

popular vote, because, besides not having been elected by the people, they have lost the few titles of legality they might have by committing . . . the most scandalous electoral fraud recorded in the history of Mexico.

Third. In order to avoid, as far as possible, the upheavals inherent in every revolutionary movement, all the laws promulgated by the present administration and their respective regulations, except those that are manifestly repugnant to the principles proclaimed in this plan, are declared to be in force, with the reservation to amend, in due time, by constitutional methods, those that require amendment. . . .

In every case the obligations contracted by the Porfirist administration with foreign governments and corporations prior to the 20th proximo will be respected.

In abuse of the law on public lands numerous proprietors of small holdings, in their greater part Indians, have been dispossessed of their lands by rulings of the department of public development . . . or by decisions of the tribunals of the Republic. As it is just to restore to their former owners the lands of which they were dispossessed in such an arbitrary manner, such rulings and decisions are declared subject to revision, and those who have acquired them in such an immoral manner, or their heirs, will be required to restore them to their former owners, to whom they shall also pay an indemnity for the damages suffered. Solely in case those lands have passed to third persons before the promulgation of this plan shall the former owners receive an indemnity from those in whose favor the dispossession was made.

Fourth. Besides the constitution and existing laws, the principle of no reelection of the President and Vice President of the Republic, governors of the States, and municipal presidents is declared to be the supreme law of the Republic until the respective constitutional amendments are made.

Fifth. I assume the character of provisional President of the United States of Mexico, with the necessary powers to make war on the usurping government of Gen. Diaz.

As soon as the capital of the Republic and more than half of the States of the federation are in the power of the forces of the people the provisional President will issue a call for extraordinary general elections one month thereafter, and shall deliver the power to the President who is elected as soon as the result of the election is known. . . .

Seventh. The 20th day of the month of November, after 6 p.m., all citizens of the Republic will take up arms to remove from power all the authorities who now govern it. (The towns which are at distance from means of communication will do so the day previous.) . . .

Fellow citizens, if I call upon you to take up arms and overthrow the government of Gen. Diaz, it is not only because of the unwarranted act he committed during the last elections, but to save the country from the gloomy future that awaits it under his dictatorship and under the government of the nefarious scientific oligarchy which, without scruple and in great haste, are absorbing and wasting the national resources, and, if we permit him to continue in power, in a very short time they will have completed their work; they will have led the people into ignominy and will have degraded them; they will have sucked all their wealth and left them in the most absolute misery; they will have caused the bankruptcy of our finances and the dishonor of our country which, weak, impoverished, and manacled, will find itself without arms to defend its frontiers, its honor, and its institutions.

In so far as concerns me, I have a tranquil conscience, and no one can accuse me of promoting the revolution for personal ends, for it is within the knowledge of the nation that I did everything possible to reach a peaceable arrangement. . . .

He himself justified the present revolution when he said, "Let no citizen impose and perpetuate himself in the exercise of power, and this will be the last revolution."

FRANCISCO I. MADERO.
San Luis Potosí, October 5, 1910.

4

EMILIANO ZAPATA

The Plan of Ayala

1911

The most prominent peasant element of the revolution arose in the state of Morelos, just south of Mexico City. Its head, Emiliano Zapata, had begun as the leader of a small village that sought to recover land expropriated by the neighboring large estate. Zapata and his followers joined with the Madero movement in 1910. But the Morelos peasants did not fully

From Emiliano Zapata et al., "Plan of Ayala," in *Revolution in Mexico: Years of Upheaval, 1910-1940*, ed. James W. Wilkie and Albert L. Michaels (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1984), 45-46.

trust Madero. When it appeared that he would not proceed quickly with land redistribution after his victory over Díaz and his election as president, the Zapatistas rebelled against him, issuing the Plan of Ayala only three weeks after he took office. Zapata's protest and revolt were striking evidence that the revolutionary coalition had shattered because of the conflicting goals of various groups in the multiclass alliance. Madero, representing the middle and upper classes, was concerned with political and legal processes and the protection of private property rights, while the Zapatistas sought the prompt redistribution of land.

We, the undersigned, constituted as a Revolutionary Junta, in order to support and fulfill the promises made by the Revolution of November 20, 1910, solemnly proclaim . . . the following plan:

. . . We declare the said Francisco I. Madero unfit to realize the promises of the Revolution of which he is the author, because he is a traitor to the principles . . . which enabled him to climb to power . . . and because, in order to please the *científicos*, *hacendados*,¹ and *caciques*² who enslave us, he has crushed with fire and blood those Mexicans who seek liberties.

