ances of all industrial workers with regard to the Terrazas and Creel regime—resentment of its repressive policies with regard to unions and indignation at the higher wages paid to foreign workers, with a corresponding surge in nationalism—both miners and railwaymen had special grievances of their own. What the miners resented was the fact that so many of them were dismissed by their employers during the economic crisis of 1907 and 1908. Railwaymen were less affected by unemployment, but all the more by the privileges given to U.S. railroad employees, who frequently did not even speak Spanish, but were preferred to their Mexican counterparts, not only receiving higher wages but also having greater access to higher status in the railway system.

Chihuahua's Radical Opposition

Until 1907, political opposition in Chihuahua expressed itself in two very different ways. The first was unsuccessful revolutionary activities centered around the only existing, although illegal, opposition political formation in the state, the PLM.[91] The other was a far more diffuse manifestation of political opposition centered around the newspaper *El Correo de Chihuahua*.

The PLM was founded in 1901 by a group of intellectuals disillusioned by Porfirio Díaz's close relationships to the Mexican clergy and his gradual abandonment of the original anticlerical policies of the Mexican liberal movement. The party soon became far more radical than the Juárez liberals had ever been. Under the leadership of two brothers, Ricardo and Enrique Flores Magón, it advocated prohibiting the reelection of the president and limiting presidential terms to four years. It called for radical limits to the influence of foreigners by obligating those who invested in Mexico to become Mexican citizens. It advocated granting industrial workers an eight-hour day and raising their daily wage to eight pesos. It also called for far-reaching land reform and the breakup of the largest estates. The PLM's newspaper, *Regeneración*, was soon suppressed by the government. The Flores Magón brothers fled to the United States, where they continued publishing their newspaper and smuggling it into Mexico. By 1905–6, the party was calling for the revolutionary overthrow of the Díaz regime and planned a series of revolutionary uprisings. In Chihuahua, it had a strong influence among industrial workers and the middle class, but far less impact on the rural population. Indeed, Chihuahua became one of the main targets of the PLM's revolutionary strategy.

The Flores Magóns drew up plans for simultaneous attacks from Mexico and the United States on the border city of Ciudad Juárez in Chihuahua by Mexican sympathizers of the liberal movement living in the United States and by supporters in Mexico. Concrete plans for such an uprising were soon elaborated, and Ricardo Flores Magón went to the border to coordinate them. The liberal leaders did not know that Enrique Creel had set up a whole network of American and Mexican informers, who had penetrated their ranks and knew exactly what they intended to do.[92] A large number of the Mexican conspirators were arrested on Creel's order in Chihuahua, while U.S. police pursued and later prosecuted the Flores Magón brothers on charges of violating U.S. neutrality laws. Later plans

for an attack by Flores Magón sympathizers on the town of Casas Grandes in Chihuahua were also betrayed to the authorities by informers in the Magonist ranks sent there by Creel. The plot was unsuccessful, and its leader, Juan Sarabia, fell into government hands.

The imprisonment of its leaders did not prevent the PLM from continuing to have great influence in Chihuahua. In spite of government restrictions, control of the mails, and so on, *Regeneración* continued to circulate throughout Chihuahua and was bolstered by financial contributions from people whose commitment not only angered but puzzled Enrique Creel. "Had they had to pay a 25 centavos tax to the government . . . they would have cried to high heaven, but many of them have deprived their children of bread in order to send five pesos to the Flores Magón," he commented bitterly. "This social and political phenomenon is worth studying for the effect that it has produced on certain classes of society."[93]

In spite of their support among industrial workers and parts of the middle classes in Chihuahua, the Magonistas failed to unleash a revolution. There were some obvious reasons for the liberal failure: the infiltration of their movement by government agents and the persecution they suffered on both sides of the border by both Mexican and U.S. authorities. Yet infiltration and persecution do not provide a sufficient explanation. In part their calls for revolution came at the wrong time; 1905 was still a year of economic boom, and for many industrial workers, as well as for many dissatisfied members of the middle classes, economic opportunities diminished the negative impact of Creel's political and economic measures.

A perhaps even more important explanation for the failure of the liberals' tactics was their belief in spontaneous upheavals. While *Regeneración* did carry out political agitation, the liberals did not wait for the kind of general popular political awakening and politicization that tends to precede any genuine revolution. The political party they founded, based on intellectual leaders, newspapers, and secret clubs, was more in tune with European than Mexican traditions. The industrial workers constituted a new class in Mexican history and had no difficulties in accepting these new forms of organization. But large segments of the middle classes, and above all the peasantry, were used to a different kind of political organization, with roots in the nineteenth century. It was based on leadership by a charismatic local caudillo rather than by intellectuals. Moreover, revolutions are generally preceded by strong divisions at the top, which by 1905 had not yet come about in Mexico. When all of these conditions were finally met in 1910, revolution broke out; but it was not led by the intellectuals of the PLM. Rather, it was led by a caudillo in the old tradition of nineteenth-century Mexico. His coming was prepared by what could be called the moderate wing of the Chihuahuan opposition.

Chihuahua's Moderate Opposition

The views of the more moderate members of Chihuahua's middle-class opposition were expressed by Silvestre Terrazas in his newspaper *El Correo de Chi-*

huahua. Terrazas, who by 1908 had found many points of agreement with the liberals, came from what might be called the opposite end of the political spectrum from the PLM.[94] The Magonistas had begun their political careers with anticlericalism as their main issue; Silvestre Terrazas began his, at the age of 21, in 1891, as secretary to José de Jesús Ortíz, the bishop of Chihuahua. The bishop soon gained such confidence in Terrazas that he named him editor of the newspaper of the archdiocese of Chihuahua, the *Revista Católica*. Not long after Díaz came to power, a reconciliation between his administration and the church had taken place. As a result, church publications and leaders rarely criticized Díaz or his most important appointees (a situation that began to change in the final years of the Díaz administration). Church leaders nevertheless had a number of points of disagreement with the regime, which they openly expressed, and which seemed to have shaped many of Silvestre Terrazas's attitudes. While the church did not oppose foreign investment in principle, it was highly critical of U.S. penetration into Mexico.[95]

Under Silvestre Terrazas's direction, the *Revista Católica* attacked both U.S. Protestant missionaries and the Mormons, who were making considerable inroads in Chihuahua. It opposed the liberalism inherent in U.S. society and extended its opposition to what it felt were U.S. monopolies controlling much of Mexico's economy. At the same time, some segments of the church had become mildly critical of some agrarian structures in the country. While the church generally supported the existence of large estates in Mexico, its support was far more restrained than in the early nineteenth century, when the church had been one of the largest landowners in the country. Having lost most of its landed property and its special link to hacendados (which in the early nineteenth century had consisted, as in colonial times, in being the main creditor of many landowners), the church was more critical of some aspects of Mexico's agrarian structure. It strongly opposed debt peonage and the sale of alcoholic beverages by landowners to peasants at company stores, and demanded that in accordance with the teachings of the Bible, peasants not be forced to work on Sundays. These ideas continued to influence Silvestre Terrazas. In 1899, he founded *El Correo de Chihuahua*, which absorbed the *Revista Católica* and at first did not greatly deviate from the political opinions of its predecessor. Until 1905, it supported both Porfirio Díaz and Luis Terrazas and only rarely criticized Enrique Creel.

In 1906, there was a radical change in the attitude of Silvestre Terrazas and his newspaper. It began with a "technical" question, the meaning of which went far beyond technicalities. In 1903, before ending his term as governor of Chihuahua, Miguel Ahumada had resigned his office in order to become governor of the state of Jalisco. New elections had then been called, and Luis Terrazas had become governor for a four-year period, which the legislature had established until 1907. Silvestre Terrazas raised the question in his newspaper of whether Luis Terrazas's term should not expire one year earlier—that is, at the same time that Ahumada's term was to end. This was a technicality, but its consequences, had it been accepted, would have been anything but technical. Creel, whom Luis Terrazas had designated as interim governor, would then have been in office illegally. The implied opposition that these questions reflected was transformed into outright opposition when *El Correo* opposed Creel's election to the governorship in 1907 on legal grounds. Mexican and Chihuahuan law stated that only a native-born citizen of Mexico whose parents had also been Mexican citizens could become governor of a state. Since Creel's father, Reuben W. Creel, had been not only a U.S. citizen but U.S. consul in Chihuahua, Silvestre Terrazas asserted that Creel lacked the necessary legal qualifications for the office.

At the same time that Silvestre Terrazas was attacking the rule of both Luis Terrazas and Enrique Creel on legal grounds, he was expressing his support for popular opposition movements not only in Chihuahua but outside the state as well. In 1906, *El Correo* sharply protested the massacre of striking miners by Mexican government forces at Cananea in neighboring Sonora. It protested even more against the presence of an armed force of American volunteers that had come to Cananea to help quell the strike.

Silvestre Terrazas was equally vehement in his support of striking railway mechanics in Chihuahua, who were demanding equal rights, equal pay, and equal working conditions with American railway employees. By 1907 and 1908, *El Correo* had become a forum where every kind of grievance against the state government was aired. Silvestre Terrazas printed letters by villagers from Namiquipa and Cruces protesting the expropriation of their lands. Residents of towns such as Ciudad Juárez, Jiménez, and Namiquipa wrote the newspaper decrying the abuses committed by jefes políticos and mayors.

It is not clear what caused this evolution in Silvestre Terrazas's attitude. Was it owing to a personal change of heart or did it reflect a new policy of the Catholic church, to which Silvestre Terrazas had been so intimately linked, and which would never condemn him? While the majority of clerics continued to support the regime of Porfirio Díaz, which had lifted so many of the restrictions imposed on the church by Juárez and his liberals, its attitude toward Enrique Creel seems to have been more negative. The church hierarchy may have felt that Creel was doing too little to oppose the penetration of American Protestant missionaries in Chihuahua, who in fact were increasingly successful in gaining adherents. Creel did nothing to prevent their propaganda and in fact surreptitiously contributed money to Protestant churches.[96]

As a result of his opposition to the state's political regime, both Silvestre Terrazas and his newspaper now became the objects of increasing repression and persecution.

In April 1907, at the height of his campaign against Creel, Silvestre Terrazas was imprisoned for the first time. More imprisonments would follow in 1909 and 1910. The ostensible reason for his incarceration in 1907 was a libel suit brought by a mayor whom *El Correo* had accused of illegally carrying out searches. Silvestre Terrazas remained in prison for two weeks, after which a judge granted him a writ of *amparo* (restraining order) and he was released.

Economic pressure was also exercised. Creel's Banco Minero withdrew advertising from *El Correo*, as did other enterprises linked to Creel and Luis Terrazas. When a particularly galling issue came out, the governor stationed men around the offices of *El Correo* to buy up all available copies of the paper and thus prevent it from gaining any kind of circulation.[97]

What is striking about this repression is not so much that it took place at all—

this was to be expected in a dictatorship like that of Porfirio Díaz—but its relatively mild character. In a twentieth-century Latin American dictatorship, Silvestre Terrazas would probably have been killed or at least tortured, his house and his office would have gone up in flames, his staff would have been arrested, his family might have disappeared. Silvestre Terrazas's relatively benign treatment did not constitute a complete exception in Mexico. Díaz could be ruthless and savage with opponents from the lower classes of society (around the time Silvestre Terrazas was arrested, dozens of striking workers in the mines of Cananea and the textile mill of Río Blanco had been massacred), but Díaz was more cautious in his treatment of the middle classes. Opposition journalists were imprisoned and at times tortured, but rarely were they killed. Filomeno Mata, perhaps Díaz's most famous opponent among newspapermen, was imprisoned 34 times. This also means that he left prison 33 times, something that would have been unlikely in a latter-day Latin American military dictatorship. Some governors were more ruthless than Díaz, but Creel followed the Mexican dictator's cautious policies. This may have been because Creel himself was not a bloodthirsty man but perhaps also owing to fears that persecuting Silvestre Terrazas too much might antagonize groups within the Catholic church.

