

Many Causes, Movements, Failures, 1910–1913

The Regional Nature of Maderismo

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It may seem trite to state once again that Mexico is, even today, a nation of regions despite the efforts of regimes from that of Benito Juárez in the nineteenth century to today's ruling party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), to wield all-embracing and effective control from the national level. Therefore, a view of Mexican history from a regional perspective can provide a very different and instructive view of the nation's development.

One of the earlier, and at least for a while, seemingly more effective efforts to tame and corral Mexico's regions was that of the dictator Porfirio Díaz (1876–1911). As time would prove, however, Díaz's policies did not eliminate this phenomenon. Instead, many of his developmental policies actually exacerbated longtime centrifugal tendencies. The intrusion of increasing central government control and modern economic capitalistic practices disrupted more traditional political and economic structures and tied previously quite ^{economically} autonomous areas more closely to the vicissitudes of the policies of Mexico City and world markets. By the first decade of this century, regional elements of all socioeconomic stripes had begun to question and even challenge Díaz's threatening ways.

Little that was concrete could be achieved, however, to redress the threat to regional interests by the Díaz regime, as indicated by the early failures of the so-called "precursor movement" after 1900, until exogenous economic and political circumstances (the impact of the United States economy and the debate ^{over} Díaz's successor) changed later in the decade. These factors, then, allowed for the birth of competing political movements, including that of Francisco I. Madero, himself the son of a frustrated and economically threatened regional elite family. Madero's call for political reform (leavened only lightly with socioeconomic content) quickly garnered support from large numbers of regional elements.

Madero's political and then revolutionary support enabling him to overthrow the Díaz dictatorship came primarily, although not exclusively, from

two regions of the country. The most important was that composed of the five contiguous northwestern states of Chihuahua, Sonora, Sinaloa, Durango, and Coahuila. The second principal region was that of the five adjoining central states of Guerrero, Morelos, Puebla, Tlaxcala, and Veracruz. Other areas, especially western and southeastern Mexico, proved to be much less involved in the Maderista movement between 1909 and 1911.

Madero's rise to power in 1911 meant the establishment of at least nominally Maderista governments in all the nation's states. Nevertheless, continuing opposition to Madero, from the Porfirian right and then increasingly from the left as the revolutionary cum president proved incapable (and unwilling) to undertake significant changes, soon undermined the new government. In this case, too, the most serious rebel movements to challenge the administration came from the northwestern and central states that had earlier provided Madero with his main base of support. Again, other parts of the country boasted only marginal insurrections against the central government. Although not immediately nor directly successful, these anti-Madero movements did help to weaken the regime, thus nurturing the February 1913 coup d'état headed by General Victoriano Huerta that finally toppled Madero from power. In turn, ironically, Huerta in 1913 and 1914, and then Venustiano Carranza from 1915 to 1920, would have to face armed challenges to their governments from, again, these same two regions of the country.

Origins

At the risk of oversimplification, two phenomenon can be posited as the principal factors causing the Madero revolution, capitalistic penetration of the economy and society and increasing central government control of the political system. Each had far-reaching and complex repercussions, and their impact was greatest in the northwestern and central regions of the country, the areas where the Maderistas were strongest.

Capitalistic penetration of the country during the Porfiriato had several important economic and social effects. It tied Mexico's economy more closely to the outside world (especially the United States). This linkage led to severe dislocations in 1905 when Mexico devalued its silver-based currency, the peso, and switched to the gold standard, and again after 1907 when economic depression in the United States hurt the Mexican mining, textile, and agricultural sectors with thousands of people suddenly out of work. The opening of foreign markets to Mexico's natural resources, mainly foodstuffs and minerals, combined with the introduction of the railroad, prompted the rapid com-

mercialization and modernization of agriculture and mining, the disruption of traditional economic practices, the loss of village lands, rising prices, and the shortage of basic commodities. The competition of foreign investment and the presence of many non-Mexicans in the country provoked a nationalistic reaction (including attacks on foreigners). The creation of a select domestic elite, allied with foreign interests at the expense of other nationals, especially hurt certain key provincial-upper-class interests. Meanwhile, the middle class chafed under inequitable taxes and limited economic opportunities while the lower classes, both urban and rural, struggled to survive under generally deteriorating conditions.

Díaz's program of political centralization also had significant repercussions that led to the alienation of regional elements. A smoothly functioning "investment-worthy" modern state could not tolerate troublesome autonomous regions. Central government interference in state and local affairs meant the imposition of outsiders, encouraged abusive and corrupt authorities, and frustrated politically ambitious locals not allied with the regime. It also threatened the integrity of the pueblo (particularly *municipio libre*) and led to strict enforcement of the universally hated levy.

