow to arrange the world as best they can . . .

The Rough and Tumble Career of Pedro Crespo

Gilbert M. Joseph and Allen Wells

Despite the hopeful rhetoric of Calles, much of Mexico's political life has long been dominated less by institutions and laws than by regional caciques of the sort described in the following reading (and in the earlier selection by Rosalie Evans)—men whose power seems to be based upon a complex and mysterious blend of charisma, patronage, violence, and manipulation. Two veteran historians of modern Yucatán, Gil Joseph and Allen Wells of Bowdoin College, analyze the ways in which these individuals gained and used power in their close-up portrait of Pedro Crespo, the political boss of a strategic portion of the state in the decades following 1910.

Temax is at the end of the road. A few blocks north of the weather-beaten plaza, the paved road from Izamal runs out; further on, *camino blanco* winds for about twenty kilometers through scrub, then mangrove swamp to the Gulf of Mexico. Eighty kilometers west of the town is the state capital, Mérida: en route one travels through the heart of the henequen (sisal) zone, glimpsing remnants of a more affluent past. Poorly tended henequen fields line both sides of the highway, which is crisscrossed here and there by the rusting and twisted rails of imported Decauville narrow-gauge tram tracks. Blackened chimneys and the ruins of once elegant haciendas similarly bear witness to the grandeur of a monoculture now in irreversible decline. To the east of Temax, henequen's bluish gray spines soon give way to denser scrub and clearings of grazing cattle; beyond the neighboring village of Buctzotz there is little to see for another seventy kilometers, until Tizimin, cattle country's new boomtown. Hot, dusty, and unprepossessing to the casual eye, Temax appears to be just another desperately poor and sleepy municipal seat that time has long since passed by.

Current appearances, however, mask a turbulent and intriguing recent past. Indeed, Temax has figured prominently in Yucatecan history since the apocalyptic Caste War of the mid–nineteenth century. Poised as it is between

the dynamic henequen zone and the marginal sparsely populated hinterland, between the settled plantation society and the zone of refuge for the rebellious Maya *campesinos* who resisted plantation encroachment on their traditional way of life, Temax has been a strategic periphery or frontier. Consequently, its control has posed a significant problem for Yucatán's modern rulers. And, for much of the first half of the twentieth century, Temax's political fortunes were closely linked to the career of an extraordinary rural insurgent and political boss, Pedro Crespo. State authorities came to realize that the price of peace in Temax was a certain degree of autonomy for Don Pedro. . . . Crespo knew how to survive. [His] political career came to embody the achievements and contradictions of the larger revolutionary process.

We know relatively little about Crespo's prerevolutionary career before he burst upon the local political scene in March of 1911. . . . [He was] born about 1870, of humble village origins, like many campesinos on the fringes of the expanding henequen zone. . . . [He] grew up determined to preserve the family's status as small but free cultivators. Quite likely, he chose to enlist in the state national guard, to avoid the mechanism of debt that tied an ever-increasing number of villagers as peons to the large and powerful henequen estates.

In short order, Crespo demonstrated his prowess as a soldier and was made an officer in the local guard. How did Crespo regard his duties, which included hunting down and returning runaway people to their masters, quelling worker protests against brutal, slavelike labor conditions, and implementing the hated *leva* (conscription), which dragooned villagers and drifters into the guard? We'll never know. No doubt Crespo came to know the social world of north-central Yucatán beyond the boundaries of the rural countryside. Temaxeños remember him as a man with a foot in both worlds: "un mestizo de buen hablar"—a Maya who spoke Spanish well and could handle himself in town.[1] Through his work, young Crespo was introduced to the milieu of urban polities, to the ever-shifting layered networks of patronage and clientele, which tied the local *dzules*—powerful [white] rulers of land and men in their own right—to even more powerful patrons in the state capital.

As an officer in the guard, Crespo was compelled to play this exacting, dangerous game of late Porfirian politics. Although he initially flirted with the intrigues of a disenfranchised faction of the planter elite in 1909, by the eve of the 1910 gubernatorial election, Crespo had allied himself with Enrique Muñoz Arístegui, the "official" candidate of the "Divine Caste," an entrenched oligarchy led by the state's most powerful planter, merchant, and politician, Don Olegario Molina.

Don Olegario was a formidable patron. He was a favorite of President Porfirio Díaz, and, following a term as governor of Yucatán, he served as minister

of development in Díaz's cabinet (1907–11). Molina's relations filled the upper echelons of the state's bureaucratic machine. Indeed, the power of the "Divine Caste" radiated outward from the Molina *parentesco* (extended family), which, apart from its national connections, was greatly fortified by its partnership with the principal buyer of raw henequen fiber, the International Harvester Company. Under the terms of a secret arrangement between Molina's import-export house and the North American corporation, large sums of foreign capital were periodically placed at the oligarch's disposal, enabling Molina y Compañía to affect price trends, acquire mortgages, and consolidate its hold on fiber production, communications, the infrastructure, and banking in the region. Despite the fabulous wealth generated by the *fin de siècle* henequen boom, the first decade of the new century was a veritable summer of discontent for the vast majority of Yucatecan producers, merchants, workers, and campesinos, who found themselves personally indebted or subordinated, in one form or another, to the Molina *parentesco.*

Francisco Madero's national political campaign against the Díaz regime emboldened two disgruntled *camarillas* (political factions) of the Yucatecan planter class and their middle-class allies to organize parties for the purpose of challenging Molinista hegemony in the 1910 elections. Formed in 1909, these rather loose political coalitions, the Centro Electoral Independiente and the Partido Antireeleccionista, were known popularly as "Morenistas" and "Pinistas," after their respective standard-bearers, Delio Moreno Cantón and José María Pino Suárez, who were journalists. But they were financed by their planter supporters, and each faction hastily attempted to construct alliances reaching into the urban intelligentsia and small working class, and, perhaps even more tactically, into the large and potentially explosive Maya *campesinado.*

As a rising military leader able to bridge the cultural distance between dzules and campesinos, Crespo was a valuable asset in strategic Temax and was wooed by incumbents and dissidents alike. After testing the waters of Morenismo, however, he chose to stay with the Molinista . . . puppet, Muñoz Arístegui. . . .

What, then, turned this cautious policeman into a revolutionary? Quite likely he was unable to ignore ties of blood and a claim for vengeance. Like Pancho Villa, whose sister was raped, and countless others who joined Madero's national movement in 1910, a sense of deep personal outrage set Crespo at odds with the Porfirian authorities. . . . Crespo had been left by Temax's corrupt *jefe político* [district prefect], Colonel Antonio Herrera, who also was Crespo's superior officer in the local guard detachment, to languish for thirty days in the notoriously unfriendly confines of Mérida's Juárez Penitentiary.

Crespo would later speak vaguely of differences he had had with the Temax authorities, and his lieutenants would cite the tyrannical abuses of Herrera's local rule. Some old-timers recall that Crespo had been openly critical of the jefe político's high-handed tactics in meetings with Temaxeño campesinos. But for Crespo, much more than *mal gobierno* or perhaps even personal rivalry was at issue here: Herrera had killed Crespo's father, Don Cosme Damían, under shadowy circumstances. Apparently, while Pedro was in jail, Don Cosme had balked at Herrera's arbitrary order that he do *fagina* (unpaid, forced road work), whereupon the jefe político ordered his goons to gun the old man down in broad daylight.