Unlike the Magonistas, Silvestre Terrazas never called for a revolution to overthrow the regime, although in 1910 he was quite sympathetic to the Madero revolution. Nevertheless, his paper, because it was legal and had a large and steadily increasing circulation in Chihuahua, played a greater role in galvanizing opposition to the regime than did the Flores Magón and *Regeneración*. In fact, in 1910, Luis Terrazas to a large degree attributed the paternity of the revolution to the agitation of his distant cousin.[98]

The Crisis of 1908–1910

The transformation of dissatisfaction with the existing regime into revolutionary fervor was linked to three distinct phenomena: the large-scale destruction of the economic basis of the free villages by Creel and Terrazas; the great depression of 1908, which seems to have affected Chihuahua more than most of the rest of Mexico; and a political crisis at both the national and regional levels. To these developments within Mexico must be added an evolution of the situation north of the border.

The economic crisis of 1908–10 was the most serious that Porfirian Mexico ever suffered. It affected the whole of the country but was felt most keenly in the northern states, the economies of which were most closely linked to that of the United States. Decreasing prices of silver and copper and recession and financial panic in the United States led to the widespread closing of mines in northern Mexico. One of the largest U.S. mining companies doing business in Mexico, the American Smelting and Refining Company (ASARCO), shut down its mines at Santa Eulalia and Santa Bárbara in Chihuahua, throwing more than 1,000 people out of work. Most mines in the largest mining center in the state, Hidalgo de Parral, also shut down. The economic empire of William C. Greene, an American tycoon who owned a large number of mines, most of them in Sonora, and had set up vast lumberyards in western Chihuahua, collapsed, greatly increasing the number of unemployed, especially in western Chihuahua.[99]

Many villagers who worked part-time in the mines or in the lumberyards were affected. Previously when enterprises had closed in Chihuahua, unemployed workers had been able to find work elsewhere. They could go to the neighboring states of Sonora and Coahuila or cross the border into the United States. Now, however, Sonora and Coahuila were hit by the same crisis that affected Chihuahua, and Mexican workers were being laid off by the thousands in the southwestern United States. The United States proclaimed a ban on Mexican immigration, and more than 2,000 Mexicans were given railway tickets by their companies to El Paso, where they crossed into Chihuahua, swelling the ranks of the unemployed.

As a last resort, some of the unemployed returned to their native villages to live off the produce of the family fields as long as the crisis lasted. But many discovered that their families had lost their fields because of Creel's land law. And those who still owned land were affected by droughts in both 1908 and 1909.

Not only the unemployed but even workers who managed to hold on to their jobs were profoundly shaken by the crisis. Their wages were drastically cut at a time when food prices were rising because of bad harvests. "The economic situation has been particularly bad," the German consul in Chihuahua reported in 1909, "because of increases in the cost of necessary food and beans. Most food prices have doubled, and beans have gone from 6 to 15 pesos per hectoliter. The purchasing power of the public has been seriously reduced. . . . The population's consumption has been reduced to the most essential foods. The earnings of the workers have been reduced still further, and wages have dropped to between $0.75 and 1 peso a day."[100] This meant that price increases of between 200 and 300 percent were accompanied by wage cuts.

The middle classes of the state were particularly affected by the crisis. Many small enterprises went bankrupt. They had lost many of their clients, whose buying power had run out once they became unemployed, and when merchants attempted to obtain loans to weather the storm, they found that funds were either unavailable or the cost was prohibitive. "Even though the banks have been somewhat more liberal in their loans," the German consul wrote in 1909, "the cost of money has remained quite high and has made business difficult. Even first-rate companies have been unable to obtain funds at less than 10 percent while the interest rates of the banks have been 12 percent per annum, and the rates of the private money lenders have ranged from 18 to 24 percent."[101] The banks restricted most of their credit to companies owned by the oligarchy, and at a time of crisis, they called in their outstanding loans, foreclosing on small owners unable to repay. In other parts of Mexico, regional strongmen, worried by the possible social consequences of the crisis, attempted to secure federal help to alleviate its results or even helped the unemployed themselves. In neighboring Coahuila, one of the state's richest men, Evaristo Madero, called on Porfirio Díaz to set aside funds to help the starving and the poor.[102] His grandson, Francisco Madero, used part of the income from his estates to feed the hungry, regardless of whether they worked on his haciendas or not.[103]

Enrique Creel showed no such concern. In November 1908, he wrote to Díaz

saying that because of early frosts, "the harvest of beans has been completely lost, while that of corn has been reduced by half. As a result, the price of basic foodstuffs is very high and causes great harm to the poorest segments of society. . . . The low price of silver is causing great harm to mining in the state and different companies have closed their mines, so that lack of employment is being felt in many mining districts and business is slackening. . . . In general, economic prospects for the next few years are not good."

Unlike Evaristo Madero, Creel did not even mention relief for the needy in his letter. Instead, he concluded, "I am from now on taking prudent and necessary steps to prevent deficit in public spending. With this aim I am reducing the budgets of all municipalities of the state to the most necessary expenses in proportion to probable income."[104] This was the only practical consequence that Creel was willing to draw from the crisis. Moreover, balancing the budget meant not only decreasing expenditures but increasing revenues—that is, taxes. Since the largest foreign companies and the business enterprises belonging to the oligarchy were practically tax-exempt, Creel increased the taxes paid by the lower and middle classes. This occurred precisely at the height of the recession, when they were least able to pay.

The past administration's "tax increases and other acts," the last Porifirian governor of Chihuahua, Miguel Ahumada, wrote to Porfirio Díaz in 1911, "created such a climate of resentment and lack of confidence that if the minister of foreign affairs [Creel] were to come here, his life would be in jeopardy."[105]

As a result of the crisis of 1908 and the policies of Creel and Terrazas, an unprecedented unity among groups that had never collaborated before was created in Chihuahua in opposition to both the state and the federal governments. For the first time, cooperation began to emerge among the urban middle classes, industrial workers, and free villagers.

That unity was reinforced by a bizarre event that contributed to undercutting Creel's legitimacy in the eyes of many of Chihuahua's inhabitants. This was the robbery at the Banco Minero. Perhaps if it had occurred when Chihuahua's economy was booming, when prosperity seemed to be on the rise, it would not have provoked the repercussions it did.

The Robbery of the Banco Minero

The case remains, in many respects, an unsolved mystery.

On March 1, 1908, 300,000 pesos were stolen from the Banco Minero, which was jointly owned by Enrique Creel and his brother Juan. The break-in damaged not only the governor's fortune but his prestige as well. The building where the bank was located also housed his residence. Enormous police activity followed the robbery. Dozens of suspects were arrested, frequently without warrants, and held incommunicado. American detectives were brought in to help the police. Within three weeks, this intensive activity by law enforcement agencies seemed to have paid off. A woman confessed to knowing who the robbers were and stated that she had been paid $5,000 to hide their identity. Five suspects, among them bank employees, were arrested, and one of them soon confessed.[106] While the money was not recovered, the administration's prestige was vindicated by the rapid success of the police.

Within a few days of this "success," Silvestre Terrazas and his newspaper stepped into the fray, the government's case started to crumble, and the governor personally came under a cloud of suspicion. On March 21, *El Correo de Chihuahua* wrote that on the day the robbery occurred, one of the accused had been seen on the Chuviscar Bridge by a number of persons including the jefe político of Chihuahua. At the same time, a number of other witnesses had seen one of the other alleged burglars watching a bullfight. As suspicions against the authorities increased, the case became a political issue. *El Correo*'s circulation increased dramatically, and the newspaper was frequently sold out soon after it was printed. Hitherto apolitical organizations, such as the Workers' Mutual Aid Societies, which had been founded with the consent of the governor in order to provide insurance to workers in times of need, began collecting money for the accused. The government's case seemed to break down entirely when Silvestre Terrazas received an anonymous letter signed "CAG" in which the writer claimed to be the real perpetrator of the burglary and as proof of his statement enclosed 100 quartered 1,000-peso bills. The government's case was further discredited when rumors surfaced that the accused had been threatened, tortured, and subjected to simulated executions. These rumors were confirmed after the victory of the revolution, when the arrested men told harrowing tales of having been stood before open graves with an execution squad leveling their rifles at them in an effort to force them to confess. After eight months, the prisoners were finally released. Their sufferings had aroused a wave of sympathy. The wife of one of the prisoners, who had also been arrested, had gone mad, and the wife of another had given birth prematurely in jail.

For a short time, the government seemed to have recovered some of its lost prestige when three new suspects were arrested and confessed to the crime. One of them stated that he had written the anonymous letter to Silvestre Terrazas. It was again Silvestre Terrazas who a few days later dealt a crippling blow to the government. He published correspondence between the accused and their lawyer stating that Creel had promised them privileged conditions in prison as well as money if they would confess to the robbery. The prisoners did not deny their part in the robbery but now demanded that Creel keep his word. Silvestre Terrazas probably knew of, but never published, a letter that the accused subsequently sent to Porfirio Díaz stating that the robbery had in fact taken place at the initiative of Enrique's brother, Juan Creel, who had invited them to his home four weeks before the incident and promised them a large sum of money if they would break into the bank. While the letter was never published before the revolution, rumors to the same effect—namely, that Juan Creel, possibly with the complicity of the governor, had organized the robbery of his own bank—began to surface, further discrediting the administration.

What many people in Chihuahua believed was most clearly voiced by Abraham González, the revolutionary governor of Chihuahua in 1910–11, in a conversation with an American friend. "It seems that after Enrique [Creel] left for Washington, Juan [Creel] got to playing the stock market and lost 200,000 pesos belonging to the bank. To cover the theft, he had a man come down from El Paso

and burn the hole into the vault. Then he arrested the two bank clerks. Incidentally, the man who used the torch on the bank vault was accidentally killed the next day."[107]

Silvestre Terrazas's subsequent arrest in 1908 (a jefe político sued him for libel because *El Correo* had printed accusations against the jefe by a disgruntled citizen) fueled suspicions that the governor was trying to hide the truth by muzzling the opposition press. Two weeks later, Silvestre Terrazas was released and resumed his attacks on the Creel administration. The case has never been entirely cleared up, and in spite of the fact that for years after the revolution, the courts continued to deal with it, its most bizarre aspects still baffle researchers. Did Juan Creel in fact break into his own bank? Was there substance to the rumors that he stole the money to pay off gambling debts? Was it an insurance scam? Did he want to circumvent his own brother and the other owners of the bank? Was Enrique Creel involved in any way? Why did the robbers send 100,000 pesos to Silvestre Terrazas? While a final answer to these questions may never be found, there is little doubt that the case had a powerful impact on Chihuahua's public opinion in the years immediately preceding the revolution. It contributed to undercutting the legitimacy of Creel's and Terrazas's rule over Chihuahua and to uniting an extremely heterogeneous opposition against them.

What made this internal crisis in Chihuahua so dangerous for the administration of Porfirio Díaz was that it coincided with a national crisis that his government was facing. That national political crisis between 1908 and 1910 linked the Chihuahuan opposition to opposition movements in the rest of the country and gave it a very distinct direction.