These two factors alone, capitalistic advances and political centralization, however, are not enough to explain fully why Maderismo took solid root in the northwest and center of the country. Indeed, other areas of the nation also underwent similar experiences, yet failed to back the movement strongly. The Maderistas also prospered, then, where the liberal movement, including its later more radical manifestation, the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM), had been most activé between 1900 and 1910. Although unsuccessful in toppling the Díaz regime, the PLM offered a coherent alternative political and socioeconomic program (much of which eventually would be incorporated, unofficially at least, into the Maderista program); forced the authorities to step up their repression, thus exposing even more clearly the contradictions within the regime and alienating more people; organized principally urban workers; and trained an armed cadre that would play an important role in the Madero revolution. Another factor was the activities of the Protestant, and especially the Methodist, church in the northwest and center of the nation. Its calls for civil rights and constitutional liberties appealed to many. Probably the most well-known Protestant of the revolution was Pascual Orozco, but many other insurgents, especially old-line liberals already wary of or hostile to the Catholic church, came under Protestant influence. A mobile work force also seems to have been a prerequisite for successful political organizing. In those areas where workers had the option of geographic and occupational mobil-

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ity, they were much more aware of their condition and surroundings, less dependent upon the largess of bosses and owners, able to make mutually beneficial contacts, and generally more willing to get involved in political activity. Students, too, played an important role in the movement; often the offspring of provincial urban elites, they gained theoretical knowledge and political experience in the state capital and then went home to proselytize their family and friends. Finally, it is evident that the Maderistas prospered most where there existed strong local leaders willing to risk themselves for the cause. This type of person, like Abraham González in Chihuahua and Aquiles Serdán in Puebla, seems to have been most prevalent in the northwest and center, perhaps because of coincidence but more likely as a result of the circumstances in which they lived, for both were from old middle-class families marginalized from the Díaz regime.¹

The north of Mexico has long been recognized as a region apart from the remainder of the country. It exhibited several historically well-defined characteristics that help to explain why it was the most rebellious region throughout the Madero period as well as during the entire revolution. Distant and quite isolated from the influence of central Mexico and lacking a large sedentary Indian population, the north developed without the same degree of constraint that the Catholic church, state, and hacienda imposed on other areas of the country. With labor scarce and mobile and formed by a frontier mentality, there existed a large degree of socioeconomic and geographical mobility and opportunity for the self-made man. Many of these people came to resent the closed Porfirian system. Although influenced by United States economic and political liberalism (many having visited or lived north of the border), they disliked foreign monopolization of large sectors of the economy. To these elements, then, the calls for political change by Madero, himself a northerner, had much appeal.²

In Chihuahua, the focal point of the Maderista revolution in the northwest, monopolization of economic and political life by the Terrazas-Creel family and the intrusion of the railroad caused deep-seated discontent among a cross-section of society from the middle class and small landowners to the workers. The PLM also added to the widespread local tension by provoking harsh government crackdowns. After 1905 the state suffered greatly from widespread encroachment on communal and municipal lands following the implementation of the Municipal Land Law of that year. Then, after 1907, the international economic turndown hurt industry and agriculture while poor weather only exacerbated the difficult situation. Indeed, Mexico's close and dependent economic relationship with the United States became very evident

after the 1907 crisis; and the inability of the U.S. to absorb Chihuahua's discontented and unemployed laborers forced many to return to or remain at home where they joined the revolutionary armies. A good example of this type of worker was José Inéz Salazar, who found employment on both sides of the border as a miner, railroad hand, foreman, and smuggler before joining the PLM and then the Maderistas in 1910. Meanwhile, middle-class leadership emerged in the persons of Abraham González, Silvestre Terrazas, and, in the volatile and mountainous western part of the state, Pascual Orozco.³

In neighboring Sonora, the foreign-aided economic boom of the Porfiriato had uneven and divisive effects. It barely touched such traditional centers of economic and political power as Alamos and Hermosillo, but had a large impact on other areas like Guaymas and Navajoa. The latter's economic fortune, however, was not accompanied by a corresponding increase in political power, thus causing a breach between the new rich and the old political elite. These upstarts, along with disaffected lower-middle-class elements who also benefited from the boom but resented the powerful and wealthy traditional bourgeoisie in the state, united to initiate the Madero movement. One of its principal leaders, hacendado José María Maytorena, led a group of fellow wealthy landowners, professionals, and petty entrepreneurs against the regime. Their major grievances were the government's policies of encouraging foreign developers in the state and the carrying out of Indian extermination campaigns, both of which endangered the elite's precarious labor supply. Anti-foreign sentiment took its most concrete manifestation in the form of attacks on Chinese who dominated petty commerce in many northwestern towns.⁴

Durango, another northwestern state leavened with liberal influence and anti-Americanism as a result of large United States investments in mines and haciendas, also played an important role in the Madero period. Foreign control of mining tied Durango to the world silver market, which collapsed after 1895. New investments in agriculture also accelerated the growth of capital-intensive joint-stock companies destroying the old paternalistic hacendado-client relationship heretofore predominant on the state's haciendas. This process resulted in the rise of a mobile wage labor system and the displacement of peasants who then joined the revolutionary armies. Díaz's protection of foreign investors at the expense of middle-class interests also alienated this key sector of the state's society.⁵

In Coahuila, Madero's home state, discontent also existed, especially among rancheros and the urban petty bourgeoisie who resented the unequal tax structure, foreign economic intrusion, and the monopolization of the political system by Díaz cronies. Unemployment among rural workers, inadequate and

unequal educational and health services, and threats to village autonomy by large landowners also agitated the lower classes. As in other areas of the northwest, the 1907 economic downturn combined with the 1910 drought, which drastically cut food supplies for rural dwellers, added to the tension. Here foreigners, too, became targets of a rising nationalistic backlash as peons singled out Spanish-owned businesses and ranches. Finally, the defeat of Madero-backed Venustiano Carranza for the governorship in 1909 by a Díaz-imposed candidate, Jesús del Valle, gained many supporters for the Maderista cause.⁶