* * *

The Revolutionary Junta of the State of Morelos will not sanction any transactions or compromises until it secures the downfall of the dictatorial elements of Porfirio Díaz and Francisco I. Madero, because the nation is tired of traitors and false liberators who make promises and forget them when they rise to power . . . as tyrants.

As an additional part of the plan that we proclaim, be it known: that the lands, woods, and water usurped by the hacendados, científicos, or caciques, under the cover of tyranny and venal justice, henceforth belong to the towns or citizens in possession of the deeds concerning these properties of which they were despoiled through the devious action of our oppressors. The possession of said properties shall be kept at all costs, arms in hand. The usurpers who think they have a right to said goods may state their claims before special tribunals to be established upon the triumph of the Revolution.

¹ *hacendados*: owners of large estates.

² *caciques*: Originally, *cacique* was the word for an indigenous local leader, but eventually it came to be used for any local political boss.

. . . The immense majority of Mexico's villages and citizens own only the ground on which they stand. They suffer the horrors of poverty without being able to better their social status in any respect, or without being able to dedicate themselves to industry or agriculture due to the fact that the lands, woods, and water are monopolized by a few. For this reason, through prior compensation, one-third of such monopolies will be expropriated from their powerful owners in order that the villages and citizens of Mexico may obtain *ejidos*,³ colonies, town sites, and rural properties for sowing or tilling, and in order that the welfare and prosperity of the Mexican people will be promoted in every way.

The property of those hacendados, científicos, or caciques who directly or indirectly oppose the present plan shall be nationalized, and two-thirds of their remaining property shall be designated for war indemnities—pensions for the widows and orphans of the victims that succumb in the struggle for this plan.

³ *ejidos*: Landholdings held collectively by a village.

5

FRANCISCO "PANCHO" VILLA

Dreams for a Future Mexico

ca. 1913

Francisco "Pancho" Villa was, perhaps, the most notorious revolutionary leader and most certainly the most controversial. Historians have labeled him as everything from a murderous bandit to a great reformer. Villa represented the middle-class, peasant, and working-class segments of the revolutionary movement. He had been at various times a muleteer (hauling ore and mining supplies), a small business operator, and an outlaw. Villa was a mercurial figure and a tough, at times brutal, military leader. But he had a vision for the future and a sincere affection for his loyal soldiers. All of this comes through in the unpublished parts of his memoirs. This selection outlines Villa's dream, helping us to understand why he and his followers rebelled and continued to fight.

From Francisco Villa, unpublished memoir, quoted in Friedrich Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 280–81.

The battle of Tierra Blanca, according to my memory, began on November 23, 1913, and ended two days later at night. The enemy lost more than one thousand men and left me three trains and two pieces of artillery.

12

J. B. TREVIÑO

A Losing General's Perspective

ca. 1916

Although Obregón destroyed Villa's army in 1915, the former bandit remained a formidable force in northern Mexico, especially Chihuahua. Venustiano Carranza's army could not end Villa's resistance. In this dispatch, General J. B. Treviño, who headed the army sent by Carranza to stop Villa in 1916, describes a difficult few days. He blames others for his defeat, extols the bravery of his soldiers, and defends his own honor. Treviño, educated at Mexico's national military college as an engineer, was one of the best-trained officers in any of the revolutionary armies. He refers to his foes as "bandits," clearly indicating his disdain for them. Indeed, there was much bitterness between the Carrancistas and the Villistas.

To: General Alvaro Obregón
From: J. B. Treviño

Permit me to communicate with you that on the 27th at 3 a.m. the bandits initiated a desperate attack over the whole area and after two hours, having completely exhausted our ammunition, I was obligated to withdraw our forces which we effected in relative order, part of our cavalry and infantry leaving on trains going north and another part of the same with the undersigned to Aldama. This last I did with the object of

From J. B. Treviño to Alvaro Obregón, dispatch, no date, in Friedrich Katz, "La Última Gran Campaña de Francisco Villa," *Boletín* (Fideicomiso Archivos Plutarco Elías Calles y Fernando Torreblanca), no. 5 (1991). Translated by Mark Wasserman.

looking to link with the column of General Murguía, which did not take place until the 30th in the Bachimba station, from where he continued the advance of said column encountering the enemy between Horcasitas station and the Masula station on the 1st of the present month. Earlier I fought six hours, myself taking direct command of the infantry and which combat resulted disastrously for the bandits, who fled in different directions, with the main body of them heading to Santa Isabel. Yesterday, the advance continued to this plaza, which was abandoned by the enemy, General Murguía's column taking possession of it at 7 p.m. The bandits had set out to sack the town and shoot the municipal president and some civilians. During the four days of the defense of this plaza, it took great force to save it, but the effort was futile because of the complete scarcity of munitions, . . . The soldiers who defended this plaza endured defeat that deserves the honorable opinion of this city. . . . All of my officers did their duty and as a result the majority were killed or wounded. I consider myself to have complied with my duty to the very end. Having been wounded in this action, I ask respectfully that you permit me to travel to the capital of the Republic to attend to reestablishing my health. Advise me the best method by which I can deliver the forces under my command.