The Emergence of Francisco Madero

The national crisis began, as prerevolutionary crises frequently do, with a conflict within the country's upper class. New presidential elections were due in 1910, and while most people expected Díaz to stand for reelection, there was a possibility that he might not survive his term in office because of his advanced age. Within Mexico's elite, two groups were vying to control the succession, each one hoping that Díaz would name their candidate vice president (who would succeed the dictator if he died). The first group, Mexico's financial elite, were called *científicos*, a designation based on their espousal of the "scientific" principles of positivism and social Darwinism. Their vice-presidential candidate was an unpopular politician from the northern state of Sonora, Ramón Corral. The second group included parts of northern Mexico's economic elite as well as important segments of the army. Its leader and vice-presidential candidate was one of Mexico's most powerful generals, Bernardo Reyes. For a brief period in 1908 and 1909, Reyes had become the focal point of middle-class opposition to Díaz.[108] Fearing that Reyes might overthrow him, Díaz had sent the general into exile. In order to weaken the opposition led by Reyes, Díaz was ready to tolerate the activities of other opposition groups whom he considered harmless. He even encouraged them by giving an interview to an American newspaperman named James Creelman in which he stated that he would not run for office

in 1910, and that he would welcome any opposition groups that might form in Mexico.

One man who immediately availed himself of this opportunity was the scion of one of the wealthiest families in the northeastern state of Coahuila, Francisco I. Madero. Neither Díaz nor Madero's family took him seriously. He seemed at first glance the absolute antithesis of a revolutionary caudillo. He was a small man, a spiritist, a teetotaler with a squeaky voice, full of good-hearted intentions. In 1908, he published a book, *La sucesión presidencial en 1910* (The Presidential Succession in 1910), in which, while recognizing the merits of Díaz, he advocated a reform that would only allow a president to remain in office for one term. To the astonishment of Díaz and his científico advisors and of his own family, both disgruntled members of the middle class and members of Mexico's lower classes took Madero seriously, and soon thousands of people were coming to listen to his speeches and rallying to his campaign. His anti-reelectionist party grew dramatically once Reyes had gone into exile.

In January 1910, Madero made a brief campaign trip to the state of Chihuahua. Although thousands came to hear him in the state's main cities—Ciudad Juárez, Ciudad Chihuahua, and Hidalgo del Parral—his campaign there seemed at first glance less successful than in the neighboring states of Coahuila and Sonora. In those states, disgruntled members of the upper class who had supported Reyes, men such as Venustiano Carranza in Coahuila and José María Maytorena in Sonora, rallied to Madero's cause. Reyismo was never strong in Chihuahua, and no member of the upper class in that state joined the Madero movement. This may have been one of the reasons why Creel underestimated Madero's impact on his native state, writing Vice President Ramón Corral that Madero's rallies had only been attended by "the curious, who [queue up] for an exhibition of a rare animal or some company of clowns."[109]

Creel obviously shared Porfirio Díaz's conviction that no successful revolution could take place in his country without the support of dissident members of the upper class. He was mistaken. The middle-class leadership of the anti-reelectionist party, headed by the impoverished scion of a former wealthy family, Abraham González, would prove to be far more formidable opponents than most upper-class dissident leaders.

When elections were approaching and Díaz recognized that Madero was more dangerous than he had initially thought, he had him imprisoned and faked the elections, in which officially Madero received all of 183 votes. Nevertheless, Díaz continued to underestimate Madero, and, in response to pleas from his family, freed him from jail. Madero immediately fled into exile in the United States, where he issued a revolutionary plan, called the Plan of San Luis Potosí, the last city where he had stayed before crossing the border into the United States. In his plan Madero assumed the provisional presidency of Mexico and called for a general uprising against Porfirio Díaz to begin on November 20, 1910. It was a plan primarily aimed at securing the support of Díaz's middle- and upper-class opponents. It called for political reforms: non-reelection of either the president or other powerful officials, genuinely free elections, a free press, and an independent judiciary. The plan contained few clauses dealing with social reforms. Nothing was said about labor, and only one paragraph dealt with the peasantry. It stated

that lands taken from peasants because they were considered to be vacant land should be returned to their former owners, or, if these lands had in the meantime been sold to a third party, the former owners should be compensated for them.

This paragraph was very limited in scope, since only a part of the peasantry had lost its holdings under the federal Law of Vacant Lands. The plan was also vague about the modalities for the return of expropriated holdings. Yet this vague promise was sufficient to provoke the largest rural uprising in Mexico's history since the rebellion of 1810. This was not what Madero had wanted or expected. He had hoped that very different forces would constitute the pillars of his movement: that in addition to his retainers, clients, and friends in his native state of Coahuila, the forces that supported Reyes—parts of the army, the middle classes, and dissident members of the upper classes—would transfer their support to him.

On November 20, 1910, none of the forces on whom Madero had pinned his hopes rebelled. With one significant exception, there were only a few sporadic uprisings, generally of small groups of men, in various parts of Mexico. The only serious revolt that took place in November and December of 1910, when most of the country was still quiet and peaceful, occurred in the state of Chihuahua. But what did occur in Chihuahua was more than a simple armed movement or an uprising. It was a genuine mass insurrection.

To Revolt or Not to Revolt: The Dilemma Facing Mexico's Revolutionaries

When Francisco Madero issued his call for revolution throughout Mexico in November 1910, he may have been mistaken in his assessment of the forces that would constitute the core of the revolution, but he was essentially correct in his judgment that Mexico had become ripe for a revolutionary upheaval. Every revolution in history is different from every other, and the results are even more diverse, yet on the eve of a revolutionary upheaval, certain common conditions tend to occur.

On the eve of revolution, there has to be a widespread dissatisfaction with political, economic, and social conditions affecting not just one segment or class of the population but a wide variety of social classes and social groups. This was the case in Mexico in 1910. While expropriation of peasant land may not have been as generalized and as widespread throughout Mexico as has been assumed, it was nonetheless extensive enough to produce resentment and dissatisfaction among peasants in a number of key areas of the country. Even where land tenure had not been affected, the end of the open range, as well as the loss of autonomy, with increasing centralization and interference by the central government, had affected large segments of the peasantry. These peasant grievances were not new, although they had greatly increased in the final years of the Porfirian dictatorship. In the 1890s, in many parts of Mexico, peasants had risen against the government, but their rebellions had been crushed when no other social groups except a few caudillos supported them. By 1910, dissatisfaction was rampant among Mexico's middle classes and industrial workers as well. Lack of democracy, which meant lack of access to political power and subordination to an all-powerful state bureaucracy, increasing taxation, and resentment at the privileges accorded to foreigners, in addition to a generational conflict, profoundly affected Mexico's middle classes. While in the 1890s, industrial workers, many of whom had been hacienda peons, favorably compared labor conditions in industry with the way they had lived in the countryside, a new generation of industrial workers had other points of comparison: living conditions of workers in the United States and the rights accorded to foreign workers in Mexico, who received higher wages for similar work. Dissatisfaction alone, however, was far from sufficient to produce a revolutionary climate.

Another precondition for revolution is a widespread politicization of the people. Politicization in this context means not only awareness that conditions as they exist must change, and that large numbers of people share that opinion, but also a widespread political mobilization in which people hitherto estranged from or uninterested in politics are suddenly willing to participate in the political process. Such a politicization can come about in very different ways. In some cases, it has been brought about by war—this was the case after Russia's defeat at the hands of Japan in 1905, and again in Russia in February 1917, when after three years of world war that had cost millions of lives, the problem of peace began to dominate people's thinking. In other cases, politicization resulted from a dictatorial government suddenly opening up political spaces. This was the case in France in 1789, when the government allowed elections to the States General and permitted people to voice their grievances openly. A similar process happened two centuries later when Gorbachev's *glasnost* policy suddenly opened up a new political space for the peoples of the Soviet Union. This also occurred in Porfirian Mexico. Díaz's interview with Creelman and his tolerance, although limited, of the Madero movement created such a political space. The Madero campaign in Mexico politicized hundreds of thousands of people.

A third precondition for revolution is a sense by increasing numbers of people of the illegitimacy of the existing government. That sense of illegitimacy receives a powerful impulse from the opening up of the political process. Grievances can now be voiced more openly, and the negative aspects of the existing regime can be exposed in a way that was not possible before. In unprecedented fashion, speakers at rallies of Madero's anti-reelectionist party, as well as opposition newspapers, laid bare many of the injustices of the Porfirian administration. Public perceptions of the illegitimacy of the existing political system tend to reach a high point when the government, sensing the negative consequences of the way it has opened up the political process, tries to close it down again. The people of Paris rose on July 14, 1789, when rumors began to spread that the king was bringing troops into Paris in order to dissolve the national assembly and put an end to the political opening that had emerged in France. The attempt by conservative military officers, led by General Kornilov, to take power in Russia in July 1917 radicalized large segments of the Russian population and helped the Bolsheviks to seize power in October that year. The attempted coup by conservatives within the Communist party in August 1991 put an end to any kind of legitimacy that the Communists had enjoyed in the eyes of the majority of Soviet people. Díaz's manipulation of the 1910 elections had been so blatant that a widely shared perception that the Díaz government lacked legitimacy emerged in Mexico.

A fourth and decisive precondition that can transform an uprising into a revolution is the appearance of a clear alternative to the existing regime. In 1910, Madero was seen as such an alternative by a majority of Mexico's population. Nevertheless, one often-cited precondition for revolution, the perception that the government is weak and irresolute, seemed to be absent in Mexico in 1910, although it had existed for a time. The divisions within Mexico's upper class between the supporters of Reyes and the científicos had, perhaps for the first time since Díaz assumed power, created the impression that the government was not monolithic. The Creelman interview and Díaz's toleration of Madero's opposition movement in 1909–10 may have strengthened the impression that the government was not strong enough to impose its rule upon the country. In the eyes of many people, however, Díaz seemed to have dispelled the notion that his government was weak and irresolute in the latter part of 1910. The banishment of Reyes, the arrest of Madero, and the manipulation of the elections without provoking active opposition convinced many supporters and opponents that Díaz had regained control of the country. The festivities that took place on September 15–16, 1910, on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the beginning of the country's independence movement, enhanced the image of a strong and stable government enjoying international recognition. Parades by elite troops through the streets of various cities reinforced the impression of government strength, while the arrival of delegations from all over the world seemed to give Díaz international legitimacy.

CHAPTER TWO

The Revolution That Neither Its Supreme Leader Nor Its Opponents Expected

The Chihuahuan Revolution, 1910–1911, and the Role of Pancho Villa

Camino real de Durango adornado con nopales; huye Doroteo Arango, lo persiguen los rurales.	On the royal road of Durango Full of nopales Doroteo Arango is fleeing from the rurales.
Lo siguen por un delito para llevarlo a prisión; en el rancho Gogojito herido dejó al patrón.	They are pursuing him for a crime and want to imprison him; at the Gogojito ranch he wounded the owner.
El patrón quería mujer con intenciones malsanas; entonces pensó escoger entre una de sus hermanas.[1]	The boss wanted a woman for his own vile purposes and he thought he could pick one from among Arango's sisters.

With Porfirio Díaz seemingly in firm control of Mexico in November of 1910, many would-be rebels were loathe to rise against him. They waited either for a sign of weakness within the regime or for a successful challenge to its power by a revolutionary group. Thus a vicious circle developed, with nearly everyone waiting for everyone else to make the first move. The one revolutionary movement that broke this vicious circle, exposed the weakness of the government, and finally triggered revolts all over Mexico was centered in the state of Chihuahua. In this respect, Chihuahua would play a role similar to that of Boston in the American Revolution of 1776, Paris in the French Revolution of 1789, Petrograd in the Russian Revolution of February 1917, and Moscow and Leningrad in the defeat of the attempted conservative coup of 1991.