Soon after his release from prison, Crespo sought revenge. He mustered up a small band of his kin and clients—most of them peasant villagers—and exploded into revolt. Operating in the chaotic climate that was Maderismo in Yucatán, Crespo elected to burn his bridges behind him, joining his local vendetta to the larger regional movement against Díaz and the Molinistas. On March 4, 1911, he led his column in a lightning predawn raid on the county seat of Temax. The rebels easily overwhelmed the nine-man guard detachment of Temax's central plaza. (Later, the town police commander would charge that the guardia had been sleeping on the job.) Crespo immediately rousted Colonel Herrera and the treasury agent Aguilar Brito from their beds and hauled them, clad only in their skivvies *(paños menores)* to the plaza. All the while, as members of his band shouted "Viva Madero!" and "Down with bad government!," Crespo vented his rage on the stunned Herrera: "You bastard, you killed my father! Before you were on top and screwed me, but now it's my turn."

The tables were indeed turned. Handpicked as district prefect by the great Molinista planters, Colonel Herrera was the dominant figure in Temax's political life, and his physical presence made him even more menacing to local campesinos. Hulking in stature, with his shaved head and long gray beard, Herrera often took on the dimensions of a mad monk or an avenging prophet. Only days before, during the Carnival revels of Shrove Tuesday, although too cowed to make a statement about their jefe político, Temaxeños had mocked his subordinate, Aguilar Brito, as "Juan Carnaval," shooting an effigy of the treasury agent in front of the Municipal Palace. Now, in the same central plaza in the wee hours of the morning, Pedro Crespo was cutting the despised prefect down to size. In a final act of humiliation, Crespo strapped Herrera and Aguilar to chairs and riddled them with bullets in the same spot in front of the town hall where Aguilar had been "executed" during Carnival. The bodies were piled into a meat wagon and then dumped at the gates of the town cemetery. (It was ghastly ironic that the treasury agent would later be interred

in the same coffin that "Juan Carnaval" had occupied the preceding Shrove Tuesday.)

Before he left town the next morning, Crespo emptied the municipal jail, freeing some campesinos who had been imprisoned for refusing to do *fagina* ordered by the deceased jefe político. Crespo armed his new recruits and then . . . requested food, drink, and "contributions" from local merchants, and took the 300 pesos (one peso equaled fifty U.S. cents) in the municipal treasury. Yet Crespo . . . made sure that Temax's prominent families were not physically harmed, and he strictly limited his men's intake of *aguardiente*. . . . Crespo saddled up his force—now swollen to about eighty—and divided the men into two mobile bands, one to head west toward Cansahcab, the other east, under his direction, toward Buctzotz. All wore red bands on their hats.

In the weeks and months that followed, Pedro Crespo became Yucatán's most successful insurgent. His hit-and-run tactics, based on an intimate knowledge of the local terrain, were celebrated in the pueblos and hacienda communities of north-central Yucatán, and his ranks continued to multiply. One week after his raid on Temax, his troops mushroomed to 200; by mid-April some estimates placed his strength at 400, in May, close to 1,000. Many free villagers and some hacienda peons joined his campaign willingly, eager to strike a blow against the dzules, particularly the despised jefes políticos and hacienda overseers who symbolized the encroachments and abuses of the oligarchy. In Buctzotz, a group of villagers rose up upon Crespo's arrival, took the National Guard barracks, and cut out the tongue of the municipal president before executing him. In Dzilám González, dozens of campesinos, including the town's band, defected en masse to the rebellion. The musicians brought their instruments and enlivened the guerrilla campaign in the weeks ahead with a series of impromptu Saturday night *jaranas* (folk dances) in remote backcountry hamlets.

Although many hacienda peons were recruited at gunpoint by the rebels, Crespo sought to erode planter paternalism and social control with clientelist measures of his own. At the Cauacá, Chacmay, and San Francisco Manzanilla haciendas—the estates of the largest henequen planters—he decreed "liberation," canceling all of the peons' debts. Moreover, Crespo provided amply for his recruits, derailing trains, raiding *cuarteles* (barracks) for munitions, and levying forced loans on local planters and merchants. At Cauacá, 150 peons joined Crespo, and suddenly Maya surnames were greatly outnumbering Spanish ones in his ranks. . . .

Crespo's guerrilla campaign forced the Molinista regime to expend great amounts of time, money, and manpower in a futile effort to pin down the rebels. Soon other risings against government installations and officials—like

Crespo's, nominally Maderista—spread through the countryside. During the spring of 1911 the Mérida government found itself unable to do more than hold the county seats, leaving the hinterland to the insurgents. Moreover, village-based campesinos increasingly resisted government attempts to recruit them to fight against the rebels, or mutinied following recruitment. Finally, Muñoz Arístegui was compelled to resign, and the new military governor issued an amnesty for all disaffected rebels designed to coax rebel leaders like Crespo to lay down their arms, a desperation move that did little to quell rural unrest throughout the state. . . .

By late May 1911, Díaz had fallen, and Pedro Crespo had disbanded his forces. But, far from being finished, his career was just beginning. For the next thirty years, Crespo arbitrated the political fortunes of Temax, brokering power between elites, villagers, and peons during the most volatile juncture of the revolutionary period.

In the political vacuum that resulted in Yucatan from Díaz's defeat, Morenistas and Pinistas vied for leadership, and rural violence reached dangerous new levels. But, under Crespo's sway, Temax remained relatively calm. The cacique had only contempt for noncombatant civilian politicians like Pino Suárez—soon to become Yucatán's Maderista governor and then vice president of Mexico—who during the insurrection had called upon Yucatecos to join Madero but to avoid acts of vengeance such as those committed at Temax. Unfortunately, once in power, Madero and Pino seemed intent upon employing the same nefarious "bola negra" tactics of political imposition that they had deplored during the Porfiriato. Crespo's sympathies lay with the more popular Morenistas, who now intrigued throughout the state with their former Molinista foes against the ruling Pinistas. At no point, however, during the short-lived Madero regime (1911–13) did the Pinistas feel strong enough to move against Crespo in Temax. Following Díaz's ouster, Crespo had sent his lieutenants to Mérida to serve Pino notice that, although they had been disbanded, his followers remained armed and could be activated at his command on short notice.

Like the Maderista liberals, the neo-Porfirian Huertista military leader who would supplant them (1913–14) saw the wisdom of accommodating the Crespo *cacicazgo.* Nor did the pattern change significantly when the Mexican revolution in Yucatán moved dramatically left under the socially active administrations of Constitutionalist General Salvador Alvarado (1915–18) and the Marxist Felipe Carrillo Puerto (1921–24). These progressive caudillos also found it wiser to court rather than wrangle with the powerful Crespo as they sought to mobilize campesinos behind their agrarian, labor, and educational reforms between 1915 and 1924. For his part, Crespo was a political pragmatist; he

could live with—even actively support—regimes of widely varying ideological coloration, provided they favored, or at least did not intrude upon, his *cacicazgo.*

Particularly interesting is the nature of Crespo's collaboration during the twenties and thirties with the Socialist Party of the Southeast (PSS), led by Carrillo Puerto (1915–24) and his successors. Whereas General Alvarado had brought the Constitutionalist revolution to Yucatán in March 1915 with eight thousand troops, the civilian governor, Carrillo Puerto, was not always able to count on the support of a loyal, progressive military and, consequently, had to rely more heavily on the muscle of local power brokers like Crespo. Moreover, in case of hacendado-backed insurrection against the socialist revolution (a very real possibility), the geopolitics of Crespo's *cacicazgo* were critical: Temax was located on the rich eastern fringes of the henequen zone, astride the Mérida–Valladolid Railroad. Its proximity to the [Mayan populated] hinterland made it essential that Temax be secure since, if it fell into hostile hands, Valladolid and the southeastern part of the state—the base of rebel operations during the nineteenth-century Caste War—might once again be cut off from the state capital in Mérida.