The cotton-growing Comarca Lagunera, located along the Coahuila-Durango border, became a particularly fecund seedbed of revolutionary activity. Anti-foreign sentiment, caused by the monopolistic concession Díaz granted to the Tlahualilo Company, abounded as this British and United States-owned concern competed for water, labor, and markets with Mexican producers and exploited the area's workers. Small landowners and Indian villagers also resented the encroaching cotton hacienda (both national and foreign-owned), while landless agricultural laborers experienced the insecurity of intermittent work, low wages, and high prices. Many workers in the region had experience in the United States or along the international border and were considered by owners to be more "uppity" than their less worldly colleagues. Here, too, the 1907 depression hit hard as Mexico's textile industry slumped. Both the PLM and Madero found large numbers of supporters in the Laguna, and recruits from the area formed a key element in Madero's army. In fact, Madero cut his own political teeth in the Laguna in 1905 when he organized groups backing an anti-Díaz candidate for the governorship of Coahuila. His activity gained him respect and helped establish his reputation as a "man of the people."⁷

Sinaloa, a state of sharp contrasts and inequalities, also produced a large and active Maderista contingent by 1910. There, modern coastal plantations, many of whose owners felt closed out of the Díaz political system, encroached on traditional Indian communities. The isolated and backward mountain areas consisted of small marginal farmers and miners, the latter of whom severely felt the economic downturn of 1907 and the threat of large foreign operators who were moving into the area. In the urban areas, such as Culiacán and Mazatlán, there existed a growing but frustrated middle class. Two important elements of this middle sector, professionals and students, teamed up in 1909 to back the journalist José Ferrel for the governorship. In a clearly rigged contest, however, he was defeated by the Díaz-imposed hacendado and industrialist, Diego Redo, thus adding to the discontent and tension in the state.⁸

Unlike the north and particularly the northwest, the second major region of Maderista activity, the center, was a more traditional area where the state,

Catholic church, and hacienda generally wielded a constraining influence on society. Nevertheless, certain parts of the region, especially the sierras of Guerrero and Puebla; the Guerrero, Morelos, and Puebla lowlands; the Atoyac River valley; and the industrialized zones of Puebla, Tlaxcala, and Veracruz demonstrated many of the same characteristics of the northwest that provided the basis for a strong Maderista movement: capitalistic penetration, political centralization, the influence of the liberal movement and the Protestant church, a mobile work force, activist students, and a strong leadership.

In Guerrero, two distinct foci of activism developed to join the Maderista movement. In the northern highlands, middle-class dissidents (professionals, small merchants, students, intellectuals, rancheros, and some hacendados), influenced by the liberal movement, joined together to protest the Díaz government's encroaching political power and the imposition of outsiders. Led by the Figueroa brothers, a prosperous ranchero family, they wanted to return to the halcyon days of greater local and regional autonomy of the nineteenth century when they dominated the political scene. In the coastal lowlands, where commercial tropical crops were produced by haciendas and small leaseholders, resentment ran strongly among the peasantry, especially against Spanish owners. Here, adherence to the Maderista cause would be slower to develop than in the sierra and would eventually take the form of Zapatismo.⁹

In Morelos, an aggressive planter class attempted to take advantage of an expanding world sugar market (stimulated in large part by the introduction of the railroad), while simultaneously warding off increasing domestic and international competition. By 1908 the state had become the third largest sugar-producing area of the world (after Hawaii and Puerto Rico), but this growth came at the expense of Morelos's peasants and their villages, eighteen of which disappeared between 1884 and 1905 as haciendas gobbled up land and imported new labor-saving capital equipment. Hacendado control of the economic and political systems of the state alienated other groups, too, including small merchants, students, intellectuals, and professionals. Movement into Madero's ranks came quickly following the 1909 gubernatorial election in which, as in other states, Díaz once again imposed an official candidate, this time the planter-backed Pablo Escandón, over the favorite of the "outs," Francisco Leyva.¹⁰

The Maderista movement in Puebla made early and strong gains, especially in the central part of the state delimited by the Atoyac River valley. There, mainly urban elements (middle-class professionals, artisans, shopkeepers, workers, and students), formed by a tradition of protest and mobility, resented the heavy-handed and corrupt rule of the longtime (since 1892) gov-

ernor, Mucio Martínez. Limited political opportunity and deteriorating economic conditions (Puebla was very dependent upon a depressed textile industry between 1907 and 1910), combined with poor crops, agitation by the PLM, and the message of the Protestant church, had an important impact. Of particular influence on the success of the Maderistas in Puebla was the leadership of the shoemaker, Aquiles Serdán. In the southern lowlands of the state, geographically an extension of neighboring Morelos, villagers also faced the relentless incursion of the sugar hacienda. The mountainous northern area of the state, as opposed to the south, did not so much fear and suffer from the loss of land as from threats to its traditionally autonomous and isolated way of life by outside political forces and capitalistic intruders, such as the railroad and the huge Necaxa hydroelectric project which supplied power to Mexico City and surrounding states.¹¹

To a large degree, central and southern Tlaxcala was an extension of central Puebla, with both states sharing the Atoyac River valley, an area in transition to a capitalistic industrial economy. Here, nearly everyone chafed under the deadening hand of Governor Próspero Cahuantzi (who served a total of twenty-six years in office). Hacendados and the urban elite were hurt especially hard by the 1907–1910 depression. Industrial workers, artisans, and campesinos, influenced by the PLM, the Protestant church, and a hatred for Spanish-owned factories, farms, and shops, formed the backbone of the Maderista movement in the area under the local leadership of Juan Cuamatzi, a collaborator of Serdán.¹²

In Veracruz, Maderista support was mostly confined to the industrial areas of Orizaba–Río Blanco and Atoyac, located in the highlands along the Puebla border. There, textile-mill hands, like their counterparts in Puebla and Tlaxcala, labored under generally harsh and deteriorating conditions, often for foreign (mainly French and Spanish) owners and bosses. Influenced by the PLM and a tradition of protest (remember the Río Blanco strike and killings of 1906–1907), these workers early on took an active part in the movement.¹³

At this point the question must be asked why, if other regions of the country also experienced some of these same phenomenon, such as capitalistic penetration and political centralization, did they not also form a strong and active base of support for Madero? There seems to be no totally satisfactory answer, but a brief examination of several factors helps to shed light on the problem.

