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DON PORFIRIO'S TESTAMENT

I

For *burgueses* of the Porfiriato, happiness was, to cite an aphorism of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's, "a good bank account, a good cook, and a good digestion." Unfortunately for them, they did not share their aspirations with everyone, and so, as befalls all things of man, the era of peace, order, and progress came to an end. Its collapse caught by surprise Mexicans and foreigners alike. The causes of this sudden and unexpected volte-face were complex and, at the same time, the logical result of the Porfiriato's successes and failures.

II

III

Progress, capitalist by design and surely welcomed, had, indeed, laid its hand upon the tiller. To quote Francisco I. Madero, the man destined to drive Don Porfirio into exile, "Our economic, industrial, commercial, and mining progress is undeniable." But that progress, viewed in hindsight, was, at best, ambivalent; it was not the same to all men or, worse still, a faithful lover. And rebellions, which toppled Díaz, as sages throughout the ages have admonished their disciples, originate not in the souls of people crippled by hunger and want but, to the contrary, with those who have tasted the fruits of change. The dashed hopes of a beneficent future or their abrupt loss plants its seeds. Such was the condition of Mexicans as a new century replaced the old. "In every corner of the Republic reigned prosperity and an enviable peace," reported the steel magnate Andrew Carnegie after a visit to Mexico.

Economic growth, despite its rewards, exacted a price. Its repercussions were felt even in rural Mexico. With the building of railroads, the advent of industrialization, and the trappings of a capitalist economy, the traditional way of life clashed with new ambitions and needs and, likewise, as the mayor of La Aduana's letter testified, fed fears for the future. Similarly, if industry were to prosper, a domestic market would have to grow apace or foreign markets be found; but signs indicated that the buying power of the consumer had failed to stay abreast of the ability of the manufacturer to produce, while foreign buyers did not rush to buy the goods of Mexican industry. Yet, as Andrés Molina Enríquez pointed out in his eloquent analysis of Mexico's ills, *Los grandes problemas nacionales*, only industries turning out exports profited. Two examples were tobacco and henequen. Those relying on the domestic market faltered upon arriving at a certain stage in their development. To the manufacturer, the only way to circumvent this barrier was to sell abroad. Failure to do so meant stagnation, since it was impossible to build industry on the buying power of the masses.

To make matters worse, the cyclical fluctuations of foreign markets, a result of economic currents outside the control of Mexico, made reliance on exports hazardous. This was the nature of dependency. During the bonanza years of henequen, to retell a story of Julio Sesto, the Spanish tourist and poet, a clerk counting money in a store in Mérida dropped a quarter accidentally and, seeing a janitor standing nearby, asked him to pick it up. "Bah! I don't stoop for a *pinche* quarter," he replied. After the bottom fell out of the export market for henequen, that same janitor, if he was lucky enough to have a job, labored from dawn to dusk for less than a quarter. The uneven nature of economic growth, characteristic of the society of that time, helped bring about its downfall. Reliance on the vagaries of the export market, the failure to

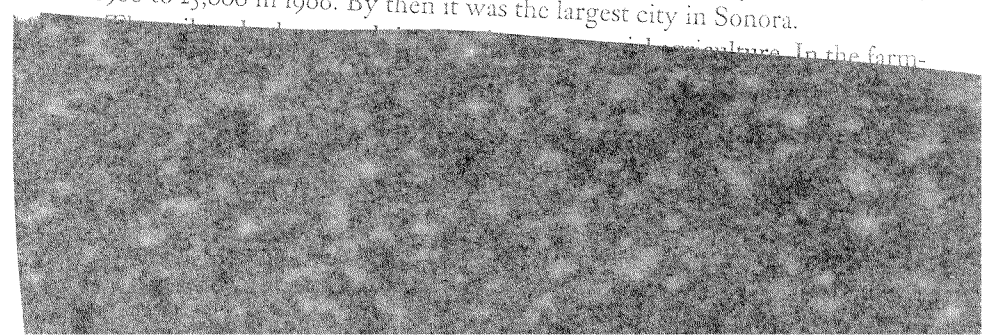
enlarge the consumer market, and the fickleness of social change undermined the foundations of the old structure.

The regions of Mexico which enjoyed the most economic growth were its most troubled. By 1910, they had become the seedbeds of discontent and rebellion. Being swallowed into the international capitalist vortex, for the most part into the economy of the United States, split society more and exacerbated old divisions. A dependent *burguesía*, more powerful and numerous than before, was the chief beneficiary of ties with outside markets and capital but also, to some extent, industrial labor. Of like importance, the dependency relationship spurred the expansion of the middle class, part and parcel of the *burguesía* but with an agenda of its own.

Most of all, links with international markets and capital transformed the border states of the north, the focus of much anti-Díaz sentiment. The repercussions were noteworthy in Sonora, only less so in Chihuahua and Coahuila. For Sonora, where the malcontents of 1910 found eager listeners, the arrival of American capital molded a Western colonial society out of tune with its Spanish roots. It was no less colonial, just different. As Sonora's rich silver veins, bedrock of the Spanish mining economy, petered out, the old system fell apart, replaced by something different. As Eric Hobsbawm put it in his study of an earlier era, "old colonialism did not grow into new colonialism; it collapsed and was replaced by it." That description fits Sonora, where a rudimentary, silver-mining structure barely survived the first years of Independence, to be supplanted by a dynamic mining economy, mostly of industrial metals, financed and controlled by Yankee capitalists.