To ensure Crespo's loyalty, Carrillo Puerto awarded him the plums of civil government and agrarian office, either to hold himself or to dispose of as he saw fit. Like other powerful caciques, Crespo combined the municipal presidency with leadership of the local resistance league *(liga de resistencia),* the PSS's constituent unit in Temax. Upon Crespo's recommendation, his ally, Juan Campos, was chosen as the district's federal deputy. Several years later, Crespo succeeded Campos in the Chamber of Deputies. . . .

To the day he died, Pedro Crespo lived in much the same manner as his campesino followers: He spoke Maya among friends, wore the collarless white *filipina,* and lived in the *kaxna,* the traditional wattle-and-daub cottage with thatched roof. What interested him most was political power, not wealth. The revolution had offered him a chance and he had seized it. No doubt he viewed himself and came to be regarded in Temax as a *líder nato*—a born local leader, a chief. As such, he did what was necessary to preserve, even extend, his *poderío,* or his local power base. This entailed constant political vigilance and negotiation; deals might be made with powerful planters and bargains struck with the emerging revolutionary state, but it never called upon Crespo to sell out his clientele, to accumulate great wealth and leave Temax for Mérida. Indeed, precisely because he was a *líder nato,* he was incapable of transcending his locality and breaking with the political culture that had produced him.

In return for Carrillo Puerto's preferment and patronage, Crespo performed a variety of services for the PSS. Not only did he selectively bring violence to bear against local opponents of the party to ensure it a political monopoly within the state, but Crespo also doubled as an informal ward boss, guaranteeing, through a variety of incentives, the enrollment of local campesinos in Temax's liga de resistencia. Like other loyal party officials, Crespo scheduled weekly cultural events and frequent recreational activities.

Although few in the region appreciate it today, under Carrillo Puerto baseball became a strategic component of the PSS's campaign to mobilize its rural-based revolutionary regime. The sport already was rooted in the regional environment. In addition to its incredible popularity among all classes in Mérida and Progreso, the principal port, campesinos in the larger rural towns had demonstrated a particular fascination with it. Now the party's goal was to mount a statewide campaign to organize baseball teams *"hasta los pueblitos"*—in even the most remote interior Maya communities. Such a program would enhance the popularity and morale of the PSS, which might then be parlayed into other programs for social change. It would strike at traditional rural isolation which impeded the socialist transition, and would immediately contribute to the party's goal of social integration, even in advance of longer term efforts to improve regional communication and transportation. Carrillo Puerto had no way of knowing it at the time, but his campaign also would have the effect of institutionalizing *béisbol* as the regional pastime, an anomaly in a nation where elsewhere *fútbol* became the people's game.

Pedro Crespo and Juan Campos became energetic promoters of the game in north-central Yucatán. In 1922 these *beisbolistas* petitioned the Liga Central de Resistencia in Mérida for money for gloves, bats, balls, and uniforms, and personally organized ball clubs in Temax, Dzilám González, and surrounding pueblos and hacienda communities. Once this rudimentary infrastructure was in place, Crespo and Campos worked with the presidents of other interior ligas de resistencia to schedule country tournaments and leagues and, later, to arrange for tours by the more experienced Mérida and Progreso clubs. To this end, they frequently petitioned Governor Carrillo Puerto for free passes for ballplayers on the state-controlled railroads.

It is not surprising, then, that local nines still bear their names, or that Temax has become synonymous with high-quality baseball, periodically producing bona fide stars for the Mexican League. The backcountry ball games that these caciques promoted in the twenties and thirties likely echoed with the same patois of Maya and Spanglish that one hears on hacienda and pueblo diamonds today: "Conex, conex jugar béisbol. . . . Ten pitcher, tech quecher,

tech centerfil!" ("Come on, let's play ball. . . . I'll pitch, you catch, and you play centerfield!").

Carrillo Puerto's socialist experiment ended suddenly and tragically in January 1924, when Yucatán's federal garrison pronounced in favor of the national de la Huerta rebellion and toppled the PSS government, which had remained loyal to President Alvaro Obregón. Carrillo Puerto and many of his closest supporters in Mérida were hunted down and executed by the insurgent *federales,* who had the financial backing and encouragement of Yucatán's large planters, whom Carrillo Puerto had threatened with expropriation. When push came to shove during the de la Huerta revolt, the majority of the irregular bands led by Carrillo Puerto's cacique allies proved unreliable; in fact remarkably few of them mounted even token resistance against the federales. The truth is that few of these local bosses were ideologically motivated or were organizationally prepared to become dedicated socialist revolutionaries committed to a defense of the PSS regime.

Pedro Crespo was one cacique who did not desert his *patrón.* In Carrillo Puerto's vain attempt to elude the Delahuertistas in December 1923 and, ultimately, to gain asylum in Cuba, he stopped in Temax where he was received by Don Pedro and his intimates. . . . Crespo could not persuade his patron [to wait out the siege in Temax. Carrillo Puerto] continued his flight eastward across the peninsula, a journey that soon ended in his capture and execution.

By April 1924 the de la Huerta revolt had been quelled and the PSS returned to power in Mérida, but now with a social program more in tune with the moderate politics of national leaders Alvaro Obregón and Plutarco Calles in Mexico City. The next decade (1924–34) witnessed a decline in the membership and organization of the resistance leagues, a reconsolidation of the power of the peninsular bourgeoisie, the infiltration of the PSS by that group, and a sharp falloff in agrarian reform, especially in the henequen zone. As the Yucatecan revolution reached its Thermidor, Crespo, now in the autumn of his years, adjusted with the times. In 1930 he was still president of the local resistance league, but now, more than ever, "Yucatecan socialism" was a matter of form, not substance. Led by their patriarch, Temaxeño socialists wore red shirts, spouted revolutionary slogans, and invoked their martyred Don Felipe Carrillo on appropriate public occasions. Yet few serious agrarian or labor demands emanated from Temax's liga de resistencia.

Apart from the revolution's ideological drift to the right, the economics of the period left Don Pedro and the socialists little room to maneuver. The henequen boom had crashed on the rocks of world depression and foreign competition. Temaxeños, like other Yucatecan campesinos, were experiencing

severe privation and were glad for even the reduced workload that the henequen estates provided. Like most of the PSS's rural chiefs, Crespo was forced to seek an accommodation with the most powerful planters during the Great Depression in order to keep fields in production and minimize layoffs. Indeed, it was his ability to balance and play off the hopes and fears of both dzules and campesinos amid the roller-coaster-like political economy of the twenties and thirties that preserved his cacicazgo until his death in November 1944.

Even the renewed populist groundswell of Cardenismo, which unleashed a fury of riots and political assassinations throughout the state during the late thirties, could not topple Crespo. Newly formed radical mass organizations like the "Juventudes Socialistas" denounced Crespo and the larger evil of "revolutionary caciquismo," but Don Pedro's alliances within the party and provincial society allowed him to hang on. In fact, it was Melchor Zozaya Raz, perhaps the most vocal of the young firebrands in the Juventudes Socialistas during the late 1930s, who would become Don Pedro's protégé in the early 1940s and ultimately inherit the Temax cacicazgo upon Crespo's death.

