

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.

And I see that orderly grouping of little houses in which soldiers/farmers live: clean and white, smiling and hygienic, the true homes for which one really fights with courage and for whose defense one would die.

I see these luxurious fruit orchards, these abundant vegetable gardens, these sown fields, these corn fields, these alfalfa fields which not only a large landowner harvests and accrues benefits from but rather an entire family cultivates and gathers, cares for, and harvests.

And I see that the school is the tallest building in the hamlet and the teacher is the most respected man; and that the one who studies and knows the most is the most appreciated youth; and that the happiest father is he who will leave his land, animals, and house to his learned, good, and honest child, so that new, healthy, learned, good, hard-working children will arise from this sanctified home, who will dignify the country and honor the race.

Oh, if life will only permit me to live long enough to see this dream realized! . . . The true army of the people, which I loved so much, dispersed through the entire land, plowing the soil, making it respectable and respected! Fifteen years! Twenty years, perhaps! And the sons of my soldiers, who will bring this ideal to fruition will know with what tenderness I caressed this dream of my soul. And they will not suffer, they will not have the threat of suffering, which I endured in the fullest years of my life, which formed my youth and my entire maturity.

6

JOHN KENNETH TURNER

Barbarous Mexico

1910

Although the Mexican Revolution originated in considerable part because of injustices perpetrated by the Díaz regime in the countryside, particularly the expropriations of tillage land and the national government's incursions against local autonomy, not all peasants rebelled. In fact, the people who were the most badly treated were the least likely to take up

From John Kenneth Turner, *Barbarous Mexico* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1910), 12-28, 30-32.

arms. Such was the case in the henequen plantations of Yucatán, where Yaquis deported from Sonora and Mayas from the local regions were enslaved. Henequen, the fiber from a species of the agave plant, had become an important export crop because it yielded twine used for tying up wheat in harvesting machines. John Kenneth Turner was a muckraking American journalist who traveled in Mexico during the last years of the Díaz regime, and who discovered and publicized shocking conditions on henequen plantations. This excerpt shows just how vicious the treatment of indigenous peoples was under Díaz.

Slavery in Mexico! Yes, I found it. I found it first in Yucatan. The peninsula of Yucatan is an elbow of Central America, which shoots off in a northeasterly direction almost half way to Florida. . . .

. . . The surface of the state is almost solid rock, so nearly solid that it is usually impossible to plant a tree without first blasting a hole to receive the shoot and make a place for the roots. Yet this naturally barren land is more densely populated than is our own United States. More than that, within one-fourth of the territory three-fourths of the people live, and the density of the population runs to nearly seventy-five per square mile.

The secret of these peculiar conditions is that the soil and the climate of northern Yucatan happen to be perfectly adapted to the production of that hardy species of century plant which produces *henequen*, or sisal hemp. Hence we find the city of Merida, a beautiful modern city claiming a population of 60,000 people, and surrounding it, supporting it, vast henequen plantations on which the rows of gigantic green plants extend for miles and miles. The farms are so large that each has a little city of its own, inhabited by from 500 to 2,500 people, according to the size of the farm. The owners of these great farms are the chief slave-holders of Yucatan; the inhabitants of the little cities are the slaves. . . . The slave-holders' club numbers 250 members, but the vast majority of the lands and the slaves are concentrated in the hands of fifty henequen kings. The slaves number more than one hundred thousand. . . .

Chief among the henequen kings of Yucatan is Olegario Molina, former governor of the state and Secretary of Fomento (Public Promotion) of Mexico. Molina's holdings of lands in Yucatan and Quintana Roo aggregate 15,000,000 acres, or 23,000 square miles—a small kingdom in itself. The fifty kings live in costly palaces in Merida and many of them have homes abroad. They travel a great deal, usually they speak

2

At War

The military history of the Revolution can be divided roughly into four phases. The combat began as guerrilla warfare in Chihuahua, the northern state just below El Paso, Texas. The first phase ended with the siege and surrender of Ciudad Juárez in May 1911 and Díaz's exile. There followed a year or so of guerrilla warfare in the south and Pascual Orozco's revolt in the north. During the third phase, 1913 to 1915, conventional warfare with large battles predominated, although the Zapatistas and others carried on a continuous guerrilla struggle in the regions south of Mexico City. The largest, bloodiest battles were fought during these years. Alvaro Obregón's destruction of Pancho Villa's army in 1915 and Zapata's retreat led to the fourth stage, more guerrilla warfare, which lasted until 1920, when Villa at last laid down his arms.

9

JOHN REED

Villa's Rules of War

1914

Pancho Villa seemed indestructible in 1914 as he crushed the federal army, led by General (and President) Victoriano Huerta. Always colorful and sometimes murderous, Villa was a magnet for newspaper correspondents from all over the world, especially the United States. One of the most famous journalists of the early twentieth century, John Reed, got his start reporting on the Mexican Revolution and Villa. Reed's book

From John Reed, *Insurgent Mexico* (New York: Appleton, 1914), 140–44.

Insurgent Mexico was derived from stories that originally appeared in the Metropolitan Magazine in 1913 and 1914. Reed covered Villa's stunning campaign against Huerta, who had overthrown and killed Francisco Madero, the first head of the Revolution, in 1913. Villa was popularly known for his boldness on the battlefield. In this selection, Reed presents him as a tactical innovator who "invented" nighttime attacks and hospital railroad cars and employed quick mobility to overcome his enemies. Reed, like the great novelist Mariano Azuela, gets to the grit and the emotions of an army on the move.