13

EMILIANO ZAPATA

The Possibility of Alliance with Villa

1914

In this letter, written January 19, 1914 at the height of Villa's military power, Zapata, deeply disillusioned by the reluctance of Madero and Carranza to endorse the immediate redistribution of land in Morelos and other regions, probes for common ground to form an alliance with Villa. Later in 1914, Villa and Zapata would join together to capture Mexico City. But theirs was an ambivalent partnership. In 1915, Zapata would

From Emiliano Zapata to Francisco Villa, January 19, 1914, in Richard M. Estrada, "Zapata to Villa, Revolutionary Camp in Morelos, January 19, 1914," *Proceedings of the Pacific Coast Council on Latin American Studies* 8 (1981-1982): 165-67.

not commit his forces to assist Villa against Carranza, accounting at least in part for Villa's defeat.

The Liberating Army of the South and Center

REVOLUTIONARY CAMP IN MORELOS, JANUARY 19, 1914

General Francisco Villa
Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua

Esteemed General and friend:

I received yours dated November 28, 1913, which I have read closely and I respond to you that the ideals of the Revolution of the South and Center of the Republic have always been and will continue to be those of "Land and Liberty"; that they are the hopes and ardent desires of the Mexican people, and even though it is true as you say that our enemies intrigue toward the end of undermining the noble and just cause that we defend, they will never be successful while there remains one human being alive in these regions of our nation; and rest assured that we, the southern revolutionaries, will not allow ourselves to be deceived, for the war of three long years has provided us with hard lessons, and I await [the expression of a] similar position from you, [i.e.] that you will not allow the traitors and false supporters of the revolutionary cause to deceive you. Remember the case of Pascual Orozco, Jr., who, after distinguishing himself for his patriotism and good intentions in favor of the fatherland, to the point of occupying a respected place in the history of our country, turned his arms against the fatherland and established a common cause with those who betrayed it, and there you have him! Defending the interests of the enemies of progress and well-being of the Republic. Damned by all who believe they have the right to call themselves Mexicans, and why? Because he allowed himself to be deceived by our enemies. And therefore I say to you, and as you similarly expressed to me, that we not let ourselves be deceived by our enemies. Let us be wary of those false idealists, who eventually turn into fanatical personalists, let us beware of those personalists who masked as idealists proceed to ruin the fatherland[.] As you well know by experience . . . the personalist causes have never brought happiness to the nation, but on the contrary, those causes always were, are, and will be the misfortune of the Republic; there is our history, as if the sad events of three long years of war were not enough to demonstrate it. Because of that I repeat to you, that we should be vigilant of all our companions and false supporters so that we will not be surprised, and so that our cause will not be betrayed and the people's will not be mocked.

You tell me in your aforementioned letter, which I am pleased to answer, that the day is not far off when we will have to attack the capital of the Republic with blood and fire, sweeping away all of those corrupt elements who are the enemies of the people, who are called científicos, militarism and clericalism[.] . . . The truth is: . . . we have to undertake these executions in order to finish off these enemies of the fatherland, because only in that manner will there be peace and will the reforms of the Revolution be put into effect. Remember that the Revolution which began on November 20, 1910 failed solely because upon entering Mexico City it did not decapitate its enemies, and they were the ones who ultimately defeated it. . . .

Believe me, that I like my comrades, the southern revolutionaries, have always had faith in the triumph of our cause, not just now that the evil and illegal government is moribund, but rather, ever since the South continued the Revolution, begun by Madero, when he took possession of the presidential chair and betrayed the people; when only the South raised the standard of liberty, justice and law, where its sons, boldly and courageously combatted the treacherous Government; when the idealistic Government, which turned into a personalistic and dictatorial government, counted on adequate forces with which to fight us.