Now properly reverential of Pedro Crespo's "revolutionary legacy," Don Melchor Zozaya ruled the district into the 1970s, until diabetes and blindness weakened his political grip. Although no powerful individual boss has emerged since, caciquismo as an informal institution of power and patronage has endured in Temax. Municipal government, *ejidal* office, and access to work on private sector estates are in large part controlled by a camarilla, which corporately functions as a cacique. A favored few are endlessly recycled through the same offices, thereby assuring the Party of the Institutionalized Revolution (PRI) a large majority at all levels of government. And, while the PRI periodically excoriates bossism in the abstract, the national regime seems reluctant to tamper with the political culture of the institutionalized revolution in Temax or anywhere else. This is because the Mexican state rests upon a multitiered system of patronage and clientele that always finds new aggressive, upwardly mobile elements to sustain it.[2]

In the Temax of the 1980s, Pedro Crespo also has been institutionalized; Yucatán's branch of the PRI has duly incorporated him into the revolutionary pantheon alongside more famous regional icons like Salvador Alvarado and Felipe Carrillo Puerto. Temaxeño popular tradition, however, has reached a more ambiguous verdict regarding Crespo's *actuación revolucionaria.* "Era cacique . . . gran cacique," old-timers pronounce, often with raised eyebrows or a wry smile. ("He was a boss . . . a very great boss.") This rather terse depiction reflects admiration for Crespo's courage, resoluteness, and shrewdness, but

also registers a sardonic appreciation of his surmounting ambition to control and dispense power.

Notes

1. In Yucatán the term *mestizo* differs from the standard usage. It indicates a person or attribute—that is, style of dress—which is at root Maya but has been influenced over time by Hispanic culture.

2. These observations were made in the late 1980s and obviously will have to be reassessed following the PAN's victories at the national and regional level beginning in 2000. *Ed.*

A Convention in Zacapu

Salvador Lemus Fernández

During the years immediately following the Mexican revolution, the state of Michoacán became exemplary of some important trends. It was among the several states in the west-central area to be rocked by the Cristero *War (1926–1929). It was also the home state of General Lázaro Cárdenas, who served as its governor from 1928 to 1932. As governor, Cárdenas reinvigorated various revolutionary initiatives, including land reform, anticlericalism, and resolutely secular public education. He also formed the "Revolutionary Labor Confederation of Michoacán," an officially supported labor/campesino union and political organization. Cárdenas would later carry his experiments with such mass-based organizations to the national level during his presidency (1934–1940), experiments which are often viewed as watershed events in modern Mexican political history.*

The narrative below is an excerpt from the unpublished autobiography of agrarian activist Salvador Lemus Fernández, based upon his personal archive and his own memories. Lemus was born in Taretan, a small town in Michoacán, on July 23, 1908, the son of a carpenter-musician. He took an active interest in local agrarian politics from a very young age. While attending an agricultural college between 1927 and 1929, he began to support the social policies of Governor Cárdenas. In 1931 he left his home region to travel north to a revolutionary convention at Zacapu, which lies on a high plain in central-western Michoacán, an area populated principally by mestizos and Purépecha Indians. The region was dominated by large haciendas, and in the 1920s and 1930s it became the scene of bitter and bloody struggles between landowners and land-hungry peasants, who hoped to benefit from the government's land-reform program. It was also a region where the religious struggle was most intense, as Lemus's story graphically demonstrates.

The Secretary General of the State Committee of the Confederation invited me to attend a convention to be held in the town of Zacapu on the eleventh and twelfth of December, 1931. . . . A couple of my friends found a truck that would take us, even though there was no road that led there. I set off with compañero Ventura Mier, who would later be my compadre [co-parent], as

well as with a compañero named Piñón and the truck driver. About half way to Zacapu, the truck broke down at a village called El Tigre. We needed to repair it with a new part before we could continue on to Zacapu. It was around 4:00 in the afternoon when we sent compañero Piñón to fetch the part from Morelia. Mier, the driver, and I intended to spend the night by the truck and wait for him to return.

Let me tell a little story here that shows the sorts of difficulties we could run into in those days. We were on the outskirts of the village of El Tigre with nothing to eat when it occurred to us to go and see if any of the people who lived there would sell us some beans or tortillas or whatever. We went to the first little house, and the woman there said that she couldn't offer us anything because she had nothing at all in her home.

Then compañero Mier brazenly said, "Hey, ma'am. Don't you have anything for the father here?" (The "father" was me, since I was dressed up as a dandy with a suit and all, making me look like a clergyman. Everyone else was wearing campesinos' clothing.)

The woman opened her eyes wide and said, "Really? This gentleman is a priest?"

"Absolutely," said Ventura. "Just don't tell anybody. Keep quiet. Surely you know that priests are persecuted, and who knows what might happen if you sold us a bit of food for him?"

"You're right! But I must have something in here. Maybe just a few eggs."

Then the woman went into the kitchen, where her husband called for her. Then he came over to us to say hello, and in a short while we were eating a pair of scrambled eggs with beans and mouth-watering tortillas. But that wasn't the end of it: The restless woman began to ask us questions. First she wanted to know why I was armed, as we all carried pistols tucked into our belts.

Compañero Mier explained, "You see, the government harasses priests, and sometimes you have to be armed to defend yourself. So he carries a gun, and we are also here to protect him. But no one can know anything. God will know it if the government ever finds out about him."

"Well all right," the woman said. "You wait here."

Night was falling when church bells from the village chapel began to peal. We heard the singing of hymns in the distance, drawing ever nearer. Then the lady said, "Listen, father. Since the fiesta of the Virgin of Guadalupe (December 12) is coming up, why don't we celebrate it today and Christmas tomorrow? Maybe you could go to the church and say a Rosary for us."

"Can't you see the situation we're in?" I asked. "Who knows how many would come?"

Drawing for a poster by Diego Rivera. The poster featured the words: "The Distribution of Land to the Poor is not contrary to the Teachings of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Mother Church. The Mexican people fought and suffered ten years desiring to find the word of our Lord Jesus Christ." The poster aimed to counter clerical hostility to the agrarian reform. (From Ernest Gruening, *Mexico and its Heritage* [New York: The Century Co., 1928], facing p. 265.)

"Couldn't you give us something? Maybe just a short sermon?"

"No I can't. I can't run the risk of letting the government find out about us and then taking us off to prison." That is how I avoided saying Mass.

In the meantime, the religious procession had arrived at the church and waited there expectantly. We left the house and headed toward the truck. On the way, we began to talk about compañero Mier's recklessness. We figured that the townsfolk might attack us if they learned what had happened, since the Cristero War was still in full force. Time passed, the evening got darker, Piñón didn't arrive, and we were afraid to approach any household to ask for shelter for the night.

Some heaps of cornstalks, which the people of the region call "bulls," were stacked up nearby. The villagers pile up their harvest—the corncobs and stalks and everything—to let it dry. So we hollowed out a little cavern in the "bulls" to make a place to spend the night. Naturally, we didn't have any blankets or anything with us. We didn't want to stay in the truck because we thought we

might get ambushed. The next day, compañero Piñón arrived with the part, and we continued on our journey to Zacapu.

When we got there, we found the house in which the Governor, General Lázaro Cárdenas, was having lunch along with many of the leaders and campesinos who belonged to the Confederación. We came in and greeted him, and he invited us to eat. After we had finished lunch, compañero Mier told Cárdenas and his guests about what we had done in El Tigre. The General burst out in laughter, and, of course, all the other compañeros laughed along with him. Even we chuckled, because compañero Mier's gambit really had been quite audacious, and we had had no choice but to play along.

After a while, we returned to the work of the convention. It had opened the previous day, that is, the eleventh of December. It was now the twelfth, the day that the Catholics pay homage to the Virgin of Guadalupe, as the Spaniards had taught them. The convention took place in the yard of the town's most important church. A table of honor had been set up covered with bunting and presided over by the Governor, General Lázaro Cárdenas, and all the regional delegates were there. My friends and I also took part in the proceedings and sometimes spoke, but we preferred to let the delegates do the talking.