We should not, however, take these comparisons too far. Paris, Petrograd, and Moscow became the ideological centers of revolution in their countries, which was never the case with Chihuahua. What the Chihuahuan revolutionaries had

and U.S. newspapers. In his later memoirs, he admitted that "this was a mistake that I shall regret all my life of which I openly state that I am deeply ashamed."[98]

Villa then named Martín Luis Guzmán, who was to become one of Mexico's most famous intellectuals and Villa's most talented biographer, as Luis's successor. He did not know that Guzmán was a supporter of Gutiérrez's. Guzmán accepted the position but told Villa that he wished to visit his ill mother in Chihuahua before he started, to which Villa agreed. Guzmán did not return, however, and instead left Mexico for Spain.

Villa's last secretary was Enrique Pérez Rul, who may have gained Villa's sympathy because he was both an officer in the constitutionalist army and professionally belonged to the one category of intellectuals that Villa deeply respected: he had been a teacher prior to the Madero revolution. He stayed with Villa until his last great defeat in Sonora and then fled to the United States.[99]

It is difficult to determine the exact extent of the influence of these private secretaries on Villa, but it probably was substantial. They drafted Villa's letters and controlled access to their leader, and at times Villa would ask them for advice. In his memoirs, Luis Aguirre Benavides says that time and time again he was able to moderate Villa's more violent impulses. Enrique Pérez Rul claims that it was he who suggested to Villa the composition of the northern revolutionary government that Villa established in 1915. Both Luis Aguirre Benavides and Enrique Pérez Rul published books about Villa that depict him as a revolutionary, and not the common bandit his enemies made him out to be, but at the same time show his brutality and question whether he was fit to be the leader of Mexico. Aside from Martín Luis Guzmán and Mariano Azuela, none of the Villista intellectuals were to play a major role in Mexico's political or intellectual life after Villa's defeat.

Villa's relationship with the intellectuals drawn to his banner was different from that which both Carranza and Zapata maintained with their most influential intellectual advisors. For the most part, Carranza's and Zapata's most important intellectuals shared their leaders' views. By contrast, the most prominent intellectuals who supported Villa were far more committed to democracy, a strong central government, and the sanctity of private property than he was. And with the significant exception of Federico González Garza, they were far less committed to radical expropriation of haciendas and agrarian reform. Of the three major leaders of the Mexican revolution after 1913, Villa had the least interest in ideology, and he was thus ready to allow intellectuals with opinions far different from his own to draft intellectual pronouncements in his name, which very frequently contradicted his views. In some cases, this may have been a conscious strategy in order to gain support for his movement in the United States. In other cases, as in the discussions at the convention meetings in Toluca and Cuernavaca in 1915, where Villista delegates espoused such conservative views that they contributed to a break with the Zapatistas, this may have been because of benign neglect or contempt for political debate.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The División del Norte

Yo soy soldado de Pancho Villa,
de sus dorados soy el más fiel,
nada me importa perder la vida,
si es cosa de hombres morir por él.

I am a soldier of Pancho Villa;
of his Dorados, I am the most loyal.
Losing my life means nothing to me,
since it is a manly thing to die for him.[1]

The División del Norte is the institution most closely identified with Villa in people's minds and the aspect of Villismo that has sparked the least controversy.

The problems that Villa faced in transforming the motley array of revolutionaries from Durango and Chihuahua into an effective fighting force are clearly revealed by the state of the División del Norte shortly after its establishment, when it captured the city of Torreón. The British consul in that city, Cunard Cummins, who observed the army at close range and came to know most of its leaders, very much doubted whether it could have any military significance in Mexico, notwithstanding its triumph at Torreón. In December 1913, he painted a devastating picture of disunity and reluctance to fight, writing: "There is no general loyalty and obedience to one head; nor is there cohesion and unity among themselves; they cannot 'pull together.'" Only a small number of the men directly under Villa were primarily loyal to him. At most, they numbered 3,000. The rest gave their primary allegiance to other regional and local leaders, who constantly quarreled among themselves:

> Pereyra declares that Urbina is a barbarous bandit and Yuriar a born traitor and that he will place trust in neither of them. Ex-deputy García de la Cadena rated all but himself as ignorant robbers, as black souls incapable of harboring a noble sentiment yet he himself was little better than the worst and was recently executed by the other leaders in Torreón. Notwithstanding the previous arrangement, the Arrieta brothers quarreled with Natera whilst they were attacking Zacatecas, the former retired with their men leaving Natera to continue the fight; in consequence, Zacatecas was saved [from the Villistas].

Probably with reference to the sack of Durango, Cummins described the revolutionary soldiers as a hoard of locusts, looting and stealing from rich and poor alike. "The continuance of the revolution is marked by more frequent and more cruel assaults against the defenseless, more sweeping destruction and clearer signs of degenerating ultimately into anarchy of the worst form," Cummins wrote. Furthermore, many soldiers refused to leave the confines of their native region. "Contreras in reply to commands asserts that his men do not fight outside their own territory." Many others were reluctant to fight. "The men do not distinguish themselves by natural braveries," Cummins observed.

In order to go into battle, they usually find it necessary to indulge in much shouting, as it were to encourage each other. It does not seem to be customary to assist courage by alcohol, though resort to stimulants is not unknown. During a battle, skulking is very noticeable, many men carefully avoiding the danger zone; nevertheless, in certain instances when the men have become worked up to a high pitch of excitement, a somewhat general bravery has become evident. During some of the attacks delivered against Torreón, fierce rushes were made almost to the mouth of the cannon. As a rule, however, an encounter at close quarters is the result of accident, the rebels and the government irregular forces preferring to exchange rifle fire at a very great distance from each other.

Cummins was convinced that the revolutionaries were not up to facing regular troops:

When the regular infantry of the government are engaged, matters are different, because under the immediate lead of their officers, they continue to advance, sometimes employing volley firing with the almost invariable result that the rebels are put to flight. . . . Only in the most exceptional cases do the revolutionaries show themselves able to stand against the disciplined advance of the federal infantry, even if their numbers are many times those of the government force; and in this connection we are not taking into account the demoralization that may have been caused by a previous federal artillery.[2]

Cummins, whose hatred of the revolutionaries was almost obsessive, is perhaps not the most reliable of witnesses, but his observations coincide closely with those made by Carranza and his chief of staff, Juan Barragán, when they for a short time in July 1913 attempted to take command of these same troops (minus the Chihuahuan contingent) and organized a failed attack on Torreón (see above).

Only seven months later, Edwin Emerson, a newspaperman who in fact was a secret agent for the U.S. chief of staff, Leonard Wood, drew a completely different picture of the División del Norte, with whom he spent several months, witnessing its greatest battles. Instead of the hodgepodge of badly equipped, ill-clad revolutionaries that Cummins had described half a year before, Emerson called the men of the División del Norte "the best set-up, best armed, best mounted, best equipped, best clothed, best fed, best paid, and generally best cared for troops I have yet seen in Mexico." In contrast to October 1913, when it was not clear whether any leader would be able to control the newly formed División del Norte, there was not the least doubt about who was in charge. The authority Villa exercised over his men deeply impressed Emerson:

Villa's greatest asset is his personality. As a former outlaw and bandit, who successfully stood his ground against Porfirio Díaz' soldiers and *rurales* for over ten years, Villa is idolized by all the lower classes of Mexico. His reported exploits, true or false, such as shooting a judge on the bench, shooting a federal colonel in the midst of his staff, shaking his fist in Huerta's face, shooting an Englishman out of hand almost in plain sight of the impotent gringos, and finally his enormous exploits of stealing pretty women, have brought him a renown among Mexicans like the old legends of Robin Hood or Dick Turpin. Anyone who has ever seen him on horseback knows that he is a splendid rider, a thing that all Mexicans set great store by, and he is also taking pains to spread and emphasize a universal belief that he is "a dead shot." He has further endeared himself to the lower classes and to his followers by his manifest lack of fear (never bothers about having guards around him or escorts), by his frank manners and speech, by his simple dress, simple habits, and rough unadorned speech set off by very forceful profanity and quaint obscenities. In all press interviews or public gatherings, he always makes it a point to lay stress on the fact that he is a simple, uneducated, unlettered man who never has had any advantages of culture. If he had a Machiavelli for an advisor he could not have found a surer way to the hearts of his followers, nine-tenths of whom are absolutely ignorant pelados.

Emerson painted a picture completely opposite to Cummins's dire predictions. "During all the time that I was with them [Villa's soldiers] in the field, I never saw an act of violence committed against natives, only against Spaniards, foreigners, or out and out federal sympathizers, who invariably belonged to the upper classes." Emerson felt that

Next to Villa's personality which completely overshadows that of Venustiano Carranza or any other rebel leader, his second greatest asset is the temper of the common people of northern Mexico, who in their sentiments are thoroughly against the federal government and against the people of the center and south. This feeling extends as far down as Zacatecas, and is an inestimable advantage to Villa's army since it brings them a constant flow of recruits, supplies and valuable information, and makes it unnecessary for them to resort to the forceful measures which make soldiers hate it [the Central Government].

There was another factor, according to Emerson, that was at least as important as his personality: "Villa's strongest card with his followers is his known irreconcilable hatred for Huerta, and Huerta's known irreconcilable hatred for Villa, on most intimate personal grounds, which preclude the possibility of Villa ever selling out his men to the gobierno, a species of treachery otherwise common among other Mexican rebel leaders of the past and present. Therefore Villa's followers know they can trust him to stick."[3]

What further attracted many of Villa's soldiers to him was that he was not aloof but attempted to establish as many personal links with them as he could and to show how much he cared for them. Not only were they paid regularly, but he also made it a point to give them relatively large sums of money after every victory. When a soldier was in urgent need of money for family purposes, he would go and see Villa, who would personally hand it to him.

Frequently, Villa would suddenly turn up at one of the campfires where his soldiers were preparing their food. He would ask if he could join them and then sit down and partake of whatever they had prepared. This was not just a populist

gesture to endear him to his troops but also a way of avoiding being poisoned, since no one knew where he was going to eat.

But the tremendous authority that Villa exercised within the army and the hold that he had on his soldiers did not derive only from his charismatic personality or from the prestige that his victories had given him. Villa also took concrete measures to overcome the natural reluctance of peasants to fight outside their native region and to force his commanders to cooperate with one another and to respect his authority.

Persuading reluctant peasants to fight far from home was all the more difficult because Villa had to rely on volunteers and instituted no compulsory military service, which had been one of the most hated features of the Porfirian regime. One means he used to get them to do so was to recruit as many individuals as possible who had few kin and whose roots in their home communities were not yet very firm—primarily boys of 14, 15, and 16, who did not yet have families of their own. In July 1914, Villa made every effort to recruit miners for his army. "Every mining camp in the district has been visited by recruiting officers and hundreds of hardy mountaineers of the remote districts who have hitherto manifested little interest in the revolution have been induced to take up arms," the *El Paso Morning Times* reported.[4]

Villa gave his men economic incentives to join his army. He had promised them land; since many of his soldiers identified with him, and since he had confiscated the properties of the oligarchy, many believed that he would in fact comply with his promise. His soldiers were regularly paid. In addition, to prevent them from looting, he carried out large redistributions of money and goods from properties confiscated from "enemies of the revolution" after each victory.

Another measure that both Villa and other commanders of the revolutionary forces in the north took in order to persuade recalcitrant peasants to fight far from their native regions was to allow them to take their wives, girlfriends, and mistresses along. These women were known as *soldaderas*, and sometimes as *adelitas*, a name derived from one of the most popular songs of the Mexican revolution.

In many respects the Mexican revolution was not only a men's but a women's revolution. Like the men, the women came from highly various walks of life. On the whole, historians have paid far less attention to them than to the men. With a few exceptions, the only women to emerge from obscurity belonged to the middle class and played a prominent role in the political movement that led to the revolution; some of them also participated in the armed movement, at times even as leaders of men. The great mass of poor peasant women who joined the revolutionary armies in the most different capacities—some as camp followers, some as sweethearts, many as fighters—have remained far more anonymous than their male counterparts.