In some isolated areas of Mexico, especially the southeast and west, only a minimum of outside information reached most of the populace, thus greatly reducing the opportunities for political consciousness and mobilization. In Chiapas and Tabasco, for example, people commonly remained ignorant of

the revolution until 1913 and 1914, when the Maderista phase had already ended.¹⁴ Even where word of the upheaval was received, such as in Mascota (via mule driver), a town located in the mountains of Jalisco, its isolation from the centers of Maderista activity made any political action difficult. The community, in fact, did not even receive its first revolutionaries until 1913. Consequently, Porfirian institutions and practices there continued to function uninterrupted through the Madero years.¹⁵ Indeed, one student of the revolution estimates "that perhaps about 71 percent (the percentage of Mexicans living in communities smaller than 2,500 inhabitants in 1910) of the population in revolutionary Mexico may have been unaffected by the revolution during its violent phase."¹⁶ Surely the percentage was even greater during the Madero years.

Isolation also certainly played a key role in Yucatán where Maderista activity was quite circumscribed. Nevertheless, here, where the henequén industry represented a high degree of foreign capitalistic influence and the Molina and Peón families maintained centralized control over the state, other factors also kept political activity to a minimum. The overwhelmingly repressive power of the hacendados and their allies in the state and local governments thwarted any attempt to organize the campesino. The strength of the hacienda system came largely at the expense of the village, meaning that the rural workers' almost complete dependence on the hacienda aided the owners in maintaining control. Yucatecan elites also easily shed their pro-Díaz sentiments and nominally joined the Maderista cause, thus preempting middle-class challenges to the upper classes or efforts to organize the lower ones. Consequently, Yucatán did not feel the full brunt of the revolution until 1915, with the arrival of the Constitutionalist armies from the north.¹⁷

Other areas, too, experienced little political activity during the Madero period, mainly because of the dominant nature of the hacienda. Even in the face of a serious deterioration in their standard of living, for example, the campesinos of the German-owned coffee plantations of the Soconusco area of Chiapas remained relatively subdued. Similar circumstances also existed in Campeche, Tabasco, and southern Veracruz.¹⁸ Even in Tlaxcala, a state whose central and southern zones were highly politicized, peasants in the north remained largely impotent in the face of the powerful pulque hacienda.¹⁹

Another factor impeding political activity was due to people relatively satisfied with (or at least not conscious of) their lot. In Oaxaca, peasants generally were docile because most land remained part of traditional village holdings; coffee and cochineal production (the state's two most important commercial crops) were labor intensive and efficiently grown on small plots. Only in the

areas of Tuxtepec and La Cañada, where sugar and tobacco were important, did haciendas take over large amounts of village lands, thereby provoking violence during the Madero period.²⁰

Relative satisfaction, leading to a minimum of political protest, can also be found in other areas. The state of Mexico, which shares borders with the activist central states discussed above, took little part in the Maderista movement. Nearly all revolutionary influence in the state came from the outside, mainly from the Zapatistas to the south. Throughout the nineteenth century, the state remained relatively stable as the takeover of indigenous lands mostly had taken place a hundred years earlier, still leaving property for many people which the paternalistic state and local officials tended to protect against further encroachment. People in less prosperous circumstances had the opportunity to migrate to nearby Mexico City or to other areas of the state. The economic difficulties of the Porfiriato had only minimal impact on consumers as prices rose less than at the national rate; supplies of basic foodstuffs remained adequate; and mines and industry, well capitalized by large concerns, avoided serious downturns. In general, Mexico City, the nation's seat of power, exercised a conservative and stabilizing force on the state.²¹

Nuevo León, which shares a border with the activist states of the northwest, also seems to follow the pattern of the state of Mexico. There, a tradition of land division existed before the Porfiriato, while industrialization, urbanization, and access to opportunities outside the area (in this case, the United States) undermined the tendency found elsewhere for political agitation. Much the same can also be said of Aguascalientes.²²

A final, more all-embracing explanation for agrarian rebellion or its absence has to do with the relative security experienced by peasants. Rural elements, according to the theory, are disposed to tolerate poor, even exploitative, conditions within a dependent situation (Yucatán, for example) as long as their lot is basically predictable and stable. When insecurity arises, however, campesinos will opt to struggle for their independence (in Morelos or Chihuahua, for example).²³

Revolution

For over a year, from the spring of 1909 to the summer of 1910, Madero attempted, at least publicly, to seek a peaceful route to power by challenging Díaz in the June 1910 presidential election. During the campaign Madero visited twenty-two states, some more than once, taking advantage of the widespread discontent in many parts of the nation to gain and organize support.

Local efforts, overcoming such obstacles as internal divisions, official persecution, and the lack of funds, proved to be quite successful as several hundred Anti-Reelectionist political clubs composed of thousands of members were formed, with the great majority, although not all, in the northwestern and central regions of the country.