In Sonora, as elsewhere in the Republic, the railroad ushered in the transformation. Appearing first in 1882, it ran the length of the state by 1910, connecting the mining towns of the north with Arizona and spurring commerce. As its economy prospered, so did merchants, artisans, professionals, and rancheros. Since Sonora attracted a colony of Americans, a clash inevitably arose between them and affluent Mexicans, who gave voice to local interests.

The mining boom made Sonora the richest and most prosperous state in the Republic. Americans played the leading role in the drama, controlling an investment of \$45 million, largely in mining. The axis of the ore empire was the copper bastion of Cananea. In 1910, Sonora exported ores worth 26 million pesos, three-fifths of it copper. During the boom, the population of the mining towns multiplied; Cananea led the way, growing from barely 900 inhabitants in 1900 to 25,000 in 1906. By then it was the largest city in Sonora.



The Yaqui question, tied intimately to the land issue, added one more twist to the tangled web of events which eventually cost Díaz his office. Through the 1870s, the Yaquis, a hardworking tribe, had cultivated the lands of their ancestors, providing also most of the workers in agriculture, as well as in mining and in the construction of the railroads. In the 1880s, their fertile lands in the Yaqui Valley drew the attention of speculators. By opening up the valleys of the Yaqui and Mayo, home of the Mayo Indians, to farmers, the railroad had added impetus to the desire to acquire their lands. Mexicans and Americans, individually or in association with surveying companies, rushed to stake their claims. By 1881, a Mexican general observed wryly, these claims, if honored, would "deprive the unfortunate Yaquis of even the means to feed themselves." To the despair of the Yaquis, the rulers of Sonora, with the connivance of Mexico City, honored these claims. As a result, a long and bloody war broke out between the Yaquis and their voracious enemies.

Quixotically, some Yaquis, the *mansos*, or domesticated ones, continued to provide most of the labor of the hacendados. Without it, their lands would have lain fallow. All the same, other Yaquis, the *brancos*, or unconquered ones, harassed the haciendas, attacking towns and destroying property. Often the same Yaquis who tilled the fields belonged to the marauding guerrillas, or lent them moral support and provided them with guns and food. Because of their tenacity, it was impossible to eliminate the guerrillas. Only the return of the

lands to their rightful owners, a plea rejected by the masters of Sonora, would have restored peace.

To settle the matter once and for all, Governor Rafael Izábal launched a full-scale attack against the Yaqui in the years between 1903 and 1907. With the backing of Díaz and Corral, then in Mexico City, he brought federal troops into battle and started to deport Yaquis to the henequen plantations of Yucatán. His formula backfired; rather than bring peace, it exacerbated political rivalries in Sonora. Threatened with the loss of their workers, hacendados and American miners, who had earlier complained of Yaqui depredations, opposed Izábal's policy, charging that authorities deported both *mansos* and *brancos*. But vested interests in Hermosillo, with whom Izábal had close ties, urged him to push on, alienating, in the process, the merchants of Guaymas, gateway for the planters of the Yaqui and Mayo. Guaymas had already been hurt by the railroad, which, by destroying the monopoly of its port, favored Hermosillo, a commercial and financial depot linked with Tucson. Earlier, Yaquis had fought whites; now the campaign to exterminate them split the rulers of Sonora into warring camps.

Because Corral and Díaz stood by Izábal, his scheme ignited a clash between business and agricultural interests in Sonora and politicians in Mexico City. The Yaqui issue shattered the fragile unity of Sonora. One of the hacendados hurt by Izábal's tactics was Ramón Maytorena, sentenced to sixteen months in jail for harboring Yaquis. Not surprisingly, a member of the Maytorena family had a role in the downfall of the Díaz regime in Sonora. The hacendados had no stomach for a policy which, at their expense, provided the planters of Yucatán with cheap labor. The Yaqui wars, wrote Francisco Bulnes, cost the regime dearly, bleeding Sonora, damaging its economy, dividing its inhabitants into antagonistic camps, and driving the Yaquis and their employers into rebellion.

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who, in Galeana and Guerrero, built sawmills, a paper manufacturing plant, and a furniture factory, invested in banking, and brought the Ferrocarril Noroeste de México to Madera, the heart of his kingdom. To develop his mining stake, the Green Gold Silver Company, he cut a road through mountains judged impenetrable to the isolated towns of Cocheño and Ocampo. The crisis of 1907 struck Greene's empire with devastating blows, leaving a shattered economy in its wake. Merchants lost their shirts while over two thousand jobless workers and their families faced starvation. To quell the cries of protest, authorities dispatched rurales.

The railroad also upset the balance of power in Coahuila.

The edifice sat on a bed of sand: its dependency on American capital and markets. Moods and economic realities on the other side of the border dictated Chihuahua's fate. During the "financial panic" of 1907 in the United States, Chihuahua was hard hit. Inhabitants of its western rim, a mining and lumbering center, bore the brunt of the crisis. Much of their fate rested with Greene,

The progress had a familiar ring. The American presence was ubiquitous. Of the manufactured goods purchased locally, nine out of ten came from across the border, while exports went mostly to American buyers. One company, United States Rubber, controlled the guayule industry, after cotton the second in the state. The Carbonífera del Norte, an American enterprise, owned the major coal mines; other Americans owned the railroads, the biggest investment in Coahuila. Large tracts of land were in American hands; Piedra Blanca, one of the holdings, embraced 1.2 million hectares; San José de Piedras, 460,000 hectares.