At one point, compañero [Antonio] Mayés Navarro called me aside. He had been standing at the dais along with the General. He got down and told me, "The General wants us to go see what is going on in the church, because there are some strange sounds coming from inside."

"Fine. Let's go," I said.

We climbed an exterior stairway that led to the loft and looked in through a window. We saw an incredible mess: broken statuary was scattered on the floor; the woven reeds that the statues were made out of had been torn up; and the depositories where the faithful placed their "offerings" had been thrown onto the ground. We went back to tell the General what we had seen. The governor grew very upset and asked us who we thought could be responsible for the disaster. Someone told him that it was probably a compañera known as Catalina, or "La Pelona" ["The Short-haired Woman"], who was traveling with us. In fact, a rumor began to circulate implying that she had done it. We asked her whether it was true. She acknowledged that she had, saying that she and a group of delegates wanted to "finish with all this once and for all." The General told us that these events did not bode well for us because the townsfolk would find out and no one could tell what might happen then. He said that we had better leave at once and that we could finish the convention elsewhere.

At that moment, the townsfolk began to realize what had happened. They rang the church bells to call together all the Catholics that had been gather-

ing in the churchyard and in a large plaza nearby. As this went on, we carried out the closing ceremonies. The General told us to leave for Tiríndaro, but first we dismantled the equipment we had used during the convention. By this time the church bells had attracted about 500 people to the plaza, and they clearly knew what had happened inside the church. Men, women, and children began to shout insults at us all, but mainly at the Governor. We started to withdraw from town following behind the General, who led La Pelona by the arm.

We had to cross the plaza to get to our hotel, but we noticed that the number of zealots was growing. They were armed with stones, sticks, machetes, and doubtless with pistols. They seemed aggressive. We all came to a standstill in front of the antagonists. Mayés and I were walking just behind the General, and we had to stop short. It seemed like the prelude to a vicious battle. Once the crowd had forced the General to a halt, the people began to jeer at him. They yelled that he was not a governor but a murderer and an enemy of religion. The mob lurched forward threateningly, yet the General stood his ground and asked, "What do you want?"

He was answered by shouts: "We want La Pelona!"

Then La Pelona shook off the General's grip, took a step forward as if to give herself up, and cried, "Here I am!" The General took hold of the back of her dress and jerked her backward between Mayés and me. People in the crowd began to draw pistols and knives. At that point, the armed compañeros from the village home guards tried to halt the multitude's advance by raising their rifles to protect the General and the rest of the group. The guardsmen's attitude annoyed the General, who reproachfully ordered them to keep away, not to get involved, and to be calm. Then Mayés and I marched off with Catalina. We moved quickly between the two groups toward the hotel. As soon as the crowd noticed that we were taking Catalina away the people quit bothering the General and began to follow us instead. We started out at a trot and soon broke into a run, but the throng did the same thing. It was practically on our heels when we made it to the end of the street. About 100 guardsmen were there, though they did not intend to get involved since the General had ordered them not to. But the mob threatened to work itself into a frenzy if it caught us, so we ordered the compañeros to stop its advance. The guardsmen sprung into action and took up positions blocking the street. They cocked their rifles as they took combat positions, some on one knee and others standing. The compañeros' decisive action caught the crowd off guard, and we took advantage of the moment to get to the Hotel García, disguise La Pelona as a man, and rush out of Zacapu towards Tiríndaro.

But who was "La Pelona"? She was Catalina Duarte, a native of Taretan,

the daughter of Jesús Duarte and Josefa Zaragoza (the latter of whom was the half-sister of Mrs. María Béjar de Ruiz, who was later my mother-in-law; she was also the cousin of my compañero Emigdio Ruiz Béjar and of my wife, María Concepción Ruiz Béjar). The family owned a butchershop. Catalina disappeared from town one day for some reason, and I later discovered that she was an active member of the Confederation. She attended nearly all the conventions. She was so brassy that she would ride yearling bulls in village rodeos *(jaripeos)* to the wild applause of the spectators. She completely gave herself over to the Confederation. Her anticlerical attitudes were entirely contrary to those of the rest of her family. Her relatives were not only practicing Catholics, they vigorously opposed the government. For example, everyone knew that one of her brothers killed a compañero named Onésimo Reyes, who was a member of the agrarian community of the Ex-Hacienda of Taretan. She once received a gunshot wound when she got involved in a problem involving a priest. That was Catalina Duarte, a.k.a., La Pelona.

At any rate, we all arrived in Tiríndaro as the General had ordered. We arrived in the village and everyone was preparing to receive the General, or rather had already prepared to do so. The brass bands began to play and the compañeras cooked *corundas, tamales,* and *atoles* for dinner. In other words, as soon as the General arrived there began a huge fiesta—complete with dancing, music, and everything else—that didn't end until the early morning hours.

The Agrarian Reform in La Laguna

Fernando Benítez

The agrarian reform carried out by President Lázaro Cárdenas during the late 1930s was the most sweeping ever undertaken in Latin America, and it certainly marked a watershed in the long history of the Mexican revolution. Unlike similar efforts during the 1920s, this reform affected even lucrative export crops such as cotton and henequen. Indeed, the two showcases of the reform were the cotton-growing region of La Laguna, which is located at the conjunction of the states of Durango and Coahuila, and the henequen zone of Yucatán. These land distributions were carried out with dizzying speed, and have often been criticized as haphazard, politically motivated acts which did little to improve the conditions of the campesinos. In the following excerpt, Mexican writer Fernando Benítez, who has written several books on the dilemmas of the postrevolutionary countryside, provides some sense of the complexity of the issue, for we find that the Cardenista reform's supposed beneficiaries, as well as its alleged victims, are ambivalent about the results.

Paradoxically, La Laguna has no lake to justify its name. This region is really a kind of American Egypt, a desert region crossed by the Nazas and Aguanaval Rivers. In between these is a gigantic crescent of alluvial soils whose richness contrasts sharply with the aridity of the surrounding landscape.

The vast fields of golden wheat and the symmetrical cotton plantations—the work of men—seem out of place next to the immobile and disorderly agaves, the spiny mesquites, . . . and the fleshy plants of the dry Mexican North. . . .

In 1930 the powerful Agricultural Commission of the Laguna Region, of which all of the large landowners were members, tried to exempt the region from any sort of agrarian reform, citing their efficiency and their economic contribution to the nation: with only 1.3 percent of the national population, they claimed, the region produced more than half of the nation's cotton and 7 percent of its wheat.

But the fabled efficiency of the hacendados was contradicted by reality.

An agricultural center of such importance attracted many people who made every effort to remain there. The landowners, in the face of that avalanche of people, gave out lands—not their good lands, of course, but marginal ones—where people settled, living very precariously. This aggravated the [agrarian and social] problem. Later [the *hacendados*] tried unsuccessfully to expel 15,000 farmworker families, leaving only 20,000 resident peons who were paid starvation wages.

Thirty-five thousand pariahs, who supported themselves by working three or four months of the year or by working odd jobs, lived amid the opulent great estates. This led to a period of conflict and organizing beginning in 1935, when the day laborers organized unions, demanded a minimum wage of one and half pesos, eight-hour workdays, and a collective contract that would cover the entire agricultural workforce of La Laguna.

. . . [I]n the first months of 1935 the struggle centered on labor issues rather than on the demand for land, and the *hacendados* fought back by organizing their peons into "white" (or company) unions; they [also] called in 10,000 campesinos from other areas, offering them good wages. In September, a strike on the Hacienda Manila unleashed many more strikes, and launched a period of intense conflict between white and red unions, complete with mass firings. These events instilled in the workers some class-consciousness. While the *hacendados* bribed the local authorities for protection, the workers received the support of the most active members of the Communist Party, the rural teachers, and the union leaders from Torreón and Gómez Palacio.