All things considered, Díaz allowed Madero a relatively free hand to carry out his opposition electoral campaign; for many months, the dictator was more concerned with the movement nominally led by the general and former Nuevo León governor, Bernardo Reyes, than the young, somewhat eccentric, and seemingly harmless Madero. It was not until April 1910, when Madero presided over a highly successful national Anti-Reelectionist convention held in Mexico City, that Díaz began to take his challenger more seriously. After that date, both Madero and his followers came under increasing harassment, culminating in Madero's June 1910 arrest in Monterrey.

Before Madero's incarceration, which proved Díaz's insincerity in claiming to want a free and fair election, local Anti-Reelectionist leaders in the center and in the northwest, many of whom were in close contact with the PLM, pressed Madero to shed his electoral façade and choose the revolutionary option. Even as early as late 1909 the Anti-Reelectionist club in the mining town of Cananea, Sonora, initiated plans to rebel in June 1910. The plot failed, however, when someone notified the police. In Puebla, Aquiles Serdán attempted a trio of May 1910 uprisings in the Puebla-Atlixco-Tlaxcala area. Because of poor organization and especially the lack of arms, only one of the rebellions got off the ground, that led by Juan Cuamatzi in Tlaxcala. It too came to naught, however, when a hostage escaped and warned the government. Then, in June 1910, Sinaloan Anti-Reelectionist activist Gabriel Leyva, goaded into rebellion by the authorities, was soon caught by the Rurales and "shot while trying to escape." He provided the Maderistas with their first martyr.²⁴

While being held by the government in the city of San Luis Potosí during the summer of 1910, Madero finally came to the decision to head an armed revolution against Díaz. In early October, dressed as a railroad mechanic (railroad workers in many areas of central and northern Mexico cooperated closely with the Maderistas carrying messages and, later, arms), he escaped to San Antonio, Texas, where supporters from around the country awaited him. In the southern Texas city Madero and his aides drew up the Plan de San Luis Potosí, calling for revolution on 20 November 1910. Named by Madero to head armed movements and to form governments in their respective states, the conspirators then returned to Mexico.

On 12 November, police captured two of Madero's principal agents in Mex-

ico City and confiscated documents outlining the revolutionary conspiracy for all of central Mexico. Subsequent arrests in Tlaxcala brought to light even more detailed plans for the Puebla-Tlaxcala-Veracruz region under the general leadership of Aquiles Serdán. Serdán, who had contacts with Maderistas and the PLM from Guerrero to Veracruz, was to head a rebellion from his home in the center of the city of Puebla in coordination with other uprisings in the region. When the local authorities moved to arrest Serdán and his immediate followers, he decided to revolt two days ahead of schedule on 18 November. The rebellion failed and Serdán was killed.

Serdán's defeat and death had repercussions for the Madero revolution not only in Puebla but throughout the nation. First, it provided the movement with a second and even more well-known martyr. Second, it meant the loss of one of Madero's most influential and effective adherents. Third, it undermined any chance of a successful rebellion on 20 November. Fourth, the subsequent governmental crackdown on the mainly urban-based movement forced it to the countryside, where it became more decentralized, increasingly divided, and subject to control and manipulation by rural caciques who often were more committed to their own agendas than to Maderista principles and objectives. As a result, to the ideological and class divisions already apparent within the ranks of the movement were now added the cultural differences between city and countryside, often expressed in terms of the modern versus the traditional. Finally, Serdán's death and the movement's relocation to the rural areas also set back the revolutionaries' timetable. In all areas of the country, except along the Sierra Madre Occidental in the northwest, the movement would not show sure signs of recovery until February and March 1911.²⁵

The heart of the rebellion in the northwest was located in the western sierra of Chihuahua, sometimes referred to as the cradle of the revolution. The movement in the area must be credited principally to Pascual Orozco, a twenty-eight-year-old mule driver with many connections, including the PLM, in the predominantly mining and lumbering region. Orozco took up arms on 19 November 1910, and, along with allies in other areas, such as the Arrietas in Durango, managed to hold the government forces to a stalemate over the next several weeks. Orozco's success eventually convinced Madero to reconsider his decision to give up the revolution and seek permanent sanctuary abroad. By the time Madero did return from exile in Texas in mid-February 1911, the Maderista rebels controlled the Sierra Madre Occidental from the United States border to Tepic and Zacatecas. They even had begun to challenge Díaz's army in the lowlands, such as the Comarca Lagunera and along the Chihuahua City-Ciudad Juárez railway line.²⁶

By February, rebels in the center of Mexico were also beginning to show renewed signs of life. Although the five Márquez Galindo brothers had revolted in the Sierra Norte de Puebla as early as December, a more important foray into the center of the state occurred in February. Tlaxcalan insurgent Juan Cuamatzi led a force into the cotton textile area near Atlixco, setting off a series of battles and strikes and embarrassing the government before returning to his redoubt on the Malinche volcano. At the same time, longtime cacique and ranchero Juan Francisco Lucas notified Maderista agents that henceforth he would take a neutral stance in the conflict, thus virtually ensuring a rebel victory in the strategic northern sierra. Also, that same month, Gabriel Tepepa, a hacienda foreman in Morelos, sacked Tepoztlán. In northern Guerrero, the Figueroa brothers rebelled in Huitzucó.²⁷