The railroad paved the road for the export of cotton to the United States and for sale to textile mills in Veracruz. That transformed the Laguna, the

fertile lands watered by the Nazas, into a huge cotton plantation. In 1887, Díaz had granted the Compañía Tlahualilo, a Mexican syndicate, a concession to plant cotton and sell lands on the Nazas. When the Mexicans went bankrupt, English stockholders took over the operation. The initial success of the Tlahualilo syndicate, nonetheless, attracted scores of Mexican planters, among them Francisco Madero, father of the rebel leader of 1910. Lively quarrels over water rights soon broke out between upstream and downstream planters, with the Compañía Tlahualilo in the middle of them. The solution of Díaz, to whom the planter appealed, satisfied no one, including Madero.

IV

The Porfirista edifice had started to crumble for other reasons. A major one, ironically, was the growth of the middle class, some 8 to 10 percent of the population, 70 percent of it on the government payroll and chafing at the bit by 1900. In Sonora, for instance, middle-class dissidents attempted unsuccessfully to wrest control of the mayorship of Hermosillo from Ramón Corral's father-in-law, endorsing the son of a big landowner. As one writer phrased it, his backers represented the *clase media decente*, the middle class with proper credentials; for their campaign, they adopted the color green, immortalized by Rodolfo Campodónico in "Club Verde," a waltz which rivaled in popularity "Sobre las Olas." Barring mavericks such as Ricardo Flores Magón and his disciples, whose crusade for social justice went mostly unheeded, the middle class cared little for unorthodox formulas. The restrictions on upward mobility and the political monopoly reserved for the elite had alienated the more ambitious. Not one of the *gente decente* wanted to drop out of a middle class that had cost them so much sweat and toil to join, a fear exacerbated by the economic debacle of 1907.

Only late in the Porfiriato, when the economy had taken a downward turn, did the so-called middle class unfurl the flag of protest. Still, it wanted no truck with the radical Partido Liberal of the Flores Magón. It focused its anger not on the octogenarian Díaz but on his confederates. "Nobody," reported Rafael de Zayas Enríquez, "dreamed of the presidency, aspired to it, or conspired against it." The angry held Don Porfirio accountable for keeping in office a gang of sycophants. As late as 1909, confessed Francisco Vázquez Gómez, once personal physician to Díaz, "nobody envisaged a thorough housecleaning, merely a transitional government," dwelling rarely on "social and economic evils."

For those who vented their ire on the coterie around Díaz, the ills lay not in the system but in its administration. During three decades, a select few had shared the spoils of office and the fruits of business. Fresh blood seldom infiltrated the inner circles. In Díaz's cabinet, Ignacio Mariscal handled foreign

By 1910, Mexico was governed by old men. Of the twenty-four governors, only one was under fifty years of age, and sixteen had celebrated their sixtieth birthday. The chief justice of the Supreme Court was eighty-three, and six out of ten of the Republic's judges were over seventy years of age. Men eighty and ninety years old sat in the Chamber of Deputies, while the Senate, to quote Bulnes, "housed a collection of senile mummies in a state of lingering stupor."

Bulnes aside, what galled the middle class was the absence of access to public office and, therefore, to lucrative business ventures. The evil was cliquish control of politics. The rotation of the same men in office, the denial of opportunity to others—not age—was what the ambitious resented. Writing under the pseudonym of Sancho Bola, Rabasa depicted artfully the sophistry

to the ultimate sorrow of Don Porfirio, the upsurge of the economy failed to match the numerical explosion as well as the aspirations of the *gente de medio pelo*, a pejorative term for the middle class. The drain on the federal budget occasioned by salaries of public employees compelled Limantour to limit their number and, eventually, to reduce their paycheck. These austerity measures aggravated the discontent of the middle class, made more acute by the financial debacle of 1907. To complicate the situation, there was almost no turnover in jobs, because, in the absence of any retirement system, the aged and the infirm held on till death.

The list of job hunters took in the ubiquitous *licenciado* (lawyer), engineers, architects, agronomists, physicians, writers, and poets. Schoolteachers, whose ranks multiplied dramatically during the early years of the twentieth century, were an especially troubled lot. Poorly paid, they eked out a paltry existence. With the possible exception of *licenciados*, no other group contributed a bigger number of rebel chieftains and designers of a *plan*, the justification for shouldering arms. When the Díaz regime put learning at the disposal of the lower middle class, but denied it commensurate rewards and opportunities for advancement, it signed its death warrant.

Especially worrisome were the privileges showered on foreigners. Nationalism, a telling factor in the rebellion of 1910, contained a logical but striking paradox. Mexico won acclaim in the Western world, as Bulnes warned cogently, because of foreign investments and markets. Eventually, Mexicans denied a place at the banquet table came to place the blame for their exclusion on their guests. Their bitterness sparked a wave of xenophobia which colored the twilight years of the Old Regime and set the stage for rebellion. Nationalist firebrands, predominantly from the middle class, accused Díaz of betraying Mexico to foreigners, most of them Americans, the ugly neighbor next door.

From the cherished dream of ridding the country of alien potentates surfaced a strident cry of *México para los Mexicanos*. Although a twentieth-century crusade, it was an old gospel. In its origins, the rebellion of 1910, wrote Bulnes, "had a markedly Boxer character . . . directed primarily against the

influence, prestige, and interests of the United States." Political attacks on the Old Regime implied censure of its investment policies for foreigners. The rejection of Díaz, to paraphrase Luis Cabrera, a politico from the middle class, embodied an angry denunciation of the system of privileges, the juiciest and best reserved for foreigners. From the beginning, the battle against the Old Regime and that against foreign domination were one and the same.