On November 6, 1936, Cárdenas arrived with a group of engineers and began to distribute lands. The landowners' arrogance disappeared as if by a magic spell. The President made them see that if they used any violence, the government would arm the campesinos, and the landowners, fearful of losing everything, folded their cards and resigned themselves to the inevitable. . . .

Cárdenas distributed the lands of La Laguna in one month, and all of the important and revolutionary measures there were taken during his administration. For the first time, the campesinos were awarded fertile lands instead of the bad, rain-fed lands they had been given earlier; and it was demonstrated beyond any doubt that a well-organized collective [*ejido*] could be as efficient as an hacienda, with the advantage that it favored hundreds of campesinos instead of a single landowning family. The destiny of La Laguna was now, essentially, that of all the *ejidos* created during the time of General Cárdenas, and if problems arose later which have persisted to this day, that was due to the inept bureaucracies and corruption that prevailed during the three decades following the reform.

Lázaro Cárdenas presiding over a land-expropriation ceremony in Michoacán. The man at the microphone is Michoacán governor Gildardo Magaña, who was an important figure in the movement headed by Emiliano Zapata. (From Betty Kirk, *Covering the Mexican Front: The Battle of Europe versus America* [Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1942], 109. Reprinted by permission of the University of Oklahoma Press.)

EIGHT YEARS AFTER the land distribution, a car carrying Egon Erwin Kisch motored along the new highway between the green fields sprinkled with yellow and purple flowers. The famous Czech journalist, who had just escaped from the Nazis, recalled the European headlines of 1936: "Theft of Land Ordered by the Government!," "Has Bolshevism Triumphed in Mexico?" And naturally, he also recalled what the economists, politicians and bureaucrats of Mexico City had said before he began his journey: "The distribution, as you will see with your own eyes, has failed dismally. The old farmworkers have only managed to lose their steady wages and benefits, becoming financial slaves of the banks and sinking into misery. The new owners of the land are down on their knees begging their old masters to once again take over

the estates and hire them back as peons; but the landowners resist doing so, in the hope that the government will return their land en masse."

When Kisch spoke with the *ejidatarios,* they seemed to confirm the alarmist predictions, indeed even to exceed them.

"So, how is life around here?" asked Kisch.

"How do you think? It's plenty bad."

"Bad? Why? The fields are beautiful and the cotton is selling at a good price on the market."

"Sure, but we don't get the benefits; we just get a peso and a half per day."

"But I thought that was just an advance. Don't they distribute the profits when they sell the harvest?"

"Maybe so, but in practice there's never anything to distribute."

"Why is that?"

"Because we still have to settle all of the debts we've had pending since the first year, when we barely harvested anything. And we also have to pay the Ejidal Bank so it can pay the big landowners."

Kisch was reluctant to believe that the agrarian reform had turned the campesinos into slaves of the banks, since they looked rather like European industrial workers and had nothing in common with the Indians he had seen in other parts of Mexico, with their sunken cheeks and rags for clothing. He insisted:

"Yesterday I visited the hospital that you have in Torreón."

"Yes," interrupted one boy, "the hospital is very nice. But even when somebody is sick, it's not so easy to get in there."

"What? They don't admit all of the sick people from the *ejidos*?"

"And if we all went to the hospital, who would do the work?"

"And the schools? The new schools?"

"They would be fine if the children did not have to help out in the fields, especially during harvest time. They can't work and go to school at the same time. Also, there are not enough teachers."

Kisch's last optimistic sentiment withered. He had lost the battle, and he exclaimed:

"So you were all better off before?"

There was a deep silence, like a shout of protest. A woman said:

"For the love of God, sir! How can you think such a thing? That's not what we meant to say; don't misinterpret our words."

"Before," someone clarified, "we lived like beasts. Now at least we are men, and as the harvest grows we earn more."

"What? Didn't you just tell me you earn a peso and a half, no matter how things turn out?"

"Yes, but that's nothing but an advance, sir; we told you that when they figure up the accounts they give us what we've earned."

"But didn't you say that, in practice, they never give you anything?"

"Sure, naturally, because we have to meet our debts. But these debts we're repaying are from the first year when we hardly harvested anything; we told you that, sir."

"Our hospital alone," said a woman with a cranky tone and gestures, "makes us feel like people. Before, we could never call the doctor for want of money to pay him. My mother gave birth to me in an open field, out among the plants, and my husband died in the fields vomiting blood. Now, when we are sick we have our hospital."

"Then," Kisch insisted, "do I understand that you live better than before?"

Kisch later remarked that, "Anyone who believes that our interlocutors were pressured to answer cheerfully and in the affirmative does not know campesinos." Shrugging their shoulders, the campesinos again said that they lived badly, and Kisch, fearing that the long conversation would return to its point of departure, bade them farewell.

In Mexico City he spoke of the big hospital, of the new machines, of the new homes and schools; the educated people and bureaucrats, smiling sarcastically, told him:

"How naive you are! You don't understand Mexico. They never show visitors anything more than what will impress outsiders."

"But we spoke to more than a hundred *ejidatarios* and they all assured us that they live incomparably better than they did before," answered Kisch.

"Sure," they responded, "they're well coached. They don't tell anyone anything except what suits the unions. Pity the man who tells the truth! And you, sir, were you so naive that you believed them?"

KISCH CONCLUDED HIS report on La Laguna by asking: "Where have we heard this before?" And we, thirty years later, must ask ourselves, where do we continue to hear it? Because the campesinos are the same as the ones that Egon Erwin Kisch met. Zapata told Villa that the campesinos of Morelos, long after they had received lands, did not believe those lands really belonged to them. And the campesinos of La Laguna, who were only slightly better off than the boll weevil, "not unlike the Sudanese Berber, the Egyptian felah, the Hindu of Haiderabad, or the black man from Arkansas with his North American citizenship"—that is, all of the cotton cultivators of the world—"they complained bitterly of their fate, even while they refused to live in caves and in the old shacks, to toil in the fields like animals, or to support themselves for a year on two month's wages."

No, Mexico's problem is not the campesinos. They deeply felt themselves to be men and not beasts of burden driven by the whims of Mr. Purcell or the Tlahualilo Company.[1] The problem, the great and tragic problem of the country, is that it was and still is set up by the educated people, the engineers, the bureaucrats, the rectors of national life, with their colonialist education, who hate the people and can only conceive of them as peons or servants.

Pegren-Dutton, an Englishman who monopolized the cotton fiber in Torreón for twenty-five years, told Kisch:

"In reality, Torreón began to grow in 1936 when Cárdenas distributed the land among the cotton pickers. In these eight years the population of Torreón has grown by thirty per cent, and several thousand houses have been built here."

Kisch asked him if this really had anything to do with the distribution of land.

"The big landowners," answered the Englishman, "were foreigners, Spaniards for the most part, who lived in Mexico City or even Madrid, which is where they would invest their profits. Before, a *hacendado* would own up to 75,000 hectares; today, the maximum set by law is 150 hectares. Obviously, if a landowner took the precaution of putting part of his property in the name of his wife or children, he can own, together with his family, 150 hectares multiplied three or four times. But to recover the profits of the old days, farmers nowadays have begun intensive cultivation and above all they have renounced absenteeism; they no longer live in the city, far from their land, so they can personally supervise the exploitation of their lands. And although the old *hacendados* complain bitterly about the agrarian reform, as is natural, in private they recognize that they feel no great nostalgia for the old days, with their complaining peons with their many demands, since that was quite often disagreeable. Do you understand?"