The revolts of February produced a snowball effect that by April resulted in dozens of rebellions involving thousands of fighters. At first confined mainly to the center and northwest, the movements soon spilled over into other areas outside that of traditional Maderista strength, such as the Huasteca as well as other parts of Hidalgo and San Luis Potosí.²⁸ The rebellions were clearly rural in nature, located principally in areas of profound agrarian grievances (mainly, the loss of land and village autonomy). The insurgents' targets underline the character of their complaints—haciendas and their owners and administrators, caciques, *jefes políticos*, municipal presidents, and governmental offices containing land and tax records. Among the rural fighters (from peons to rancheros) were a small number of urban-based workers and middle-class radicals.²⁹

Of all the groups to rebel in March and April, including the Mayo and Yaqui Indians of Sinaloa and Sonora, the most important was the Zapatistas. Named after their leader, Emiliano Zapata, a mule driver and stable manager from Anenecuilco, Morelos, the Zapatistas would soon extend their influence to several neighboring states. Like many early revolutionaries nominally fighting under the Maderista banner, they read into the movement's official program more than its leadership probably ever meant to imply, in this case still modest but nevertheless unacceptably radical land reform.³⁰

Rebel forces rapidly proliferated during April and May, eventually appearing in nearly every state of the country. Even before the fall of Ciudad Juárez to Pascual Orozco on 10 May, there existed sure signs of a regime in rapid decline. As early as January, Díaz replaced Chihuahuan governor Alberto Terrazas, thus distancing himself from the Terrazas-Creel clan. In March other key governors followed Terrazas's fate, including the highly unpopular Mucio Martínez of Puebla.³¹

While Díaz changed governors and then cabinet members in an effort to shore up popular support, civilian and military authorities began to cut their losses. Newly appointed Puebla interim governor José Rafael Isunza and the local federal zone commander, General Luis Valle, for example, offered to surrender towns to the rebels in order to protect upper- and middle-class interests. They, too, slowly withdrew governmental forces from the countryside toward Puebla City. This tactic kept the state capital out of insurgent hands and allowed independent Porfiristas (those willing, like themselves, to come to terms with the Maderistas) and moderate Maderistas (those mainly urban elements who took little part in the fighting and, in general, condemned and feared the radical methods and politics of the rural fighters) to attempt to form a governing coalition upon Díaz's eventual overthrow.³²

The capture of Ciudad Juárez proved to be the decisive blow to the Díaz regime. It not only demonstrated the vulnerability of the government to both national and international observers alike, but it also provided the Maderistas with a port of entry and a provisional capital. Nevertheless, it should not be overlooked that even as Juárez fell, thousands of rebels (augmented by urban rabble) were poised to attack and sack several major cities in the northwest and center of the country. Plans were even being made to march on the national capital when the Treaty of Ciudad Juárez was signed on 25 May 1911. Otherwise, Mexico City, defended by fewer than three thousand troops, would doubtless have fallen quickly; and this consideration must have been important in Díaz's decision to surrender. Madero also realized the threat to elite interests represented by the thousands of his radical lower-class followers ready to take over urban centers if the war continued; hence the revolutionary leader himself, like the opposition, had a vested interest in quickly signing the peace treaty.³³

In Power

Madero came to power in late May 1911, buoyed by a large degree of popular support. Less than six months later, when he assumed the presidency in November 1911, this enthusiasm had largely dissipated. By the autumn of 1912, a year later, persistent rumors of an impending coup d'état circulated widely. Madero was overthrown and murdered in February 1913.

The nature of the opposition to Madero and the reasons for his quick demise, only twenty-one months after defeating Díaz, are many and complex. First, the makeup of his movement must be understood, for its heterogeneous and unorganized nature contributed greatly to his downfall.

The Maderista revolution of November 1910 to May 1911 mobilized several thousands of mainly radical, rural, and lower-class fighters in many areas of the country, but nowhere as many and for as long as in the center and especially in the northwest. In most cases these rebels and their leaders had heard of Madero, but few had any clear idea of the contents of his program. Even those people who did know the principles and objectives of the movement often interpreted them more liberally than Madero had originally intended. The vast majority of the insurgents, however, merely took Madero's call to arms as an opportunity to seek redress of local and sometimes personal grievances, unaware or uncaring of Madero's pronouncements. Indeed, many who joined the movement, especially during the last weeks of fighting, could only loosely be called Maderistas and sometimes took actions contrary to the interests and goals of the movement's leadership. This large, dispersed, and heterogeneous group, then, wanted immediate satisfaction of its demands, even of those outside the scope of the revolutionary program, no matter how liberally one might interpret it. Madero, unable (and unwilling) to meet this radical agenda of his followers and with poor connections to and understanding of the countryside, failed therefore to maintain control in the rural areas.³⁴

Second, Madero made a series of poor political decisions in the weeks following Díaz's surrender, decisions that would have an important impact regionally and quickly alienating his more radical adherents and giving his conservative opposition a chance to regroup. These events set the pattern for the breakdown of his loose coalition over the next several months.