The outcry against Yankees and other foreigners gained wide popularity. The man in the street, who gave an enthusiastic hearing to condemnations of Uncle Sam, had seldom echoed the elite's adulation of the foreigner. For too long, in his opinion, official favors had fallen on intimates of Díaz and on outsiders. As one observer commented on the nature of Yankees, "At the start, they were few and useful; but, when they came in droves, with every honest one of them, a trainload of rascals arrived boasting of talent and money and claiming to speak for big investors but who, in the long run, were just scoundrels in frock coats." As Ignacio Bonillas, the sole Mexican mining engineer in Sonora, put it, "Their word must be taken with a grain of salt." By 1910, according to *El Tiempo*, the middle class was "solidly anti-American."

Unquestionably, Don Porfirio lived to regret whatever faith he conferred on American capitalists. Stung by the charges of treason hurled at him by nationalists, the old warrior endeavored until his death to vindicate himself. "I was never," he told an Argentine reporter who interviewed him in exile, "a darling of the Yankee." To the contrary, his policies had cut short the desire by Americans to dominate Mexico. "That desire," he continued, "is more than enough to justify fears for the future of my country."

V

Labor, too, had a hand in the downfall of the Porfiriato. Until 1900, industrial workers benefited from a slight increase in real wages. However, between 1891 and 1908, food prices rose alarmingly, with markups for corn, beans, and wheat, staples of the diet. That, plus the drop in the value of silver and the crisis of 1907, wiped out their gains.

By the turn of the century, labor had started to fend for itself. Mutual-aid societies, which "buried the dead and cured the sick," met with considerable success. Sadly, the Gran Círculo de Obreros, the first of the labor organizations, which appeared in the textile industry, split into warring camps, with one answering the siren call of Díaz. Two of its messiahs and the editors of *El Socialista*, a labor journal, allowed themselves to be "elected" to Congress, setting an odious precedent for the future. However, other labor groups, to the shock of the Liberals, adopted anarchist slogans and doctrines.

Anarchism infiltrated labor's ranks by way of the French thinker, Pierre Joseph Proudhon, whose book *What Is Property?* Mexicans read avidly. Also

from France appeared the work of Elisée Reclus, *Evolution, Revolution, and the Anarchist Ideal*, followed by the writings of Pyotr A. Kropotkin, the Russian revolutionary, and Mikhail Bakunin, the Russian anarchist. From their wisdom, Mexicans learned that man is by nature good; but institutions, primarily the state and private property, corrupted, while industrial civilization blocked man's aspirations and converted him into a slave of the machine.

Unexpectedly, Americans, too, planted the seeds of the labor union in Mexico. The railroads employed American workers affiliated with labor organizations across the border, specifically the Knights of Labor and the Industrial Workers of the World. Imitating the Americans, Mexicans began to organize brotherhoods. Their initial effort, the Sociedad de Ferrocarrileros Mexicanos, took root in 1887 in Nuevo Laredo, a border town. One year later, the Orden Suprema de Empleados del Ferrocarril, an early victim of Porfirista cupidity, appeared; then followed the Confederación de Sociedades Ferrocarrileras de la República Mexicana, while workers in Puebla founded the Unión de Mecánicos Mexicanos. As these efforts testify, Mexican workers were developing what Marx baptized a class conscience.

The tug-of-war between Mexican workers and their foreign bosses intensified the sense of "class struggle." Responding to reductions in jobs and the lowering of wages, Mexicans unfurled the banner of the wildcat strike. As early as 1889, they had walked off the job at Trinidad, an isolated mining camp in the mountains of southern Sonora run by Englishmen; in 1894, unemployed workers, victims of international hard times, rioted in Torreón, compelling the ayuntamiento to provide temporary jobs. Strikes flared in San Luis Potosí in 1903, and then in Nuevo León. In 1906, in the railway shops of Aguascalientes, Mexicans left their jobs to vent their anger at the dismissal of one of their leaders and the inflated pay of Americans. That same year, three hundred workers went on strike in the shops of the Ferrocarril Central Mexicano in Chihuahua over the issue of equal pay for Mexicans and recognition of the Unión de Mecánicos y Maquinistas. The strike paralyzed the cities of San Luis Potosí, Torreón, Monterrey, and Aguascalientes. The year before, in Cárdenas, a railway hub in San Luis Potosí, a pitched battle between American and Mexican railroad workers left eighteen dead. Also, workers on the railroads had organized the Gran Liga de Ferrocarrileros Mexicanos, demanding that Mexicans run the railroads; fifteen thousand railroad workers had joined it by 1908.

Management, just the same, refused to deal with any labor union, Catholic or not. To retaliate, workers employed the wildcat strike, approximately 250 times from 1881 to 1911. Of the sundry strikes, three set the stage for the downfall of Díaz. The north hosted two: the violence at Cananea, Sonora's copper kingdom, in 1906 and the railroad walkout of 1908. The other occurred at the textile mills at Río Blanco, in Veracruz. The disputes reveal much about the nature of labor unrest and the industrial sector of the economy. At Cananea, the strike halted operations in the biggest mining hub of the Republic; at Río Blanco, the strike closed the doors on the largest textile center; the railroads, the stage for the third of them, were the key to the Republic's economic well-being.