"Do you authorize me, Mr. Pegren, to publish this as your opinion?"

"I've no objection, but do mention at the outset that I am not in agreement with the agrarian policy of Cárdenas."

Kisch finally summarized the problem of La Laguna and the entire nation, saying: "All this land belonged first to one person, then to a few, now to many. Only when everything belongs to everyone will we see an end to the bitter complaints that we always hear, and the eternal arguments about the advantages and disadvantages of the agrarian reform."

Note

1. William Purcell, an Englishman, owned some twenty haciendas in the Laguna region prior to the agrarian reform. The Tlahualilo Company, an Anglo-American cotton concern dating from 1883, owned vast amounts of land and had long been accused of laying claim to a disproportionate share of the waters of the Nazas River. *Ed.*

The Oil Expropriation

Josephus Daniels

In 1937 a labor dispute erupted between Mexican oil workers and the foreign-owned oil companies, most of which were based in the United States. When the oil companies resisted settling the strike in the workers' favor, flaunting the dictates of the Mexican Council of Conciliation and Arbitration, Cárdenas made the stunning announcement on March 18, 1938 that his government was nationalizing the companies' properties. The oil companies responded with a furious anti-Mexican propaganda campaign, but the crisis wound down thanks largely to the government's pledge to pay indemnities (though far below those demanded by the companies), the worsening situation in Europe which demanded U.S. attention, and the judicious conduct of the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico (1933–1942), Josephus Daniels.

In the following excerpt, Daniels describes the tremendous enthusiasm generated in Mexico by Cárdenas's decree.

With the expropriation of foreign oil properties, a wave of delirious enthusiasm swept over Mexico, heightened by bitter denunciations from other countries as people felt that a day of deliverance had come. On March 22, upon the call of the Confederation of Mexican Workers, some two hundred thousand people passed in compact files before the National Palace acclaiming President Cárdenas and carrying banners such as: "They shall not scoff at Mexican Laws." Old inhabitants said there had never been such manifestations of the unity of the Mexican people in the history of Mexico as followed the appeals to the people to uphold the Constitution and the sovereignty of Mexico. It was shared by people who lost sight of oil in their belief that Mexicans must present a united and solid front.

Closing his address to the multitude, Cárdenas told labor men they deserved the support of their government, and counseled them to discipline their ranks, increase production, and avoid insolent attacks—"to prove there is a real, individual liberty justly demanded by the Mexican people."

Many thousands of students in the Mexican University organized an enthu-

Women donate various items to help pay the indemnity for expropriated oil lands. (Reprinted by permission of Fototeca del INAH, Mexico.)

siastic parade. Its Rector, speaking to President Cárdenas, said: "The University offers you its solid support in this moment when the fatherland requires the unity of its sons. It comes to offer the youth of Mexico to be with you as you are with the honor of Mexico."

Catholics Raise Funds

Noticeable was the enthusiasm of Catholics, many of whom had been critical of the Cárdenas government, in raising funds to support his expropriation move. On Sunday, April 30, the Archbishop of Guadalajara advised from the pulpit that it was a "patriotic duty to contribute to this national fund." It was announced (April 3) that Archbishop Martínez had promised a "letter on the oil controversy during Holy Week." On May 3, a circular, approved by archbishops and bishops, was published, exhorting Catholics to send contributions. All over the country in churches collections were taken to help pay for the seized oil properties.

Women Make Expropriation a "National Religion"

Women in Mexico have generally followed an old slogan: "The place of woman is in the home." That was the attitude of women in the early part of April, 1938. Then, as by a miracle, suddenly they became vocal in their patriotism. Cárdenas had made approval of the expropriation of oil a sort of national religion. The people believed—and had grounds for their opinion—that their patrimony had been given for a song to foreigners who refused to pay living wages to the men who worked in the oil fields. When the men gathered by the hundred thousands to show allegiance to Cárdenas after the oil expropriation, the women poured out of their homes by the thousands to voice their ardent support of the leaders who had somehow made the people feel that the oil exploiters were the enemies of their country. What could they do? President Cárdenas had given his word to me on the day after the expropriation that payment would be made. The people were zealous to see that his pledge was kept. What could the women do? Pitifully little toward the millions needed, but all Mexico in a day was full of the spirit of the widow who gave her mite and was commended, having given her all as giving "more than all the rest."

Something the like of which has rarely been seen in any country occurred on the twelfth day of April. By the thousands, women crowded the Zócalo and other parks and in companies marched to the Palace of Fine Arts to give of their all to the call of their country's honor. It was a scene never to be forgotten. Led by Señora Amalia Solórzano de Cárdenas, the President's young and handsome wife, old and young, well-to-do and poor—mainly the latter—as at a religious festival gathered to make, what was to many, an unheard-of sacrifice. They took off wedding rings, bracelets, earrings, and put them, as it seemed to them, on a national altar. All day long, until the receptacles were full and running over, these Mexican women gave and gave. When night came crowds still waited to deposit their offerings, which comprised everything from gold and silver to animals and corn.

What was the value in money of the outpouring of possessions to meet the goal of millions of pesos? Pitiably small—not more than 100,000 pesos—little to pay millions—but the outpouring of the women, stripping themselves of what was dear to them, was the result of a great fervor of patriotism the like of which I had never seen or dreamed. It was of little value for the goal. It was inestimable in cementing the spirit of Mexico, where there was feeling that the Cárdenas move was the symbol of national unity. . . .

Celebration of Anniversary of Expropriation

On the anniversary of the expropriation (March 18, 1939) two thousand people attended a banquet in the bull ring in celebration, and on Sunday seventy-five thousand people gathered in the Zócalo with banners, and heard speeches by President Cárdenas, syndicate workers, and others to celebrate "the historic decree." The ringing of the Hidalgo bell was said to be the signal for throwing off the foreign yoke. The syndicate workers and Señor [Abelardo] Rodríguez, President of the Mexican Revolutionary Party, created great enthusiasm by their attacks of imperialistic policies. President Cárdenas' speech was mild in comparison, but he upheld the course he had pursued, said that no backward step would be made, and indicated that the negotiations going on between him and Mr. Donald Richberg, attorney for the oil companies, would be successful, leaving operation in the hands of the government.

His speech was enthusiastically received, particularly when he denounced the oil companies for launching a fiery campaign through the foreign press in an endeavor "to crack the domestic economy." He defended "the reincorporation of the oil subsoil rights to the hands of the nation." He declared that the oil companies had "made it a practice to obstruct the enforcement of the most fundamental laws by way of diplomatic coercion or mercenary revolt." He declared, "The potential wealth of Mexico, purely hard Indian labor, exemption from taxes, economic privileges and tolerances on the part of government constitute the essential figures of the great prosperity of the petroleum industry in Mexico."

At the same time flags were flown on the towers of the Cathedral which faces one side of the Zócalo. On one of the towers was a large Mexican flag with the eagle and snake. On the other tower was a great flag of the Mexican Revolutionary Party, and high above all was a banner reading: "The PRM extends greetings to President Lázaro Cárdenas, Redeemer of Economic Independence." I do not recall ever before seeing a political banner on the Cathedral.

Cárdenas and the Masses

Arturo Anguiano

Lázaro Cárdenas has entered Mexican folklore as the greatest friend and benefactor of the poor and marginalized. Not surprisingly, he has also been vilified by large landowners, foreign oil companies, and conservatives of all stripes. But there is also a significant body of literature which critiques Cárdenas from the left. Some Marxist writers, with the benefit of hindsight, have identified in his rule the origins of many of Mexico's persistent problems: government domination of labor unions, the continuing poverty of the peasantry, a fixation on industrialization at the expense of human needs, and the clear triumph of state capitalism. A fairly typical example of this perspective is excerpted below.