Although professing nonintervention in state and local affairs as part of his democratization program (note his willingness to leave all the Porfirian era state legislatures intact), Madero did take part in the selection of governors during the interim. He was prompted to do so by popular pressure (Madero had already appointed several revolutionary governors during the fighting) and by the threat that the state congresses would name blatant conservatives to the posts. In the northwest, where Maderismo was most entrenched, governors with fairly substantial popular bases were named—Abraham González in Chihuahua, José María Maytorena in Sonora, and Venustiano Carranza in Coahuila.³⁵

In the center, however, the results were mixed. In Tlaxcala, for example, the radical ex-factory worker Antonio Hidalgo gained the governorship only because a division within the local elites (in part, over Porfirian Governor Próspero Cahuantzi's effort to remain in office after May) opened the way for a truly popular candidate of the lower classes. In Puebla, a moderate lawyer who

sat out the spring 1911 fighting, Rafael Cañete, got the nod from Madero. Juan Carreón, a banker and ally of the planter class, was first named governor in Morelos only to be replaced by Ambrosio Figueroa, the anti-Zapatista ranchero from neighboring Guerrero who was now cooperating with the hacendados.³⁶

In no state, except Tlaxcala (Hidalgo was removed from office in 1912 by the hacendados with Madero's backing), did Madero allow the appointment of a governor who was truly from the masses who had fought and won the war against Díaz. Genuinely popular leaders were ignored (Pascual Orozco in Chihuahua) and even "eliminated" by those whom Madero helped put into power (Nicolás Torres in San Luis Potosí). Madero clearly demonstrated that he wanted and trusted power only in the hands of middle-aged, educated, and mainly urban-oriented elites.³⁷

Another mistake on Madero's part, with repercussions at the regional level, was his decision to form a new political party, the Partido Constitucionalista Progresista (PCP) to replace the Anti-Reelectionist Party. Although most Maderistas went along with the change, a substantial minority balked. They felt that Madero was not only discarding an important symbol of the revolution (and perhaps also reneging on some of the revolution's principles), but also betraying a loyal supporter, Francisco Vázquez Gómez, whom Madero had replaced as his vice-presidential running mate with the Yucatecan José María Pino Suárez. Staunch Anti-Reelectionists, many of whom saw themselves as the true inheritors of the liberal tradition, remained critical of Madero and formed the backbone of a vocal but loyal opposition in states like Puebla.³⁸

As Francisco Vázquez Gómez was being eased out of the picture, Madero also backed interim President Francisco León de la Barra's decision to fire Francisco's brother, Emilio, from the cabinet. Emilio, although an opportunist, had proven to be one of the strongest Maderistas in the federal government. He constantly defended the left wing of the movement, even interfering in states' affairs as secretary of *gobernación* to check the influence of the conservatives and to push for faster implementation of reform measures. His ouster provoked a near uprising among an important group of insurgent officers headed by Juan Andrew Almazán of Guerrero, Cándido Navarro of Guanajuato, and Gabriel Hernández of Hidalgo. Madero ordered the arrest of four of them, including Navarro.³⁹

Maderista officers and troops were also angered over Madero's decision to license them and keep the Porfirian army as the only official force in the nation. Insurgent soldiers expected more than a handshake of thanks, a few pesos for turning in their weapons, and a safe pass home for the sacrifices they had made in bringing Madero to power. When they resisted demobilization and

clashed with federal units (most notably in Puebla City in mid-July 1911), Madero resorted to the hated levy to build up the regular army and converted newly licensed insurgents into Rurales to fight their former colleagues. The disaffection of spurned Maderista fighters had an impact on all parts of rural Mexico, seriously undermined Madero's base of support, and led to rebellion.⁴⁰

Finally, Madero proved slow to implement the reform program that he had promised. The federal government could and did undertake some measures, such as the creation of a labor department and the construction of schools. Nevertheless, Madero's belated assumption of the presidency, his general reluctance to interfere in nonfederal governmental affairs, and the fact that most reforms directly involved state and local levels of administration meant that Madero mostly had only an indirect say in what steps were taken.

In most places, the lack of resources and time, a divided leadership, conservative opposition, poor planning, the failure to meet the needs and desires of the people, and continuing violence resulted in little or no progress being made, even in such key and universally desired areas of change as land and water, labor, education, finances, and governmental personnel. In the northwest, the greater commitment to Maderismo among state officials seems to have made the reform effort more successful than in other areas. Nevertheless, even the positive steps taken in Chihuahua were seriously undermined by Madero. The reform program's main architect in the key northwestern state, Governor Abraham González, was recruited to Madero's cabinet only six months after taking office, thus allowing much of González's efforts in the state to deteriorate.⁴¹

As a result of the disillusionment of much of his left wing and the continued adamant opposition of the conservatives, joined in part by backsliding moderate Maderistas who feared the increasingly violent masses, Madero faced a series of rebellions, beginning in the summer of 1911. Most of these movements were localized affairs and posed no serious threat to the regime, although they drained its resources, both financially and politically, and disrupted the government's reform program. Among the more notable revolts were those of the Yaquis in Sonora, the Figueroa brothers in Guerrero, the Cedillo brothers in San Luis Potosí, Che Gómez in Oaxaca, and the patently conservative one of Félix Díaz in Veracruz.⁴² They occurred both within and outside the central and northwestern regions. The two most important, however, the Zapatista and the Orozquista-Vazquista, took place within these two key regions, demonstrating once again that these areas of the country played a dominant role in the fate of the Maderista movement.

The first major rebellion to challenge the new regime came from the cen-

ter of the country. There, the Zapatistas, based in Morelos but with followers in surrounding states, had joined the Madero revolution in March 1910. During the weeks after the fall of Díaz, they waited, with increasing impatience, for the government to begin to fulfill its promises, especially the restitution and protection of communal lands. This measure was the key to restoring village autonomy and local self-government. Zapata and his adherents became especially angered when the authorities demanded their demobilization and the surrender of their arms, the only guarantee they had that their demands would be met. Zapata tried to reason with Madero, but President León de la Barra, sensitive to any challenge to his authority, especially from what he considered rural bandits, sent General Victoriano Huerta into Morelos to force the Zapatistas' submission.