The tradition of women following the army went back a long way before the outbreak of the revolution, and a large number of women and children followed the federal army as well. When the federal troops from Chihuahua, commanded by General Salvador Mercado, crossed the border and sought asylum in the United States, the army included 3,357 officers and men, 1,256 women, and 554 children.

The federal high command allowed so many women to accompany the army

for several reasons. In part, it was because these women constituted army support units by performing essential functions such as cooking, foraging for food, and tending the wounded. Above all, though, the participation of women was also a consequence of the type of recruitment that the federal army traditionally carried out in Mexico. The soldiers were neither volunteers nor short-term conscripts, but men forced into the army through an unjust recruitment system that forced the poorest and most unpopular men (from the point of view of the authorities) into a kind of semi-slavery, in which they remained for many years. The rate of desertion was, not surprisingly, enormous. One of the ways of attempting to keep the men in the army was to allow their women to accompany them.

There is little evidence of a similar massive participation of women in the Maderista armies. While some women, above all those of middle-class origin, played a prominent role in its leadership and at times even directed some of the troops, the descriptions of Maderista armies do not mention large contingents of soldaderas. Indeed, most Maderista forces operated near their native regions, and the women stayed at home, frequently providing the men with food and other help when they came to their native villages. Women's participation was also limited in Chihuahua and elsewhere in the Madero revolution because of the manner in which the rebels prosecuted the war: most Maderista forces consisted of cavalry, and since food and horses were in short supply, the Maderista horsemen tended to leave women behind when they went on campaign.

The situation completely changed in 1913–14 with the appearance of the large armies of the constitutionalist revolution. Unlike the Maderista soldiers, the constitutionalists would fight further and further away from their native homes. It is thus not surprising that many soldiers wanted to take their wives, sweethearts, and at times even their children with them. What allowed the constitutionalist leaders to acquiesce to this demand is that unlike the Maderistas, who relied primarily on horses for transportation, the constitutionalist armies were based on railroads. Thus the price the army had to pay for transporting women and even children was far smaller than it would have been had each of these camp followers had to be supplied with a horse. In addition to cooking and foraging, women frequently acted as nurses, and as along as the embargo on arms from the United States lasted, many of them smuggled ammunition and arms across the border. Others, frequently in opposition to the wishes of the army leadership, fought alongside the men.

Since trains played a greater role in the transportation of the División del Norte than in that of most other armies—there were no railroads linking Sonora to central Mexico, which forced Obregón's army to rely on horses for a large part of its southward march—women seem to have been particularly numerous in the ranks of the División del Norte. Perhaps for this reason, Villa, of all the major military leaders of the revolution, seems to have shown the greatest reluctance to allow soldaderas into his army. He could not prevent them from joining and riding along on the military trains, but he did try to limit their number. His elite Dorados were not allowed to bring women along, and by setting up a regular quartermaster corps and a hospital train, Villa sought to supply some of the functions that women were playing in the army. Based on descriptions of the División del Norte in its heyday, it is doubtful whether Villa was very successful in this re-

spect. "Of glamour, Mexico today has its full share," Gregory Mason, a correspondent for the journal *The Outlook*, wrote.

> Nowhere has warfare ever been so picturesque: the excitement of the start for the front, when as the long trains gather momentum, the men stand up on the swaying cars, shooting as wildly as they yell, but with more danger to bystanders while their sweethearts, yelling also, wave sarapes or the men's sombreros, or wrest a rifle from a lover's hands and join the fusillading; the happy hours of the dusty journey when booming guitars soothe compañeros with heads pillowed on the laps of their ladies; long drowsy waits in the heat of noon with the engines drinking at the water tanks, all talk stopped for the siesta hour and the only sound the hum of the cicada undaunted by the rocking heat of the desert that rises in billows above the grave outline of the mountains; evenings around boisterous fires after a meal of tortillas and jerke, the shrill chatter of the children, the subdued conversation of wives and the loud laughter of the other women who follow camps, the boastful bickerings of the men and deep sleep for everyone and the quiet over the silver desert broken only by the occasional quavering bark of a coyote and far off the faint bell-like notes of the mockingbird.[5]

As long as the haciendas that the revolutionary troops occupied on their way south remained stocked with large amounts of food, there was no problem in feeding both the soldiers and the soldaderas, and the latter in fact were excellent foragers, who managed again and again to find hidden supplies of food. Villa's soldiers were greatly impressed by the way he cared about them. "General Villa did everything he could to help the widows and the families of those who had fallen in battle," one of his soldiers stressed, adding that he also sent hundreds of poor children to get an education either in Ciudad Chihuahua or in the United States.[6]

Villa's care for his wounded soldiers is one part of his legend that is fully justified. For this purpose, he organized one of the most modern hospital trains in Mexico. "And surely it was a magnificent thing to see," John Reed wrote. "The hospital train lay right behind the work train now. Forty box cars enameled inside, stenciled on the side with a big blue cross and the legends 'Servicio Sanitario' handled the wounded as they came from the front. They were fitted inside with the latest surgical appliances and manned by sixty competent American and Mexican doctors. Every night shuttle trains carried the seriously hurt back to the base hospitals at Chihuahua and Parral."[7]

One right that his men forced Villa to grant them was the right to remain in units derived from their home communities. There was one instance when Villa attempted to abolish this right and failed completely. He had decided he needed an effective infantry. While his whole army stood at attention he picked out every man who did not have a horse and assigned him to an infantry unit, which would be commanded by one of Angeles's closest collaborators, Gonzalitos. When Gonzalitos one day later came to review his unit, he found no one to review. All the men had simply rejoined their old unit, and Villa was wise enough not to try to enforce his previous decision.[8]

Villa's popularity and the incentives he offered men to join his División del Norte attracted an increasingly heterogeneous group of volunteers whose motives for joining the army were various. When John Reed spoke with soldiers of Villa's army in 1914, he was struck by the diverse motives that people gave for joining the revolution. A Captain Fernando told him: "When we win the *revolución* it will be government by the men, not by the rich. We are riding over the lands of the men. They used to belong to the rich but now they belong to me and the *compañeros*."[9]

When Reed asked him, "What are you fighting for?" Juan Sánchez, a plain soldier in the army, answered: "Why, it is good fighting. You don't have to work in the mines." Another soldier, Manuel Paredes, said, "We are fighting to restore Francisco I. Madero to the presidency." He had obviously not heard that Madero had been killed in the meantime. Another, Isidro Amayo, stated, "We are fighting for *libertad*." When Reed asked him, "What do you mean by *libertad*?" Amayo responded, "*Libertad* is when I can do what I want." At this point, Juan Sánchez asked Reed, "Is there war in the United States now?" "'No,' I said untruthfully. 'No war at all.' He meditated for a moment. 'How do you pass the time then . . . ?'"[10]

In interviews carried out by a number of scholars many years later when the participants of the revolution were already very old, a similar variety of views emerged.

Two brothers who soon became two of Villa's most famous commanders, Martín and Pablo López, joined his army, according to a surviving brother, "because of the bad treatment they suffered at the hands of Catholic hacendados." They felt exploited by the hacendado Jesús Acosta at the ranch of El Pajarito, where they worked. Acosta not only paid them very small wages but repeatedly hit Martín López with a stick and at other times tried to do the same to Pablo.[11]

The motives that impelled Desiderio Madrid Carrasco to join the revolution were quite different. "I was very young," he told an interviewer, "and I was a tramp, very lazy; I didn't like to work. I loved dances, girls and drink. My father had repeatedly warned me but I never listened to him. One day when I was very drunk, my brothers expelled me from my house. At this point, I participated in the war, and I said, 'Let them kill me now so that the coyotes will devour me.'"[12]

Pedro Romero was a peon on the hacienda of Bustillos when the revolution broke out. When he was asked by the interviewer when he was born, he did not remember the exact date but he said, "I was born in the period of slavery." While it is not clear what he meant by slavery, the term probably referred to his status as a debt peon. He was working the land and was about 15 at the time, when four men, one of whom was Villa, rode over to him and asked him to tell another peon, Pablo Martínez, that "Pancho Villa tells him that the time has come, and that I am waiting for him here." When Romero transmitted this message to Martínez, "it seemed as if I had told him that God had spoken; he threw everything away, ran to his house, saddled his horse, and we galloped back. When he arrived, he embraced Villa and told him, 'Here I am, my general, at your disposal.'" As they were leaving, Villa turned around and asked Romero, "'How old are you, boy?'"

"Fifteen."
"Don't you want to come with us?"
"Where?"
"To war."

"Why?"
"To put an end to injustice."
"Will we also end slavery?"
"Slavery too, but for this we have to fight. Come with me boy, and I'll give you arms."

I turned around to see my mother's reaction to all this, but she understood that I would leave with Villa, and she blessed me. This is how I met Villa, how I went to war with him. Later we recruited and armed the men of the neighboring ranches.[13]

Rogelio Rodríguez Saenz was a son of the owner of the hacienda of El Pichague and the nephew of Trinidad Rodríguez, an old crony of Villa's from his bandit days who had become a general of the División del Norte. While his father, for obvious reasons, wanted nothing to do with the revolution, the influence of his uncle seems to have been one of the main factors that led him at 14 to become a soldier in one of Villa's brigades.

Lauro Trevizo Delgado was a member of the old military colony of Namiquipa. The reasons he gave for going to war were "land, freedom, and justice."[14]

For obvious reasons, very few hacendados joined Villa. The four Murga brothers were a conspicuous exception. Not only did this family own the large hacienda of San Juan El Duro, located in the vicinity of San Andrés, but members of the family had been highly unpopular caciques in the village whose inhabitants formed the core of Villa's first revolutionary guerrilla band. It is thus not surprising that the participation of the Murgas in the División del Norte was not a wholly voluntary affair. An uncle of theirs who lived in San Andrés had a long-standing conflict with Villa over debts that the revolutionary general had not yet repaid. When Villa sent two emissaries to the uncle to ask for help in providing for the revolutionary troops, Sabas Murga shot them as they were on the way to his ranch. When Villa heard of this, he ordered his troops to wipe out the whole of the Murga family. Villa's troops surprised the four Murga brothers, Juan, Ramón, Aurelio, and Encarnación, who had not at all been involved in the conflict between their uncle and Villa, as they were tending their fields. As Villa's men prepared to execute them, Juan Murga asked that he be allowed to talk to Villa. He told Villa that if he spared his life, he, Juan, would immediately enlist in the División del Norte, and his three brothers would follow as soon as the current crop was harvested. Villa agreed, and the Murgas kept their word. While they had originally joined Villa, as the lone surviving brother told an interviewer in 1976, "to protect our families and property,"[15] they became so deeply attached to Villa that they remained loyal to the revolutionary chief even after his great defeats in 1915 and the dissolution of the División del Norte.

Villa did not only attract recruits from Chihuahua. As his fame spread through Mexico, men from distant states made the long journey north to join his army. Federico González Jiménez, a landless peasant from the Altos de Jalisco, came from a poor family. From the age of 10 on, he had worked the fields of a hacendado for five centavos a day. He joined the revolution "because of the terrible conditions in the countryside."[16]

Pablo Baray, who joined the División del Norte from the old military colony of Bachiniva, which had a long history of conflict with the Porfirian authorities, may have had additional reasons. In his eyes, fighting for the revolution was the good life, and he proudly stated that during his army service his weight had increased from 64 to 75 kilos.[17]

While most of the fighters in the División del Norte were volunteers, there was one conspicuous exception to this rule: captured members of the federal army were frequently given a choice between joining Villa's forces or being shot. Most of them had been impressed into the federal army against their will, and the relative freedom, better pay, and better living conditions of the División del Norte formed a stark contrast to their treatment in the federal army.