The strikes had common threads. Declining exports linked two of them. Copper and the railroad running from San Luis Potosí to Texas, where the strike erupted, needed foreign customers. The financial debacle of 1907, felt earlier in Mexico, hurt copper and the transport industry. On the railroads, the lag in business kept wages low in the face of the spiraling cost of living and increased competition for jobs between Mexicans and foreigners. Fear and envy of foreigners also played a role. Price gouging by the French owner of the *tienda de raya* lit the fuse at Río Blanco, mills owned by Frenchmen who paid foreign workers higher wages. Foreign control of the best jobs as well as better wages applied the torch on the railroads. At Cananea, Greene paid his compatriots five gold pesos for a day's labor but Mexicans less than half of that. The Mexicans asked for equal wages, access to better jobs, an eight-hour day, and the dismissal of two arbitrary American foremen. Before the strike subsided, half a dozen Americans died, while rurales, with the aid of Arizona rangers from across the border who arrived at the behest of Governor Izábal, killed thirty Mexican miners, an act that raised a public furor in the Republic. At Río Blanco, where soldiers also shot strikers, Díaz, at the request of the textile workers, who mistakenly looked to him for help, arbitrated the dispute. His dictum, which favored management, offered merely skimpy concessions to labor. Political dissidents uncovered fertile soil to exploit in labor's ranks.

The middle class led the movement to dump Díaz, but, as one prominent rebel acknowledged, it inherited its strength from labor.

VI

On agrarian questions, the Liberals of Juárez and Díaz thought alike. Their tonic for agriculture was to "privatize" the land. Rhetoric about preference for small farmers aside, they prized efficiency and productivity, though that helped concentrate the lands in the hands of a minority. This attitude was hardly novel, dating from the dismantling of colonial legislation safeguarding the Indian *ejido* from rapacious hacendados and *rancheros*. The land rulings of the Reforma merely confirmed this trend. By 1900, the hacendados, their numbers fortified by foreigners, were a bulwark of the Porfiriato. Americans, alone, owned a hundred million acres of valuable agricultural, timber, cattle, and mining real estate; the newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst, one of them, had title to eight million acres of land.

All of this, according to contemporary wisdom, was in the name of progress. The Indian had not held up his end of the bargain. His nature, specifically his attachment to the communal *ejido*, as Rabasa maintained, blocked individualism and personal ambitions, the bedrock of the Liberal creed, making the Indian lazy and little inclined to cultivate his parcel of land. The Indian must not be allowed to stifle the development of agriculture.

Equally axiomatic, Mexico had to attract colonists from Europe, as one Científico pontificated, "so as to obtain a cross with the indigenous race." Only European blood, he insisted, could "raise the level of civilization" or keep it "from sinking." What he meant, of course, was that Mexico must "whiten" its skin, become more European and less Indian, lest progress be shut out. To lure European colonists, as well as encourage hardworking and ambitious mestizos to take up farming, Mexico had to hold out the promise of land, whatever the cost to the Indian *ejido*.

Putting their views into practice, the Liberals, in December 1893, approved the Ley de Terrenos Baldíos, updating the legislation of 1863. To attract European in-migrants and open lands to Mexicans, the law encouraged individuals to denounce idle lands. Merchants, hacendados, politicians, real estate speculators, and foreign mining prospectors formed surveying companies mainly because the law allowed them to keep one-third of the land mapped out. The government, in theory, sold the rest to private buyers. Legislation passed in 1894 reinforced this policy.

Whatever the intent of the lawmakers, the results, as before, were lamentable. Few Europeans arrived, and those who did settled in the cities, usually as merchants. To the delight of the architects of the legislation, however, private

individuals gobbled up the idle lands. And, because of the bad faith of the surveyors and the shoddy methods employed, the idle lands included countless ejidos, although their exact number remains terra incognita. In less than a decade, over 38 million hectares were mapped out; of that total, the government kept for sale slightly more than 12 million hectares; private individuals kept the rest. As a result, the Indian ejido was reduced mostly to marginal lands unfit for agriculture, usually in central Mexico or confined to states such as Oaxaca where, for reasons of soil and economics, the big hacienda stayed on the fringes. By 1910, the Porfiristas had largely accomplished what criollo hacendados and mestizo rancheros had attempted to do with the ejido after Independence and during the Reforma.

Of the seven states most exploited by the surveying companies, five were in the north, none with big Indian populations. More than 3 million hectares were given away or sold for a pittance in Chihuahua and Sonora; Sinaloa lost almost 2 million hectares; while a tiny clique acquired over 1.3 million hectares in Coahuila and Durango. In Chihuahua, nineteen latifundios encompassed over 100,000 hectares, while twelve ranged in size from 40,000 to 100,000 hectares. Seventeen hacendados owned over two-fifths of Chihuahua, virtually all of the land useful for agriculture or cattle. Luis Terrazas, the mogul of the landlords, had two sons, Juan and Alberto, who owned haciendas of over 200,000 hectares. Enrique Creel, who married into the Terrazas family, was master of over 433,000 hectares. By 1900, perhaps 82 percent of the country's campesinos lacked land; on the other hand, 1 percent of the population owned 97 percent of the fertile land. Alongside of them were 400,000 rancheros or small farmers, almost always lacking tools, water, and fertilizers to plant their marginal lands.