I am similarly impressed that *you are about to take the capital of the State of Chihuahua, and that afterwards you will begin the division of the lands among the people, beginning by dividing those lands that are in possession of the enemy*, and with regard to this matter, I must say to you that it is to be hoped that this division of lands will be effected in accordance with the stipulations of the Plan de Ayala, which in its relevant part states these words:

Sixth. —As an additional part of the plan we invoke, we give notice: that [regarding] the fields, timber, and water which the landlords, científicos or bosses have usurped, the pueblos or citizens who have titles corresponding to those properties will immediately enter into possession of that real estate of which they have been despoiled by the bad faith of our oppressors, maintaining at any cost with arms in hand the mentioned possession; and the usurpers who consider themselves with a right to them (those properties) will deduce it before the special tribunals which will be established on the triumph of the revolution.

And, lastly, I assure you that if the villages are given what belongs to them and if the Plan de Ayala is complied with, the peace of the nation will be assured and the prosperity and well-being of the Republic will be a fact.

Similarly, I hope that I will soon be able to embrace you and that you will soon approach the capital of the Republic, so that we may be in

contact and plan the triumphal entry into Mexico City, and then yes, the Revolution will hoist the flag of reform, liberty, justice and law over the National Palace.

Without further [thoughts] for the moment, and . . . [repeating my desire] that you not forget my recommendation that the partitioning of lands in the North be undertaken in conformity with the Plan of Ayala—because I have faith that you may well be the only one in the North who is concerned with the progress of the people, and the one who essays to effect in those regions the division of lands and the parcelling of the large monopolies of lands, as is indicated by the Plan de Ayala—, I salute you and your comrades-in-arms, to whom I hope you will convey my respects.

I am your most affectionate, attentive and faithful friend and servant.

EL GENERAL
[Emiliano Zapata]

14

ALVARO OBREGÓN

The Battle at Celaya

April 13–15, 1915

Alvaro Obregón was indisputably the best general of the Revolution. More than his mortal enemy, Pancho Villa, he adapted his tactics to modern warfare, using trenches, barbed wire, and machine guns to frustrate the daring and ultimately failed attacks of his opponent. A Sonoran, he joined the Revolution late in 1911, later attaching himself to Venustiano Carranza after the death of Francisco Madero in 1913. He defeated Villa in a series of hard-fought battles in the spring of 1915. During one of those battles, he lost an arm. Bleeding profusely from his wound, he tried unsuccessfully to kill himself, only to have the gun jam. Obregón was elected president in 1920 and served until 1924. He fell victim to an assassin's bullet in 1928, just after his election for a second term as

From Alvaro Obregón, *Ocho Mil Kilometros en Campaña* (1917; repr., Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1959), 311–14. Translated by Mark Wasserman.

president. His memoir, Ocho Mil Kilometros en Campaña (Eight Thousand Miles in Campaign), primarily describes his military campaigns against Huerta's federal army in 1913 and 1914. This selection, however, is about the crucial battle against Villa's forces at Celaya in 1915, when Obregón used Villa's impatience to defeat him.

At five in the afternoon the battle begins. Initially, we heard fire from the front of the positions occupied by the First Brigade of Infantry, which ended after a short while. At six our side opened fire, the artillery began, and in a few minutes, bombardments erupted from all of the cannon from both sides. By nine at night the hard-fought battle spread over a zone of approximately twelve kilometers.

The enemy continued to advance on our flanks, then attacked our rear guard. . . . The reactionaries continued to attack and suffered large losses.

The artillery did not cease. The assaults continued through breakfast on the fourteenth. Protected by the night, the enemy advanced to within five hundred meters of our lines. The land was perfectly flat and deforested, and there was no hiding the combatants, who fought desperately. Our troops did not retreat a single step, and the enemy did not succeed in taking any of our positions. At five a.m. I ordered reinforcements. . . . And the fighting continued until dusk.

In the morning there occurred a bloody battle on our flanks. . . . I ordered my troops to continue the fight until 7 a.m. the next day, when the cavalry would attack the enemy flanks. . . . All replied that the spirits of the troops were high and that they would continue to fight in these conditions. . . .

At noon I had a telegraphic conference with General Cesáreo Castro, manifesting my wishes to shift the burden to the cavalry the next day, at which time the enemy, without noticing our movements, would believe us lost and then commit his reserves into the line of fire and result in a complete disaster. The battle continued with bloodshed at the flanks and center. . . .

After four a.m. on the fifteenth I ordered General Amaro and others to involve their troops to the right of the enemy, where the reactionaries amounted to 6,000 and had taken position on the banks of the Río La Laja.

On the morning of the 15th I ordered General Hill's infantry, then acting as a defensive line on the right flank, in support of the cavalry column on the right of the enemy. . . . I ordered General Laveaza to cover the right flank. . . . The cavalry dislocated the enemy at the Hacienda