While the social origins of Villa's men varied tremendously, their perceptions of Villa showed great similarity. Jesús Pérez, the well-educated son of a mining administrator, who had been secretary to Emilio Madero and had joined Villa, described him as a man "endowed with the gift of leadership who was given absolute obedience by his men. He was a great organizer, so that his soldiers had great respect for him rather than simply fearing him."[18] Pérez had joined the División del Norte because, had he not done so, "federal troops would have shot him. All of those who joined at that time had done so for similar reasons."[19]

José Dolores Figueroa, from the former military colony of Bachiniva, was impressed by "the electricity" in Villa's eyes and by the fact that the people loved him.[20]

Another volunteer from Bachiniva considered Villa "a good man who never changed sides."[21]

Porfirio Adrian Díaz, a carpenter whose parents were relatively well-to-do peasants, came all the way from the southern state of Oaxaca to join Villa, whom he considered "very brave. He was very good to the common people."[22]

Lieutenant Colonel Victorio de Anda, the son of relatively well-to-do peasants in Jalisco, had joined Villa against the wishes of his father. He felt that Villa's authority derived from his courage and the fact that he could always be seen in the first line of combat.[23]

There was a consensus among those of his former soldiers who were interviewed about Villa's characteristics as a social revolutionary. A few described him as an agrarian revolutionary who would redistribute the land. Most of them used a more general designation and called him "a friend of the poor." Pedro Romero, the former peon, saw Villa as "a general who fought for the poor."[24] Lucio Alvarado Portillo, who worked in a munitions factory in Chihuahua that made ammunition for the División del Norte, considered Villa "the benefactor of the poor."[25]

The former Villista colonel Federico González Jiménez was impressed by the fact that after taking a town, Villa "gave corn and other help to the poor."[26] Francisco Muro Ledesma, who joined Villa at 13 because he sought revenge for the murder of his father by federal troops, felt that "the common people loved Villa. Wherever he went he distributed corn, beans, etc."[27]

Most of Villa's former soldiers insisted that the ex-bandit kept better discipline and better order among his troops than any other general in Mexico. They all stated that looting was absolutely forbidden and that anyone caught plundering or robbing would immediately be shot. Secundino Vaca insisted that bandits who robbed the poor frequently declared that they were Villistas in an attempt to discredit the revolutionary leader. "Villa," Secundino Vaca declared, "never took from the poor but only from the rich."[28]

The one exception to this consensus was Francisco Muro Ledesma, who had joined Villa at 13, and said that Villa sometimes allowed his soldiers to loot for three minutes. Anyone caught robbing after that would immediately be shot. He also insisted that when looting did occur, it was mainly done by the troops of Tomás Urbina and Maclovio Herrera, which were not under Villa's direct command. His men also expressed the conviction that Villa took nothing for himself.[29]

In order to maintain the discipline of his army, Villa relied not only on his popularity and the incentives that he gave his soldiers but on harsh measures of control as well. The man in charge of these policies, Manuel Banda, was a former employee of a collection agency in Torreón, who had joined Villa after he captured the city. Unlike Villa's other killers, he had given no indication in his pre-revolutionary life of the violence he would practice as an officer of the División del Norte. He was, as a former school friend remembered, "one of those quiet, relaxed, good pupils who never picked a quarrel and was on good terms with everybody." When his friend met Banda again during the revolution, he could not believe the change that had come over him. "What is your role?" he asked him.

"To force people into battle at the point of a gun."

"Did you have to hurt some of them?"

"Hurt? No, kill. I do not wound, I kill. . . . A wounded man is cured someday and can kill me anytime. . . . I shoot to kill and if I do not do so immediately, I continue to shoot until the man is dead."

"Have you killed many?"

"Many. I have killed many; in some battles I may have killed as many of our men as the federal troops have done. That's the system of General Villa, and I tell you that it's the only system that has had success, above all with these people from Durango."[30]

Banda had concentrated his efforts on Contreras's men, insisting that before Villa assumed command, they had run from firefights like "sheep" in every battle. They had sparked such contempt among their enemies that instead of calling them the Brigada Contreras, the federal soldiers had named them Brigada Carreras (the Running Brigade). According to Banda:

They now know me, and they are gripped by panic when they see me on my motorcycle with a pistol in my hand. They immediately go on the attack. In this way we took Torreón. Now Contreras's men are completely transformed; they fight at least as well as the other brigades, perhaps even better; they know that if someone is not killed by the federals in front, he will be killed by us in the back.[31]

Banda and his men were but one of the units that Villa created to enforce his will upon recalcitrant soldiers and officers. The Dorados (men of gold) were the most important of these. At first they served only as Villa's bodyguard. But soon they became an elite unit utilized for various purposes, ranging from serving as adjutants to Villa to executing his enemies, or, like Napoleon's Old Guard, to intervening in a battle when the odds had become desperate. When the Dorados were created after the battle of Torreón, they consisted of three units of 32 men each. Their number soon rose to 400. Villa chose all of them personally, on the basis of their loyalty to him and their prowess in battle. The Dorados included many of his relatives, since he felt that he could count on their unconditional loyalty (which was not always the case). Whenever Villa heard of a soldier or an officer who had distinguished himself by a particular act of bravery or of resourcefulness, he would recruit him into the Dorados. For example, Candelario Cervantes attracted Villa's attention when during an attack on the hacienda of Santa Clara, in which the Villistas had no artillery to support them, Cervantes loaded a few pieces of wood on a mule train, approached the enemy lines, and loudly gave orders for his soldiers to prepare an artillery attack on the hacienda. The federal soldiers panicked and surrendered.

Carlos Gutiérrez Galindo's experiences also captured Villa's imagination and led to his incorporation into the Dorados. Gutiérrez Galindo had been wounded and his horse killed during an unsuccessful Villista attack. After his unit retreated, federal soldiers swarmed over the battlefield, killing all the wounded and prisoners. Gutiérrez Galindo gutted his dead horse and hid for hours under its skin until Villista troops advanced once again, when he was able to emerge from his hiding place.[32]

Why these men were called Dorados is still a matter of controversy. Some believe that it was because they wore a golden insignia on their hats, others that it arose from the gold coins in which they paid for many of the goods they acquired, while others see an analogy to a famous nineteenth-century group of bandits called *los plateados*, the silver ones.[33]

In some respects, it was more difficult for Villa to maintain and secure the loyalty of the different generals of his army than that of their soldiers. Many of these generals had become regional warlords and were reluctant to give up their autonomy. They had done so only when it became clear that only by uniting under a strong chieftain could they repel federal attacks. Later, Villa's victories had greatly enhanced his standing and his influence among them. Nevertheless, many still smarted from their loss of autonomy. Others, such as Urbina, resented the discipline Villa imposed, which meant that they could not return to their traditional ways of enriching themselves and securing the loyalty of their troops by allowing them to plunder whatever city they conquered. These tendencies to autonomy were all the more dangerous for Villa, since Carranza attempted to foster them. At the same time, Carranza was wooing two of Villa's generals, Maclovio Herrera and Manuel Chao.

Villa showed great shrewdness in counteracting his subordinates' plays for greater autonomy. The first and simplest step he took was to increase the number of men under his direct command and to transform at least some of them into an elite fighting unit. In June 1914, when Villa's División del Norte had reached the high point of its development, Carrancista officials estimated that of its approximately 12,000 soldiers, 3,000 were directly under Villa and unconditionally loyal to him.[34]

In order to maintain the loyalty of his generals and their troops, Villa made substantial concessions to them. Part of the estates confiscated from the oligarchy was placed under the control of Villa's generals. They did not have to account directly for the revenues from these estates, but they were obliged to use the income to feed, clothe, and supply a certain number of their men. Some of the

generals, such as Urbina, received these lands as compensation for income that they and their men lost when Villa ordered them to stop pillaging conquered cities.

In other respects as well, the different units of the División del Norte maintained a large degree of independence. When General Juan García, the commander of the Madero brigade, fell in battle, it was not Villa but the officers of the brigade who designated his successor.[35] Moreover, regional chieftains could maintain control over their home regions. Villa had decreed that in Chihuahua and Durango, the orders of local military commanders—who were largely beholden to the regional chieftains—would supersede those of civilian officials appointed by the governor.

Villa never attempted to appeal to the soldiers of the División del Norte over the heads of their generals. Nevertheless, he did try to establish some kind of personal rapport with the soldiers, and his personal charisma and legend strengthened his popularity among his soldiers. They would go in to battle shouting "Viva Villa!" instead of the name of the local or regional general who commanded them.

Villa secured even greater loyalty from the troops of the División del Norte in the spring of 1914. Many of the men who joined at this time were far more influenced by his personal prestige and success on the battlefield than by personal links to local leaders.

Until late 1914 and early 1915, when a new civil war broke out among the revolutionaries, Villa with two exceptions never attempted to execute any of his highest officers or to take violent reprisals against them. General Domingo Yuriar's drunken refusal to join a battle was one exception. Villa's subsequent execution of Yuriar met with no opposition within his army. The situation was very different when Villa attempted to execute Governor Manuel Chao for disloyalty. In that case, Villa was forced to relent.

While Villa had made substantial concessions to some of his generals and to their subordinates by providing them with haciendas and by allowing them to maintain a large degree of control over their native regions, he tried in other ways to make them dependent upon him. He attempted to maintain complete control over the acquisition of arms, ammunition, and uniforms. He was also very careful in restricting his subordinates' access to the American market. Thus while the generals could dispose of the goods of their haciendas without asking Villa's permission, they were required to obtain a special license from him if they sought to export cattle or other goods across the border to the United States. He also maintained some control over the purse strings of his army by controlling the production and the supply of the paper money he printed.

When Villa began issuing such money, American merchants across the border accepted it at a relatively high value, since they were confident that sooner or later Villa would win, and that his currency would then increase in value and be redeemable at par.

Perhaps the easiest of the many complex tasks that Villa faced in attempting to streamline and reorganize his army was the procurement of arms and ammunitions once the U.S. embargo had been lifted by Woodrow Wilson in February 1914. Although Carranza already had representatives in place in the United States

who were charged with buying arms, Villa did not want to be dependent on the first chief and sent agents of his own to the border and to the United States to procure arms and ammunition. His main agents were the Torreón businessman Lázaro de la Garza, Felíx Sommerfeld, a German adventurer and former head of Madero's secret service in the United States, and his own brother, Hipólito. The first two of these men were knowledgeable and capable businessmen, who would work for Villa efficiently as long as it suited their interests, but would otherwise betray him. Hipólito Villa was loyal to his brother, but this loyalty was frequently overshadowed by his greed and incapacity.

Until August 1914, when World War I broke out, the arms and ammunition market in the United States was a buyer's market, and Villa had no difficulty in securing whatever supplies he needed. Nor in this early period did he have any problems paying for the goods he acquired. Largely through Lázaro de la Garza, he sold the cattle from estates confiscated from the Mexican oligarchy across the border in the United States. In addition, Villa received tax revenue from American companies whose businesses were located in the zone he controlled.

Villa's monopoly over the acquisition of arms and ammunition was not the only way he was able to control his potentially rebellious generals. Another was through direct control of the technical branches of his army, such as artillery, in which most of his commanders and soldiers lacked expertise. Villa made sure that these technical units were commanded by men who were not dependent upon his subordinates, who had no constituency of their own, and whose primary link was to him. But finding trained soldiers to fill these units was no easy task. There were only two sources from which Villa could acquire such experts: the federal army or foreign countries. Both presented risks.

With the exception of Juan N. Medina, who became Villa's chief of staff, few federal officers voluntarily enlisted in the División del Norte before Felipe Angeles joined Villa's ranks in March 1914. The great majority of former federal officers or soldiers who served in his ranks in the first months after the formation of the División del Norte were prisoners captured from the federal army and offered the choice of serving in the revolutionary forces or being shot. While most of them, for obvious reasons, elected to serve, their loyalty was by no means guaranteed.