The peon, who supplied the hacienda labor, eked out a Spartan existence. Whether in a free village or *acasillado* on hacienda lands, he was low man on the totem pole. His exploitation was as manifest as the scandalous absence of justice for him in the courts. In the valley of Toluca, for example, a peon earned a *real y medio*, less than twenty-five centavos, for a day's work, not enough to sustain him and his family. At times, wages were higher, especially in the north, but never good. At the end of the week, Gregorio López y Fuentes alleged in his novel, *El indio*, the wages earned did not buy "unbleached muslin to make pants and shirts." Here and there, a remorseful public official endeavored to make amends; on two occasions, Celso Vicencio, governor of Mexico State, purchased lands from the hacienda El Mayorazgo for resale at cost in small parcels. All the same, rural Mexicans, by and large, were badly paid, poorly fed, ill housed, and condemned to an early death because of disease and malnutrition.

The exploitation of campesinos, as well as the growth of private property, modernized only here and there (the valley of the Río Sonora, for instance)

the traditional hacienda. In much of the countryside, machinery and new techniques made their appearance belatedly. Despite an increase in the population, Mexico harvested more corn and beans in 1867 than in 1910. Although overwhelmingly rural, Mexico had to import food. Population growth, moreover, had intensified the struggle for land.

Not surprisingly, the history of the Porfiriato includes a record of rural rebellions. Revolts flared in 1879, 1882, and 1905 in San Luis Potosí. The theft of pueblo lands sparked uprisings in Quintana Roo in 1891 and 1892 and in Veracruz in 1906. Yaquis and Mayos of Sonora and the Maya of Yucatán died fighting for their lands. The novelist Heriberto Frias left for posterity the gallant story of Tomóchic in Chihuahua, a struggle pitting the poor against Díaz's soldiers. An army lieutenant, he was ordered north to help quell the uprising, then was cashiered from the army for publishing *Tomóchic*, a novel sympathetic to the underdogs.

A wide gulf, all the same, separated the traditional hacienda from the commercial ones. Far-reaching steps had been taken to encourage the cultivation of crops for export, mostly for industrial processing, peanuts, flax, sesame, and cotton, for example, for the manufacture of oils or soap. The production of cotton in La Laguna had doubled, while Mexico ranked among the major exporters of henequen. Sugar, too, enjoyed a bonanza in Morelos, and prospered in Veracruz and Michoacán. Tobacco and coffee were sold abroad, as well as guayule, a native rubber plant, principally from Coahuila, Chihuahua, Durango, and Zacatecas. Hacendados in the Mayo Valley of Sonora shipped garbanzos to Spain and stockmen from Chihuahua and Sonora cattle across the border. Their sale rewarded hacendados handsomely, but, at the same time, their cultivation in place of corn, rice, and beans, far less profitable, exacerbated food shortages. No balanced assessment of the hacienda can ignore this side.

Most attempts to explain why Mexicans rebelled in 1910 point an accusing finger at the "agrarian question." The landless and their champions, the enemies of the octopus-like hacienda, kindled the armed protest. However, as an embittered but sagacious Limantour recalled from exile in Paris, the character of the notorious "agrarian question" underwent a transformation in retrospect. The old Porfirista had ample reason to complain. To credit the discontent of the landless for the rebellion simplifies, if not distorts, the nature of the problem. As Limantour observed, to argue from hindsight that "popular agitation for land and water ignited the revolution . . . falsifies intentionally the facts on behalf of a cause that either did not exist or had begun to take shape only vaguely." Bulnes phrased it succinctly. Long before Madero challenged Don Porfirio, apostles of agrarian reform had called the country to arms; yet its proponents, the Magonistas, only got themselves jailed in the United States. The landless of Coahuila and Chihuahua failed to answer their call. A

few months later, nonetheless, Madero, no arch-enemy of hacendados, uncovered fervent rebels in the northern provinces. If the hunger for land had put the match to the tinderbox, asked Bulnes, why had northerners not rushed to enlist in the ranks of the Magonistas? Similarly, the tragic course of the rebellion records the death of apostles of agrarian reform at the hands of their companions in arms.

Novelists, artists, and historians have depicted vividly the plight of the campesino. Still, it is risky to conclude that rural neglect and the exploitation of the poor spawned the rebellion. That they encouraged discontent requires no documentation. But at what point and for what reason they encouraged campesinos to take up arms is another matter. Despite their earlier protests, the most persecuted, the campesinos of rural Mexico, neither plotted nor spearheaded the rebellion. Quite the contrary, the rebellion fared poorly where the peon was most exploited: in the Valle Nacional of Oaxaca, Tabasco, Campeche, Yucatán, and Chiapas. Only in Yucatán did rebels uncover somewhat fertile soil. In Chiapas, with one of the most abominable records of man's inhumanity to man, rebel propaganda fell mostly on deaf ears.

To many scholars, the numerical multiplication of the haciendas from 1877 to 1910 verifies the relationship between agrarian unrest and the coming of the rebellion. In that time span, they increased from 5,869 to 8,431. Nevertheless, their numerical importance, compared with the growth of other rural units, declined from 21 percent to 12 percent of the total. Similarly, ranchos increased from 14,705 to 48,633. While the hacienda and its expansion figure among the causes of the rebellion, they do not alone explain its coming.