Villa had to invent an entirely original method of warfare, because he never had a chance to learn anything of accepted military strategy. In that he is without the possibility of any doubt the greatest leader Mexico has ever had. . . . Secrecy, quickness of movement, the adaptation of his plans to the character of the country and of his soldiers,—the value of intimate relations with the rank and file, and of building up a tradition among the enemy that his army is invincible, and that he himself bears a charmed life,—these are his characteristics. He knew nothing of accepted European standards of strategy or of discipline. One of the troubles of the Mexican federal army is that its officers are thoroughly saturated with conventional military theory. The Mexican soldier is . . . , above all, a loose, individual, guerrilla fighter. Red-tape simply paralyzes the machine. When Villa's army goes into battle he is not hampered by salutes, or rigid respect for officers, or trigonometrical calculations of the trajectories of projectiles, or theories of the percentage of hits in a thousand rounds of rifle fire, or the function of cavalry, infantry and artillery in any particular position, or rigid obedience to the secret knowledge of its superiors. . . . But he does know that guerrilla fighters cannot be driven blindly in platoons around the field in perfect step, that men fighting individually and of their own free will are braver than long volleying rows in the trenches, lashed to it by officers with the flat of their swords. And where the fighting is fiercest—when a ragged mob of fierce brown men with hand bombs and rifles rush the bullet-swept streets of an ambushed town—Villa is among them, like any common soldier.

Up to his day, Mexican armies had always carried with them hundreds of the women and children of the soldiers; Villa was the first man to think of swift forced marches of bodies of cavalry, leaving their women behind. Up to his time no Mexican army had ever abandoned its base; it had always stuck closely to the railroad and the supply

trains. But Villa struck terror into the enemy by abandoning his trains and throwing his entire effective army upon the field, as he did at Gomez Palacio. He invented in Mexico that most demoralizing form of battle—the night attack. When, after the fall of Torreon last September, he withdrew his entire army in the face of Orozco's advance from Mexico City and for five days unsuccessfully attacked Chihuahua, it was a terrible shock to the Federal General when he waked up one morning and found that Villa had sneaked around the city under cover of darkness, captured a freight train at Terrazas and descended with his entire army upon the comparatively undefended city of Juarez. It wasn't fair! Villa found that he hadn't enough trains to carry all his soldiers, even when he had ambushed and captured a Federal troop train, sent south by General Castro, the Federal commander in Juarez. So he telegraphed that gentleman as follows, signing the name of the Colonel in command of the troop train: "Engine broken down at Moctezuma. Send another engine and five cars." The unsuspecting Castro immediately dispatched a new train. Villa then telegraphed him: "Wires cut between here and Chihuahua. Large force of rebels approaching from south. What shall I do?" Castro replied: "Return at once." And Villa obeyed, telegraphing cheering messages at every station along the way. The Federal commander got wind of his coming about an hour before he arrived, and left, without informing his garrison, so that, outside of a small massacre, Villa took Juarez almost without a shot. And with the border so near he managed to smuggle across enough ammunition to equip his almost armless forces and a week later sallied out and routed the pursuing Federal forces with great slaughter at Tierra Blanca.

General Hugh L. Scott, in command of the American troops at Fort Bliss, [Texas,] sent Villa a little pamphlet containing the Rules of War adopted by the Hague Conference. He spent hours poring over it. It interested and amused him hugely. He said: ". . . It seems to me a funny thing to make rules about war. It's not a game. What is the difference between civilized war and any other kind of war? . . ."

As far as I could see, the Rules of War didn't make any difference in Villa's original method of fighting. The *colorados*¹ he executed wherever he captured them; because, he said, they were peons like the Revolutionists and that no peon would volunteer against the cause of liberty unless he were bad. The Federal officers also he killed, because, he explained, they were educated men and ought to know better. But the Federal common soldiers he set at liberty because most of them were

¹ *colorados*: The followers of Pascual Orozco, who rebelled against Madero in 1912.

conscripts, and thought that they were fighting for the Patria [fatherland]. There is no case on record where he wantonly killed a man. . . .

. . . Villa, although he had never heard of the Rules of War, carried with his army the only field hospital of any effectiveness that any Mexican army has ever carried. It consisted of forty box-cars enameled inside, fitted with operating tables and all the latest appliances of surgery, and manned by more than sixty doctors and nurses. Every day during the battle shuttle trains full of the desperately wounded ran from the front to the base hospitals at Parral, Jimenez and Chihuahua. He took care of the Federal wounded just as carefully as of his own men. Ahead of his own supply train went another train, carrying two thousand sacks of flour, and also coffee, corn, sugar, and cigarettes to feed the entire starving population of the country around Durango City and Torreon.

The common soldiers adore him for his bravery and his coarse, blunt humor. Often I have seen him slouched on his cot in the little red caboose in which he always traveled, cracking jokes familiarly with twenty ragged privates sprawled on the floor, chairs and tables. When the army was entraining or detraining, Villa personally would be on hand in a dirty old suit, without a collar, kicking mules in the stomach and pushing horses in and out of the stock-cars.

10

JOHN REED

The Horrors of Battle

1914

John Reed was not one to observe from a position of safety. He ventured onto the battlefield. In this selection from chapters titled "The Bloody Dawn," and "Battle," he illustrates the horrors of war, from the unending noise of the battlefield to the terror of hand-to-hand combat. The soldiers seem to have been perpetually afraid, hungry, and exhausted. We can also discern a hint of disillusionment among both soldiers and civilians as the war continued longer than anyone had anticipated.

From John Reed, *Insurgent Mexico* (Appleton, 1914), 208–12, 214–15, 220–29.