Foreign soldiers of fortune and volunteers presented a different problem for Villa. He had no ideological opposition to using foreigners in his service. After all, Madero had done the same. Although Villa had criticized Madero's use of foreigners in 1911, he had not done so as a matter of principle but rather because Madero seemed to trust Garibaldi more than he trusted most of his Mexican officers and had given him a position of decisive responsibility. This was something Villa never did. He used foreigners as experts but never gave them a place in his war councils or among his generals.

Foreigners presented two problems for Villa. First, if he disciplined them, or even if they were killed in battle, complications with foreign governments might ensue. Second, he had no way of checking the credentials of the foreigners who came to him. They would cross the border from the United States, come to his headquarters, and claim to have great experience in military affairs and to have fought in many battles. Villa had no way of knowing whether they told the truth.

There were no agencies that hired these men, no letters of reference on which he could depend. If he found they had lied, he could dismiss them, but punishing them in any other way, especially shooting them, might again entail diplomatic problems. As a result, Villa's experiences with foreign mercenaries were of a very mixed nature. John Reed describes meeting five American mercenaries who had fought with Villa for a time, and whom the revolutionary leader had practically forced to leave his army. Of these, only one had real military experience; all the others had falsified their records when they enlisted.[36]

The one way Villa tested his recruits was to put them in charge of technical branches of his army and judge them on the basis of their performance. Thus, Villa named an American soldier of fortune who had fought in the U.S. Army, but had no artillery experience, as head of his artillery prior to the battle of Tierra Blanca.[37] At the time, the artillery consisted of only two guns, which Villa had captured in Torreón. Fortunately, another officer who had more experience in battle than the American, Ivar Thord-Gray, arrived in Mexico hoping to offer his services to its revolutionaries. He had fought in the Boer War in South Africa, as well as with the British Army in India, and had gone to China to try his fortune with warlords there before alighting in Mexico. He was a cavalry expert, but Villa felt that while he needed no one to tell him how to run his cavalry, he was in urgent need of artillery officers. Thord-Gray was no artillery expert, but he did know something about guns. When the two guns that Villa had captured in Torreón did not fire and seemed to be completely out of service, Thord-Gray, unlike the American soldier of fortune who was in charge of artillery, had no difficulty in diagnosing the problem. The federal gunners had taken away the firing pins and the range sights before abandoning the guns, thus disabling them. Thord-Gray slipped across the border and had some firing pins made, so that the guns could at least fire, although without sighting ranges, their aim was erratic. Nevertheless, when, in Villa's presence, Thord-Gray showed that he could fire these guns, Villa walked up to him

> and to my amazement gave me a Mexican embrace (abrazo), words shot from his lips like bullets from a gattling gun; I had suddenly become his friend (amigo) and companion (compañero).
>
> A few minutes later he proclaimed me as his chief of artillery with the rank of first captain (capitan primero). My command consisted of two seventy-five millimeter field guns, no officers, no non-coms. There were a few half-wild Apache gunners who knew nothing about guns and some could only speak their own language except for a little pidgin-Spanish.[38]

In this case, Villa's improvised hiring of Thord-Gray turned out to be positive, as did his enlistment of another adventurer, Captain Horst von der Goltz, a German.

Horst von der Goltz, who according to his memoirs had worked as an agent of the German secret service in different parts of the world, wandered into Mexico looking for adventure. He arrived in Ciudad Chihuahua when it was still occupied by federal troops and was immediately imprisoned by federal commander, Mercado, as a possible revolutionary spy. He was only freed when Villa's army occupied the city. Von der Goltz immediately volunteered his services to one of

Villa's generals, Trinidad Rodríguez, some of whose officers he had befriended in jail. He told the revolutionaries that he had long military experience. This was a lie; he had never been in battle. The only military training he had was the obligatory service that any German of military age had to render. The little training he had and the reputation of Germans as great fighters, as well as a series of bluffs and coincidences, soon enabled von der Goltz to rise rapidly in the ranks of Villa's army and to assume a leading technical position, for which in reality he had neither the training nor the expertise. His reputation as *el diablo alemán* (the German devil) was made when during an infantry attack, he got lost and, not knowing where he was, and trying to get away from the battle, he inadvertently fled toward the front. As he was advancing, his detachment had received orders to retreat, and when, after long wanderings, von der Goltz, coming from the front, met the rearguard detachment, its commander was impressed. "'But,' cried the colonel suddenly warming into emotion, 'you—where have you been? You brave German refused to come back with the others. All by yourself you have been fighting single-handed. Let me embrace you.'"[39]

Rodríguez was now convinced that von der Goltz was a battle-tried war veteran and decided to utilize his services in a technical capacity.

> Chief Trinidad Rodríguez got twenty machine guns down from the United States and turned them over to me. "Train your gun crews and get the platoons ready for field service," he ordered. "You can have three weeks. Then I shall need them."
>
> Without a word I saluted and turned on my heel. I could not very well tell my general that I had never in my life applied even the tip of one finger to a machine gun.[40]

While von der Goltz may have had no inkling of machine guns, his basic training and resourcefulness led him to a success he himself had not expected. He hired a former American bank robber named Jefferson, who had escaped from jail in El Paso, recruited a few Mexican gunners, and finally set up an efficient machine-gun company.

Von der Goltz must have possessed unusual learning skills, for only a few months later, an agent of the U.S. war college, posing as a war correspondent, carefully examined Villa's army and lavished praise on the organization of his artillery, for which he credited the German soldier of fortune.[41]

Some of the mercenaries whom Villa hired were real experts and had no need to bluff their way into his army.[42] One such, with much fighting experience in his chosen field, machine guns, was Sam Drebben, "internationally known as the fighting Jew.'" According to Patrick O'Hea who knew him,

> he had fought in the U.S.A. war against Spain, in the Marines in Nicaragua at least, and on a condottieri basis in the other republics of Latin America. Of medium height but rather heavy build, in age on the happy side of the half-century, there was nothing of the expected bluster and blasphemy to his mouthed speech as he asked for any unwanted newspapers that I could lend him, no matter how old, the better to pass the lonely hours.
>
> The antithesis of a swashbuckler, he was silent and diffident concerning his feats of arms but took a sort of modest pride in his profession as might any other artificer or master craftsman.[43]

One of the strangest of the men said to have served with Villa was the American short-story writer and satirist Ambrose Bierce, who was 71 when he entered Mexico. It is not clear why he went there, and it is still less clear in what capacity he rode with Villa's army, if indeed he did. One purpose of his trip may have been to put an end to his life. Shortly before he left the United States, he wrote his niece that "if you hear of my being stood up against the Mexican stonewall and shot to rags please note I think that I think that a pretty good way to depart this life. It beats old age, disease or falling down the cellar stairs. To be a Gringo in Mexico—Ah!, that is euthanasia."[44]

By Bierce's own account, he crossed the border from El Paso to Ciudad Juárez sometime in November 1913, shortly after Villa had captured the city, and rode south with Villa. He probably participated in the battle of Tierra Blanca, where Villa defeated federal troops sent to retake Ciudad Juárez. During that battle, at least temporarily, Bierce's status changed from mere observer to combatant. He took a rifle and shot at the federal troops, killing one federal soldier. The Villistas were so delighted that they gave him a large sombrero. On December 16, he sent his last letter from Ciudad Chihuahua, which Villa had captured not long before, stating that he expected to go to Ojinaga, where the last federal troops in the state of Chihuahua had holed up and were resisting attacks by Villa's troops. This was the last communication he ever wrote. What later happened to him, when and where he died, remains one of the great mysteries of American literary history. One theory, accepted by many of his biographers, is that he died during the battle of Ojinaga. Other authors believe that he stayed for some time with Villa and then angered him either by criticizing him or by saying that he intended to join Carranza, and that Villa then either shot Bierce or abandoned him in the desert.[45]

Villa's way of dealing with the specialized and technical branches of his army and the quality of those services dramatically improved when Felipe Angeles joined the División del Norte.

As Villa achieved one victory after another, his strategic abilities and the fighting qualities of his army became the subjects of intense debate in the press in the United States. On a very different level, they also became a preoccupation of the U.S. military, which was contemplating the possibility of an American military intervention and trying to gauge the kind of resistance U.S. troops would encounter.

In the press, the discussion largely focused on Villa's personality, with John Reed clearly expressing the opinion of large segments of U.S. public opinion. "On the field too Villa had to invent an entirely original method of warfare," Reed wrote, "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 that Mexico has ever had. His method of fighting is astonishingly like Napoleon's. Secrecy, quickness of movement, the adaptation of his plan 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.[46]

The U.S. secret agent Edwin Emerson was also impressed by Villa's ability to generate loyalty among his soldiers and to mold them into a fighting whole, but he did not believe that this warranted the American press calling Villa "a consummate Napoleonic strategist." Branding such descriptions "moonshine," he wrote:

> as for strategy he has merely the inborn cunning of any Indian on the warpath, with an almost inexhaustible fund of intimate personal knowledge of the north country, gained during the strenuous years when he was chased all over the lands as an outlaw, besides which he has the invaluable quality of energy, dash and initiative which as you know is exceedingly rare among the Mexicans. Maps are quite lost on him, for he can no more read a map than an owl. This last also applies to most of his officers except for a few of his highest staff officers. . . . What glimmers of apparent strategy Villa has shown in this campaign were either simple Indian cunning or were the result of the advice of some of the educated soldiers around him, to whom he is always willing to listen—another great military virtue. These professional soldiers include General Felipe Angeles, Marshall P. Martil Poole, an American civil engineer, and young von der Goltz.[47]

Emerson was only willing to concede "three innovations in Villa's military organization which excited most comment among Mexicans and foreigners resident in that region . . . his supply service, his commissary and quartermaster department, and his medical department, all of which depended wholly on the railway service and never made any effectual attempt of getting away from the railway. Whenever they did so they invariably broke down but while with the railway they did good work, in fact surprisingly good work judging by Mexican standards."[48]

A committee of U.S. military men of which Emerson was part, many of whom had also spent time with the División del Norte, came up with a much more favorable view of Villa's strategic innovations. His strategy, they felt, was based on the dependence of the federal garrisons in large cities on supplies brought in by railroad, as well as on the federal army's incapacity to take offensive action: the federals had no mobile units for this purpose, and the soldiers impressed into that army largely lacked the will to fight.

> The enemy's bread line is cut where it is impossible for him to repair it in time; the hungry insurgents watch on the hills for a sign of weakness and as soon as one appears an attack is made; if successful the federals evacuate with practically their whole force. No pursuit is made by the Constitutionalists, because, in the first place the towns taken contain too much loot to be abandoned to anyone else, and in the next place, the federals' line of retreat is stripped bare of food, animals and often of water. If the attack is unsuccessful the federals make no vigorous prolonged counterattack, and the Constitutionalists retire unmolested to the hills, resume the policy of watchful waiting and prepare for the next attack. Each time a town is taken the insurgents, unmolested by the enemy, become stronger, better equipped and their next operation takes place against a stronger force of federals. . . . there is nothing complicated about the strategy; but it is hard to beat in northern Mexico.[49]

The commission was also greatly impressed by Villa's strategy of night attacks on large cities, which had paid off at Torreón.

Emerson tried to analyze the effectiveness of the División del Norte. He was not much impressed by the infantry, which he designated as "Villa's weakest arm." He felt that "in a horse country like northern Mexico people who have to go afoot are generally scorned, therefore nobody serves in the infantry by choice but only those poor devils who could not get themselves mounted. During the latter part of the Torreón campaign all the federal deserters and prisoners who were incorporated in Villa's army were stuck into the infantry." Nor, in spite of Angeles's leadership, was Emerson impressed by the quality of Villa's artillery.