Rural maladies, which statistics easily document, were endemic and complex; the Porfirista epoch exacerbated them but did not introduce them. What, then, brought the "agrarian question" to a head? The evidence, to begin, does not support the theory of a troubled conscience. Not until late 1914 did the future leaders of Mexico embrace the doctrine of land reform. Before that, only José Wistano Orozco, who published in 1895 his monumental *Legislación y jurisprudencia sobre terrenos baldíos*, and his disciple Andrés Molina En-

More than likely, the snowballing awareness of rural problems developed from a concern with the low productivity of agriculture. For twenty years, Mexico had imported corn and wheat from Argentina and the United States. From the perspective of Bulnes and the Centíficos, this fact documented the inability of Mexico to feed itself; others placed the blame on the hacienda system. Reliance on imports, moreover, worsened during the final years of the Díaz regime, bringing about rising public expenditures on food. Clearly, something was wrong with the agricultural system.

That debate heated up in 1907, well nigh by accident. Tláloc, the flighty deity, forgot to water the lands of his worshippers. Droughts, which had already damaged the crops of two previous years, struck with devastating fury and continued to wreak havoc in the countryside until 1910. One of the regions hardest hit was the Bajío, the Republic's breadbasket; by 1909, the droughts, exacerbated by cold weather, had driven authorities in the Bajío to buy corn for sale to the starving poor.

... did not spare the northern provinces. In Chihuahua, the last

The fields of Mother Nature punished unevenly. The droughts crippled mostly rancheros, tenant farmers, and sharecroppers, who depended on Tláloc to water their fields. Few of them cultivated irrigated lands. Rancheros and *medieros*, the tenant farmers or sharecroppers, blamed their plight on the hacendados who denied them irrigated lands. Shortages of corn and wheat reflected the predicament of *medieros* and rancheros. By 1910, as Molina En-

riquez explained, they harvested the bulk of the grains for sale on local markets, though the haciendas occupied nine-tenths of the fertile lands. Grain shortages, therefore, occurred at the expense of dirt farmers; without irrigated lands, they had to gamble on the weather. The droughts penalized them, not the hacendados who relied on irrigation to cultivate their lands. To the contrary, hacendados profited during years of scarcity, selling their crops at inflated prices.

Harvests in short supply meant bad news for consumers. The sharp rise in the cost of foodstuffs, moreover, coincided with the financial collapse of 1907. By closing down markets abroad for Mexican ores, the crisis cut national revenue and reduced the buying power of the peso. The disparity between income and the cost of living, aggravated by the agricultural debacle, brought loud complaints from cities and towns, from Hermosillo and Guaymas in the northwest, across the expanse of the border communities, and south to Mexico City. Everyone suffered, but some more than others, with the middle class and the industrial workers carrying the brunt of the burden. Much of the middle class, to cite *El Imparcial*, had not enjoyed a raise in salary for twenty years.

Approximately 3.1 million Mexicans made their living from the land. *Peones acasillados* spent their entire lives under the tutelage of the hacendado who, in one way or another, took care of them, with varying degrees of benevolence. Other campesinos tilled small plots of their own, or those of their pueblo. Not infrequently, both scratched out a meager existence; to feed their families, they needed jobs on the neighboring hacienda for at least a part of each year. At the same time, the hacienda's monopoly of the land, plus the increase in the rural population, multiplied the landless proletariat, employed seasonally by the hacendado. The hacendado, however, could not provide either jobs for the entire year or decent wages. On the average, he paid twenty-five centavos for a day's work, but only for approximately half of the year. At best, he employed workers for two months to plant the crop, for another two to thin and weed it, and perhaps for an additional two to harvest it. The landless in rural Mexico, therefore, had limited alternatives.

The focus of the protest in the countryside did not arise from *peones acasillados*, often thought to be the worst off. On the contrary, it came from landless workers but, for all that, the more able and aggressive of the rural sector, the tens of thousands unwilling to spend their lives on haciendas. This sector, rural wageworkers, often jobless and without alternatives, grew dramatically before 1910. From this sector came the men who, after the call to arms, enlisted in the rebel armies. The *peones acasillados* often watched the rebellion unfold from afar.

Just the same, no one denies that alienation of the land spurred the gestation of rebellion, as the example of Morelos, a tiny state victimized by voracious sugar planters, documents. Isolated from central Mexico by towering

mountains, Morelos, home of sugar since colonial times, had for centuries scarcely changed. With only a small market to supply, the planters had worked out a fragile peace with neighboring villages. Although not forgotten, the theft of village lands was a matter of historical record. Scores of villages still farmed their own land. The arrival of the railroad in Cuautla and Yautepec upset that truce. For the first time, planters dreamed of a national market for their sugar, even of foreign customers. When the Spanish-American War disrupted the Cuban sugar industry, which partially supplied the Mexican home market, the planters of Morelos rushed to acquire its customers. They built huge mills and equipped them with the latest machinery. Hungry mills and bigger markets called for additional lands on which to plant cane, for more irrigation water, and for fresh supplies of cheap labor. The "race was on to grab land, water, and labor."

Land thefts became a major business. As villages succumbed to the hacendados, they became, for all intents and purposes, company towns. As in the mining camps of Sonora, their owners ruled the lives of their inhabitants, gave the *tienda de raya* a monopoly, and meted out justice as they saw fit. The haphazard exploitation of former years turned into the systematic oppression of the Gilded Age factory. With the help of authorities in Mexico City, and the complicity of local judges, the planters made themselves masters of Morelos.