The new governing forces headed by Lázaro Cárdenas knew that the class struggle was bound to worsen. They therefore considered it necessary to guide the mass movement of workers and peasants by winning their support and orienting their struggles so as to strengthen the State, giving it power that it could use to foment the country's industrial development. The destruction of the large landed estates and the transformation of the old rural structures brought Mexico into the era of mechanization and capitalist relations. Meanwhile, the renovation and encouragement of industry, which obliged the bourgeoisie to break with their anachronistic practice of exploiting the working class to the point of exhaustion, were objectives that the State not only was able to carry out, but carried out without provoking serious social conflicts that might well have caused the incipient social and political regime to waver and break apart. The State lacked its own social base, since the capitalist class did not yet fully identify its interests with those of the government; only the assistance of the masses would allow it to impose its will and realize its objectives.

In order to achieve this, Cárdenas, as the new representative of the State, adopted a policy which, in addition to conciliating classes and conceding social reforms to the workers and peasants, took on a new character that differentiated it from all preceding governments. We shall call this policy "mass politics," since it appealed to the masses and provoked their mobilization. . . .

Although mass politics would surely have developed independently of the person who occupied the presidency, it is certain that Cárdenas's unique personal characteristic and particular style were decisive in reestablishing relations between the State and the working masses. His austere character, firm and full of patience; his strength and dedication to labor; the simplicity of his lifestyle and his egalitarianism—all were keys that allowed him to approach the masses, beginning a new relationship of apparent equality with them. That personality manifested itself in his first acts of government, which were designed to win the sympathy of the masses. Thus, he eliminated the wearing of dress-coats at official ceremonies; he turned Chapultepec Castle, which had till then been the presidential residence, into a museum, while he continued to live with his wife in their private home and later in "Los Pinos" [the current presidential residence]; he cut in half the salaries of government officials, using the rest for "projects for the collective betterment"; he condemned gambling, closing the Foreign Club of Cuernavaca, which included some politicians and military men among its members; and he carried out other measures of this kind. Especially important was his order that the telegraph offices dedicate one hour a day, free of charge, to transmitting the complaints and opinions of peasants and other workers. Such measures had tremendous repercussions, since General Cárdenas's no-nonsense image spread to every corner of the country and won much sympathy among the most diverse social sectors. Cárdenas's image was accepted and admired by the worker and peasant masses, which easily distinguished it from that of traditional politicians.

What best allowed Cárdenas to ally himself with the masses were his constant travels, which brought him to even the most remote and unknown parts of the country. Cárdenas went in search of the masses, and he linked himself closely with them. His electoral campaign, and the trips he took during his administration, were supposed to be a means of learning the conditions of life and the needs of the people at first hand, of studying the problems of each region and the means to resolve them. During his trips, just as in Mexico City, he listened patiently for hours to the workers, peasants, and small farmers who brought him their problems and their complaints. "They have so many needs," said Cárdenas, "they lack so many things, that I can at least listen to them with patience." Cárdenas gave them advice or promised to fulfill their demands. The trips also aimed to "educate the people" in order to secure their cooperation. They taught the masses "the precise conception of their rights and obligations," even though some believe that Cárdenas hoped personally to oversee compliance with his decisions and even to control local leaders.

The trips to every corner of the country constituted one of the special elements of the mass politics that Cárdenas originated. His direct relationship

with the peasants and workers, his socializing with them, allowed him to win the confidence of people who, lacking consciousness and direction of their own, saw in the president someone they could confide in, who listened to them and helped them to resolve their problems. He was not the usual "strong man," hostile, someone to be feared; nor was he the phantasmagorical president whom people heard speak from time to time and who lived in some place they knew nothing about and could not even begin to imagine. No, this president was a man of flesh and blood, a man they could talk to, who would not scold them, who encouraged them to fight for their own vindication. This political style allowed Cárdenas to obtain considerable support and enabled him to control the masses of workers and peasants. . . . Cárdenas was sprouting his "own roots," cementing his authority and power, gaining strength sufficient to achieve the key objective that the State had assigned itself, namely, the industrialization of the country, with all that that implied. . . .

Cárdenas made direct, physical contact with the workers and peasants fundamental to the practice of government. Official functionaries now had to become mass leaders of sorts. In order to ally themselves with workers and peasants they would have to seek them out in the workplaces, in the regions where they lived, with the aim of learning their problems and needs directly. By linking themselves closely with the masses, by beginning a permanent relationship with them, these functionaries would be able to guide them along institutional channels, to control them and regulate their struggle, snuffing out any rebellious tendencies and winning a broad base of support. The Cárdenas style invaded the country, and the governors, along with gubernatorial or congressional candidates, found themselves obliged to adopt the new political strategies.

Cárdenas launched before the entire country an immense propaganda campaign designed to encourage organization, unification, and discipline among the workers and peasants. In every workplace he visited, in every meeting where he spoke to workers, he insisted again and again, to the point of exhaustion, on the need for workers to organize. This would be the president's transcendental preoccupation, his obsession, and it would lead Cárdenas to become the most important propagandist and the leading promoter of the mobilization of the working masses. . . .

But Cárdenas did not just initiate and promote the organization of the workers and peasants into unions or agrarian leagues; his objective was the complete unification of workers and peasants. He criticized inter-union squabbles that arose among workers, denouncing them as "sterile and criminal," and pointing out that the bosses could take advantage of these conflicts. Orga-

nization had to result in unification, in the integration of a united front of all workers. . . . This must include those workers who were as yet unorganized, who were now encouraged to join unions.

In effect, Cárdenas prepared the way for the actions of the State, which was the promoter of worker and peasant organization. Peasants were organized directly by the State, which, through the PNR, took the task into its own hands; workers were aided and encouraged to commit themselves to the State. The president did this because he knew the advantages of worker organization. In his struggle to modernize the country, doing away with large landholdings and fomenting industrialization, Cárdenas, as representative of the State, appealed to the masses and solicited their collaboration in order to begin in earnest to transform the country's economic conditions, obliging the bosses to submit to the laws and the hacendados to accept the government's resolutions in agrarian matters. Without the collaboration of the masses of workers and peasants, "organized, disciplined and unified," Cárdenas reckoned it would be difficult to impose the State upon all social sectors, especially the privileged classes, and to create the bases necessary for the country's economic progress. . . .

The organization and unification of the workers not only served as a base of support for the State that Cárdenas headed, but also put an end to the inter-union squabbles that disrupted the economy. With the workers dispersed among many organizations, each fighting for dominance, struggles were guided from within, that is, by the wage workers themselves; strikes would break out, factories would stop production, the workers would cease to collect their wages, and the factory owners' losses would force them to raise the cost of their products. This retarded industrial development, which is why Cárdenas thought it necessary to unify the workers and reestablish good relations among them. . . .

The policy of promoting the organization and unity of the workers did not run the risk of being counterproductive for the State or for the nation's capitalists. Cárdenas took care to guide the workers' struggle toward purely economic rewards, and when they were integrated into the political process, they remained subordinate to, and controlled by, the State, through the official party. The limited consciousness of the workers, which was formed by the unions and their leaders, was another guarantee that the unification of the workers would not endanger the stability of the regime. On the contrary, the workers were organized precisely in order to maintain and consolidate that stability. Moreover, the organization and unification of the proletariat gave the workers uniform objectives and strengthened them, putting them in a

position to demand from their bosses better economic benefits which would redound to the benefit of the national market, since with less miserable wages the workers would increase their purchasing power and consume manufactured and agricultural products. This stimulated production and increased the profits of the capitalists. . . .