These negative ratings were overshadowed by the praise that Emerson heaped on the División del Norte. Its three greatest assets were its cavalry, its mobility, and the fighting spirit and resilience of the Mexican soldiers. The strength of Villa's cavalry was attributable in part to the quality of the horses bred in Chihuahua and Coahuila. "The best horses come from the ranch of the Zuloagas, a Spanish family near Chihuahua who had for many years been importing Arab stallions and mares, barbs and some English and Kentucky and California thoroughbreds." With the help of these horses, Villa's cavalry achieved "a remarkable mobility . . . in moments of stress. This mobility was enhanced by the fact that Villa's cavalry when engaged in hostile operations, moves unhampered by any impediment such as wagons or pack trains, the men carrying nothing but their arms, ammunition, canteen and one blanket, their invaluable practice being to make the country supply them and their horses with subsistence."[50]

The same mobility applied to Villa's military train. Emerson compared Villa's march south from Chihuahua to Torreón with a similar northward movement by Huerta's troops two years earlier, when Huerta was in charge of the campaign against Orozco. "It took Huerta's army, 7,500 fighting men (15,000 people) two months. Huerta as you may recall had twenty railroad trains. Villa this time had nineteen trains and two additional short trains which he used for communication purposes and Villa carried practically the same number of people but it took Villa only ten days." What impressed Emerson most and boded ill for a possible U.S. invasion of Mexico was the fighting spirit of the División del Norte:

> You know from your own observations in Mexico that the average Mexican pelado is a pretty sturdy creature, who can stand more privation and hardship, such as cold, heat, wetting, hunger, thirst, vermin, than any white people could put up with. I was agreeably impressed while serving with Villa's men by the generally cheerful and contented demeanor, without any of the grumbling so usual among our own troops. During the battle days and at other times when I came in contact with the wounded men I was filled with admiration at the stoical way in which they bore their hurts. Men who were not seriously wounded, almost invariably continued their service in the field, and I saw many instances of men who were really quite seriously hurt—shot through the shoulders or elbows or hands or wounded in the head—who held their places in the firing line and stayed with their commands, refusing to go to the rear. The conduct of the women who came along on the railway trains and many of whom accompanied their men into the firing line around Torreón was also notably heroic.[51]

Can the División del Norte be called a revolutionary army in the fullest sense of the term? Revolutionary armies in history have tended to have certain common characteristics. They have tended to be composed largely or entirely of volunteers, with most soldiers conscious of the aims they were fighting for, and civilian society has closely identified with the army and exercised either control or at least a profound influence over that army.

There was one army during the Mexican revolution whose revolutionary credentials according to these criteria no one has ever doubted. This was the Liberating Army of the South, headed by Emiliano Zapata. Such a "perfect" revolutionary army was only possible in a guerrilla setting where the men fought near their communities, remained peasants to a large degree, and did not become professional soldiers.

The northern revolutionary armies were of a very different nature. While they too were composed of volunteers, their social composition was more heterogeneous, and the links to their communities were different, since, unlike the Zapatistas, they fought further and further away from their homes and native communities.

It is difficult to determine either the revolutionary consciousness or the civilian link of the northern revolutionary soldiers and officers. There was no system of political commissars or political parties to indoctrinate them, as was the case with communist revolutionary peasant armies. Nor were there religious leaders to carry out similar labor, as in the Iranian army. Unfortunately, very few surveys of the mentality of these revolutionary soldiers and officers were ever carried out, and the few that were took place when most of them were in their late seventies or early eighties. Nevertheless, one can speculate on the character of the armies' revolutionary consciousness and links to civil society on the basis of the way these armies were formed and the social characteristics of the regions from whence they came.

In both Coahuila and Nuevo León, where the most important contingents of Carrancista troops originated, the core of the revolutionary armies came from professionalized state militias, which absorbed those former Maderista revolutionaries who wanted to become professional soldiers and were greatly strengthened during the Orozco rebellion.

In this respect, the composition of the División del Norte was very different. In contrast to what happened in Sonora and Coahuila, the professional state militias that had been set up in Chihuahua after the victory of Madero largely disappeared in the Madero years as a result of the Orozco rebellion. The bulk of these state militias had joined Orozco, and the majority of the units that had remained loyal to the government and had been headed by Pancho Villa were dissolved after Villa's arrest. Thus, once the constitutionalist revolution broke out, a new popular army had to be raised. Its core was not composed of professional militias but of men recruited from their communities, with which they still had links. These links were so strong that attempts by the leadership to disrupt them were doomed to failure in spite of Villa's prestige.[52]

In addition, Chihuahua and Durango were the core areas of agrarian discontent in the north, rather than Sonora, Coahuila, and Nuevo León, and men either from expropriated communities or from communities that had seized hacienda lands constituted an important part of the División del Norte. Since military units frequently came from one community, as did their leaders, their links to civil society, at least as far as their home regions were concerned, were still strong.

The División del Norte was by no means exclusively a peasant army, however.

Cowboys, miners, and drifters also joined. In addition, many of the peasants who came from other regions of Mexico joined as individuals and not as communities, sometimes out of revolutionary consciousness, sometimes just to survive by becoming soldiers. They received regular pay, with bonuses after each victory, and for some of them at least, the army had become a way of life in itself. Since many of them were boys aged between 12 and 16, the extent of their revolutionary consciousness is debatable.

What is not clear is how the revolutionary armies were perceived in regions where they did not originate. To a large degree, this depended on the amount of discipline they were able to keep and to what degree the leadership could prevent the soldiers from looting. By all accounts, at least until the end of 1914, it was the División del Norte that kept the strongest discipline among its men and thus probably gained the greatest degree of popularity even in parts of Mexico far removed from its native region.

The Battle for Torreón

In February 1913 Woodrow Wilson lifted the arms embargo that had prevented the revolutionaries from legally acquiring arms in the United States. As a result, a few weeks later, the well-armed northern revolutionaries began their offensive southward. In the east, Pablo González's army set out toward Monterrey and Tampico, and in the west Obregón advanced south from Sonora. Neither of these armies was considered an immediate or serious danger by the federal army. Pablo González's military record had not hitherto been very impressive, and the southern progress of Obregón's army would be hampered by Sonora's lack of railway links with the south.

It was Villa, the federal command believed, who presented the greatest and most immediate danger. If he could be held back or even defeated at Torreón, then the tide of war could be reversed. The federal command and the government expressed optimism that the "bandit" armies of Villa would finally meet their match in Torreón.

That optimism reflected the views of Huerta's general staff, as well as his commanders in the field. They knew that Villa had never faced the kind of situation that would now confront him in Torreón. His first capture of that city was frequently considered a fluke, due to the ineptness and cowardice of the federal commander, Munguiá. At Ciudad Juárez, Villa had surprised the garrison, and at Tierra Blanca he had fought only against irregular troops and had been able to choose the site of battle. The one time Villa had attacked a well-fortified city commanded by a competent general, his attempt to take Ciudad Chihuahua by storm at the end of 1913, he had failed.

This time the situation would be different. One of the federal army's best commanders, Refugio Velasco, commanded the nearly 10,000 federal troops in and around Torreón. They had fortified not only the city itself but a host of smaller towns around it. In Gómez Palacio, fortifications nearly as strong those in Torreón had been erected. Well-placed federal cannon, frequently located on hills, and machine-gun nests were formidable obstacles, designed to obstruct

Villa's famous cavalry charges. The federal high command hoped and expected that these strategic measures would offset Villa's superiority in numbers—Villa had sent 16,000 men. They were not unduly worried by the fact that Villa now disposed of an artillery contingent, which he had lacked when he had attacked Ciudad Chihuahua. They were convinced that Villa was incapable of organizing well-trained artillery in the few months that had elapsed since the battle of Chihuahua. According to Emerson:

> This artillery . . . was not too well handled in the field, but at least it was promptly brought into action, largely through the efficiency of the railroad and the noise it made as well as the artillery prestige of General Felipe Angeles, who was generally believed to have personal command of it (not always the case), had much to do with breaking down the morale of the federals at Gómez Palacio, Torreón, and San Pedro. . . . [Nevertheless the] positions of the guns were generally ill-chosen, single pieces often getting separated from their batteries and even from their own caissons. This was because no competent artillery officer went ahead to choose the ground. When the artillery first went into action north of Gómez Palacio, they did so after nightfall, each gun by itself, floundering about in the uneven ground, trying to find a suitable firing position. When daylight came they were found strewn all over the landscape, some in the most impossible positions, in canals and exposed slopes or out in the open spots directly under the guns of the enemy.[53]

What more than made up for the federal superiority in artillery was a new strategy that Villa now developed, consisting of night attacks, which was much admired by U.S. military observers.

"Although [the revolutionaries'] fire was poor in the daytime, it was much worse at night," William Mitchell noted. It "was not effective over five hundred yards and it was very difficult to make them cross the fire-swept zone in the daytime and engage the enemy at a range of two hundred yards or closer." At night the situation would be much better for the revolutionaries. "The insurgents crawled up to close range with few casualties, delivered their fire with almost as much effect as in the daytime, and the federals expended even more ammunition than in the daytime. The insurgents had more or less regular lines of federals to fire at while the federals had to fire at the flashes of the insurgents' firearms scattered all over the sides of the hills and in no particular formation." In addition, federal commanders feared that their units might become scattered and even fire upon each other, so no counterattacks at night were carried out by the federal army.[54]

The night attacks also had disastrous effects on the morale of the federal army. Unlike the revolutionaries, who could temporarily withdraw from the battlefield, and thus find some rest, the federal troops could never do so. By day, they were pounded by the artillery; by night, the Villista infantry attacked. The siege was extremely bloody, since the night attacks, which brought the revolutionaries into such close proximity to the federal lines, led to savage hand-to-hand fighting. The terror of that fighting was enhanced by the darkness.

Federal ammunition and federal morale seem to have given way simultaneously. The army first evacuated Gómez Palacio, and then its battered remnants, consisting of about 4,000 men, withdrew from Torreón.

The federal high command did not give up. It sent about 6,000 fresh federal troops to the city of San Pedro de las Colonias, not far from Torreón, hoping that these troops, combined with the remnants of Velasco's army, would finally be able to crush the revolutionary troops, wearied by more than ten days of incessant fighting. They were mistaken. Velasco's demoralized men from Torreón infected the fresh troops with their fears and pessimism, while the euphoria of victory more than made up for the weariness of Villa's men. San Pedro de las Colonias too was stormed, and the remnants of the federal army withdrew to the south.

CHAPTER NINE

Villa's Emergence as a National Leader

His Relations with the United States and His Conflict with Carranza

His victory at Torreón made Villa a national leader. He now controlled more resources and more territory than any other revolutionary commander, his army was the strongest among the revolutionary forces, and his prestige was unequaled by that of any other military chieftain the revolution had produced. In the United States, public opinion, and perhaps even the Wilson administration, considered him a national leader whose decisions might decide the fate of the Mexican Revolution. Carranza's enemies in the revolutionary movement hoped, and Carranza feared, that Villa was out to replace him as leader of the revolution. Villa himself was long uncertain about what role he should play. Whatever his hesitations, however, his newfound status transformed his relations with the United States, with Carranza, and with non-Carrancista factions in the Mexican revolutionary movement.

Villa and the United States

One of the greatest successes that Villa initially achieved was the relationship he was able to establish with different forces in the United States. For a time, he was able to gain the support of institutions and individuals whose views on most issues were divergent and who frequently clashed with one another. The Wilson administration, important segments of big business, leaders of the military, and liberal and radical intellectuals, as well as some radical organizations, all sympathized with Villa, and many of them considered him the potential savior of Mexico.