Thus provoked into rebellion in late August 1911, the Zapatistas quickly refurbished and expanded their regional connections of the previous spring and were soon operating over a wide area of south-central Mexico. In November 1911, they issued the Plan de Ayala, their formal declaration of rebellion against the government. It called for, among other things, the overthrow of Madero and the return, confiscation, and division of lands. It became the rallying call for land reform and peasant rights throughout the nation; it was a call that would last for decades.

Although never able (and perhaps unwilling) seriously to threaten the seat of national power in Mexico City during the Madero period, the Zapatistas did make life miserable for provincial authorities and elites, sapped the government's resources, and undermined its military and political credibility. Zapatistas panicked Cuernavaca and Puebla City on more than one occasion, and they even set up their own state government in southern Puebla. Attacks on haciendas, small towns, the railroad and telegraph systems, and other targets constantly disrupted the economy and society in many areas. Conditions by the spring of 1912 had deteriorated to the point that Madero was forced to suspend constitutional guarantees in Morelos, Guerrero, Tlaxcala, and parts of Puebla and the state of Mexico. Throughout 1912 and 1913 the Zapatista threat waxed and waned from place to place and time to time (in part because of the cycle of planting and harvesting crops), but it never went away. Madero was constantly kept on the defensive.⁴³

The second major and even more threatening (at least in the short run) rebellion that occurred while Madero was in power took place in the northwest. In Chihuahua, the popular and ambitious Pascual Orozco, while serving as a state Rural commander, came under heavy pressure to lead a growing tide of disenchanting groups against the government. Most of these people,

many of whom had fought for Madero during the revolution of the winter and spring of 1910–1911, now faulted the new administration for its failure to implement the provisions of the Plan de San Luis Potosí—freedom of expression; municipal autonomy; the end of the *jefe político*, the *tienda de raya*, and the *leva*; labor, land, and tax reform; and the Mexicanization of the railway, among others. Among those elements in contact with Orozco were the Vazquistas, followers of Emilio Vázquez Gómez, who had declared against the regime in November 1911.

Orozco finally rebelled in early March 1912, but not before he had made an alliance with conservatives in the state, including members of the Terrazas-Creel clan, for financial support. Quickly, Orozco gathered a force of several thousand men and began to push southward. His defeat of the federal army at Rellano on 23 March caused panic in the nation's capital and forced Madero to turn to Huerta to lead the government's counterattack. In the meantime, Orozco consolidated his hold on Chihuahua and parts of surrounding states, while his allies, the Vazquistas, raised revolts, for example, in San Luis Potosí and the Sierra de Puebla. Then, at the second battle of Rellano on 23 May, Huerta saved the regime by decisively routing Orozco and dispersing the bulk of the rebel army into the rugged mountains to the north and northwest, from where they originally came.⁴⁴

Although the Orozco rebellion (and its Vazquista appendage) was defeated within a relatively short time, its repercussions were much more long lasting. Like the Zapatista and other insurgencies, it sapped the government's resources (although its demise did help briefly to restore some of Madero's military and political capital). The Orozquistas themselves remained in the mountains of the northwest, fighting the regime by using guerrilla tactics; this armed resistance led to official repression, thereby further undermining the administration's liberal credentials and adding to the alienation of people in the region. Finally, the Orozco movement forced Madero to increase the size of the army, thus not only requiring the transfer of monies from other pressing needs but also giving the military greater say in the civilian political sector. This process of militarization is, of course, best epitomized in the enhanced role given to General Victoriano Huerta, the man who successfully defended the government, and who, within a few months, would also bring it down.⁴⁵

Conclusion

Francisco I. Madero was a man in the right place at the right time. He did not cause the revolution; he merely served as a rallying point around which

hundreds of groups with different agendas coalesced to create "many movements" or "revolutions" that have conveniently and traditionally, and to a large extent inaccurately, been gathered together under his name.⁴⁶ Madero's catalytic role, in other words, did not create a truly integrated and centrally guided national revolution (not to be confused with putting someone into national office). This revolution was primarily a regional phenomenon in which the northwest and center of the country dominated the political and then the armed movements nominally led by Madero.

Indeed, the revolution(s) began decades before Madero entered the scene. Capitalistic penetration and political centralization, especially in the northwest and in the center, had a profoundly disruptive impact on traditional structures. The resultant underlying social discontent was then leavened at the regional levels by groups like the PLM and Protestants; politically conscious workers, peasants, and students; and skillful local leaders. Opportunity for political and then revolutionary action came when the façade of national control cracked under the pressure of economic depression and political infighting over Díaz's successor.

Once the dictatorship fell, Madero, as nominal head of the revolutionary movement, was not capable of controlling and molding his heterogeneous and geographically dispersed coalition into a solid national political base with a universally accepted common program. Madero's coalition, then, also soon fell prey to the "destructive" centrifugal forces of regionalism just as the old regime had. In Madero's case, however, a military coup d'état headed off what probably would have been a continuation of rural insurgencies originating principally in one or both of Mexico's two most agitated regions, the northwest and the center. After all, the remainder of the revolutionary decade (1910–1920) was largely shaped by armed movements from these same two areas.

Notes

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8. Guerra, *México*, 2:160–63; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 1:71.
9. Ian Jacobs, *Ranchero Revolt: The Mexican Revolution in Guerrero* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982): 19–27, 74–78.
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 31. Guerra, *México*, 2:314–20; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 1:201–2; LaFrance, *The Mexican Revolution in Puebla*, 66–68.
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