More and more villages lost their lands, transforming their inhabitants into wageworkers on plantations. Wages kept low by the demands of cheap sugar and the proclivities of planters for bigger profits exacerbated the predicament of the workers. It mattered little that big agriculture had brought to Morelos labor-saving machinery, a profitable trade, and even a cultural renaissance. In 1909, the planters elected Pablo Escandón, one of their own, governor of Morelos. Patricio Leyva, the defeated candidate, according to *El Imparcial*, had promised to return the stolen lands to their rightful owners.

VII

One event, as so often happens, ignited the fuse of rebellion. The financial crisis of 1907, which marked the swan song of prosperity, revealed flaws in Mexico's economic and social fabric and became the watershed of rebellion. Until the depression paralyzed mining, commerce, and industry, the people paid homage to the Mexican success story; with its onset, even disciples of the Old Regime began to listen to the disciples of change.

For the beneficiaries of the years of progress, the depression dashed hopes of greater things to come, lowering expectations and shutting down the gates to upward social mobility. The middle class was hardest hit. *Licenciados*, physicians, engineers, bureaucrats, teachers, and small merchants saw their

dreams vanish in the wake of the disaster. Unemployment, poor wages, and a sharp rise in the cost of living aggravated the already difficult plight of workers in mines, railroads, and industry. Foreign-owned corporations cut wages and jobs; small merchants went out of business. *El Imparcial*, previously renowned for its panegyrics on the Mexican miracle, increasingly featured stories on the bankruptcies of commercial houses. Ironically, the tide of rebellion swept Díaz out of office as the depression receded; Mexico had a healthier balance of trade in 1911 than a year earlier.

The disaster had no single cause. Multiple ills had sapped the economy of its vigor. The financial panic of 1907 headed the list because, for all intents and purposes, the United States determined the welfare of the Mexican economy. Proximity to the northern neighbor, helped along by the railroad network and, above all, heavy investments of American capital, had transformed Mexico into a tributary of the United States. The crisis, Don Porfirio informed Congress, by reducing the value of Mexico's exports, had rocked the foundations of its prosperity.

His message had special relevance in the northern provinces, since their economies depended entirely on their customers across the border. The railroad carried copper northward from Sonora for the industrial northeast; cattle from Chihuahua for the Kansas City stockyards, and ores too; and cotton and guayule from Coahuila. Falling prices hurt large sectors of these northern states. The drop in the price of cotton, for instance, cut into the income of planters in Coahuila, among them the Maderos, and left unemployment in its wake. Plummeting prices for mineral ores hurt the national economy. The misfortunes of silver, Mexico's venerable export, antedated the depression of 1907; the specter of low prices for the white metal haunted the Díaz regime. When the bottom dropped out of the copper market, the mining industry suffered a staggering blow. As Greene shut down his mines in Cananea, the jobless filled its streets. Once the biggest city in Sonora, Cananea lost two-fifths of its inhabitants.

To rub salt into the wound, the depression touched off a banking panic. Prior to 1907, upward of fifty million pesos entered Mexico annually. When the financial debacle engulfed the United States, the principal source for outside funds, Mexico, had no one to turn to for money to shore up its economy. With their capital tied up in long-term loans, usually to hacendados, Mexican banks could not come to the rescue of merchants, businessmen, shopkeepers, rancheros, and the hacendados themselves. Debtors who, having borrowed large sums of money from the banks, could not repay it were partly responsible for the banking crisis. The shortage of loans punished chiefly the small entrepreneur. On the heels of this came an epidemic of bank failures, most of them accompanied by charges of mismanagement and wrongdoing. Even the

Banco Nacional de México, according to Bulnes, had "water in its wine barrels."

Such a fate befell Yucatán, home of the henequen tycoons. In the summer of 1907, Mexicans, to their astonishment, learned that the financial house of Eusebio Escalante Peón, Yucatán's leading business, was bankrupt. Behind the debacle lay the story of henequen, the lifeblood of the province. From 1898 to 1902, the ancient land of the Maya had enjoyed a boom of which not even the boldest of planters had dared to dream. But a slow decline set in; by 1910, the planters, though able to produce over 30,000 more bales of henequen than in 1902, sold them for less than half of their value nearly a decade before. When Díaz fled Mexico, 170,000 unsold bales lay rotting in the port of Progreso because American buyers had no need for them.

The prosperity of Yucatán had rested mostly on credit. The buying and selling, the imports of machinery as well as luxury articles, the expansion of commerce, and the bank loans presupposed ever widening markets abroad for henequen. It was an era of frenzied speculation in haciendas and urban real estate at inflated prices. To increase their profits, bank directors gambled their reserves on spurious investments and rode the crest of the wave of speculation. By 1907, the landed barons of Yucatán, as well as the merchants and bankers who depended on them for their well-being, were spending more than they earned. When the henequen market shrank as a result of the crisis of 1907, and from the competition of manila hemp from the Philippines, the speculative prosperity disintegrated. With money no longer available to fill their empty coffers, banks started to foreclose on their loans to merchants and planters. The banks that survived the storm had to occupy bankrupt properties. The incapacity of planters, the principal beneficiaries of the bankers' largess, to meet payments on their mortgages touched off widespread banking failures.

To hardly anyone's surprise, the campaign to reelect Don Porfirio in 1910 encountered a frigid reception in Yucatán. Instead, the "violence of political agitators," to quote *El Imparcial*, "knew no limits." When Madero made Mérida, capital of Yucatán, one of the stops in his presidential campaign, local admirers gave him a rousing welcome.