

CHAPTER 23

23-1

An exiled idealist ignites the Mexican Revolution.

Mexico had stagnated under the repressive hand of dictator Porfirio Díaz since 1876, but by 1910 his regime faced increasingly determined challenges. In his attempt to secure an eighth term as President, Díaz ordered the imprisonment of his leading critic, Francisco I. Madero. Madero was allowed to escape to the United States but, while in Texas, wrote the "Plan of San Luis Potosí" urging a return to democracy through popular uprising. Thus was launched the bloody Mexican Revolution, which lasted into the 1920s. In the more immediate future, however, Madero's call led to the overthrow of Díaz and Madero's inauguration as President in 1911.

Source: W. Raymond Duncan & James Nelson Goodsell, eds., *The Quest for Change in Latin America: Sources for a 20th Century Analysis* (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 54-64, quoted from: United States Congress, Senate, Subcommittee on Foreign Relations, "Revolutions in Mexico," 62nd Congress and Sess., Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913; pp. 730-736.

MANIFEST TO THE NATION

Peoples, in their constant efforts for the triumph of the ideal of liberty and justice, are forced, at precise historical moments, to make their greatest sacrifices.

Our beloved country has reached one of those moments. A force of tyranny which we Mexicans were not accustomed to suffer after we won our independence oppresses us in such a manner that it has become intolerable. In exchange for that tyranny we are offered peace, but peace full of shame for the Mexican nation, because its basis is not law, but force; because its object is not the aggrandisement and prosperity of the country, but to enrich a small group who, abusing their influence, have converted the public charges into fountains of exclusively personal benefit, unscrupulously exploiting the manner of lucrative concessions and contracts.

The legislative and judicial powers are completely subordinated to the executive; the division of powers, the sovereignty of the States, the liberty of the common councils, and the rights of the citizen exist only in writing in our great charter; but, as a fact, it may almost be said that martial law constantly exists in Mexico; the administration of justice, instead of imparting protection to the weak, merely serves to legalize the plunderings committed by the strong; the judges instead of being the representatives of justice, are the agents of the executive, whose interests they faithfully serve; the chambers of the union have no other will than that of the dictator; the governors of the States are designated by him and they in their turn designate and impose in like manner the municipal authorities.

From this it results that the whole administrative, judicial, and legislative machinery obeys a single will, the caprice of Gen. Porfirio Díaz, who during his long administration has shown that the principal motive that guides him is to maintain himself in power and at any cost.

For many years profound discontent has been felt

throughout the Republic, due to such a system of government, but Gen. Díaz with great cunning and perseverance, has succeeded in annihilating all independent elements, so that it was not possible to organize any sort of movement to take from him the power of which he made such bad use. The evil constantly became worse, and the decided eagerness of Gen. Díaz to impose a successor upon the nation in the person of Mr. Ramón Corral carried that evil to its limit and caused many of us Mexicans, although lacking recognized political standing, since it had been impossible to acquire it during the 36 years of dictatorship, to throw ourselves into the struggle to recover the sovereignty of the people and their rights on purely democratic grounds.

Among other parties that aimed at the same end, the National Antireelection Party was organized, proclaiming the principles of effective suffrage and no reelection, as the only ones capable of saving the Republic from the imminent peril by which it is menaced by a dictatorship daily growing more burdensome, more despotic, and more immoral.

The Mexican people effectively seconded that party and in response to the call made to it sent their representatives to a convention in which the National Democratic Party was also represented and which likewise interpreted the popular aspirations. Said convention designated its candidates for the presidency and vice presidency of the Republic, these nominations going to Dr. Francisco Vázquez Gómez and to myself for the offices of vice president and president of the Republic, respectively.

Although our situation is highly disadvantageous, because our adversaries counted upon the whole official element, upon which they relied without scruple, we believed it our duty to accept so honorable a designation in order to serve the cause of the people. Imitating the wise customs of republican countries, I traveled over a part of the Republic making a call to my fellow citizens.

My trips were true triumphal marches; for everywhere the people, electrified by the magic words, effective suffrage and no reelection, gave evident proof, their unbreakable resolution to obtain the triumph of such redeeming principles. At last the moment came when Gen. Díaz understood the true situation in the Republic and realized that he could not fight advantageously against me in the field of democracy and ordered me put in prison before the election, which was carried out by excluding the people from the polls by violence, by filling the jails with independent citizens, and by committing the most shameless frauds.

In Mexico, as a democratic Republic, the public power can have no other origin nor other basis than the will of the people, and the latter can not be subordinated to formulas to be executed in a fraudulent manner.

For this reason the Mexican people have protested against the illegality of the last election and, desiring to use successively all the recourses offered by the laws of the Republic, in due form asked for the nullification of the election by the Chamber of Deputies, notwithstanding they recognized no legal origin in said body and knew beforehand that, as its members were not the representatives of the people, they would carry out the will of Gen. Díaz, to whom exclusively they owe their investiture.

In such a state of affairs the people, who are the only sovereign, also protested energetically against the election in imposing manifestations in different parts of the Republic; and if the latter were not general throughout the national territory, it was due to the terrible pressure exercised by the Government, which always quenches in blood any democratic manifestation, as happened in Puebla, Vera Cruz, Tlaxcala, and in other places.

But this violent and illegal system can no longer subsist.

I have very well realized that if the people have designated me as their candidate for the Presidency it is not because they have had an opportunity to discover in me the qualities of a statesman or of a ruler, but the virility of the patriot determined to sacrifice himself, if need be, to obtain liberty and to help the people free themselves from the odious tyranny that oppresses them.

From the moment I threw myself into the democratic struggle I very well knew that Gen. Díaz would not bow to the will of the nation, and the noble Mexican people, in following me to the polls, also knew perfectly the outrage that awaited then but in spite of it, the people gave the cause of liberty a numerous contingent of martyrs when they were necessary and with wonderful stoicism went to the polls and received every sort of molestation.

But such conduct was indispensable to show to the whole world that the Mexican people are fit for democracy, that they are thirsty for liberty, and that their present rulers do not measure up to their aspirations.

Besides, the attitude of the people before and during the election, as well as afterwards, shows clearly that they reject with energy the Government of Gen. Díaz

and that, if those electoral rights had been respected, I would have been elected for President of the Republic.

Therefore, and in echo of the national will, I declare the late election illegal and, the Republic being accordingly without rulers, provisionally assume the Presidency of the Republic until the people designate their rulers pursuant to the law. In order to attain this end, it is necessary to eject from power the audacious usurpers whose only title of legality involves a scandalous and immoral fraud.

With all honesty I declare that it would be a weakness on my part and treason to the people, who have placed their confidence in me, not to put myself at the front of my fellow citizens, who anxiously call me from all parts of the country to compel Gen. Díaz by force of arms, to respect the national will.

The present Government, although it has its origin in violence and fraud from the moment it has been tolerated by the people, can have accepted from foreign nations certain titles of legality until the 30th of next month, when its powers expire; but as it is necessary that the new government, born of recent fraud, can not now assume power, or at best will find the greater part of the nation protesting against that usurpation, with arms in its hands. I have designated Sunday, the 20th of next November, for all the towns in the Republic to rise in arms after 6 o'clock P.M., under the following:

PLAN

First. The elections for President and Vice President of the Republic, magistrates of the supreme court of justice of the nation, and deputies and senators, held in June and July of the current year, are declared void.

Second. The present Government of Gen. Díaz is not recognized, as well as all the authorities whose power ought to emanate from the popular vote, because, besides not having been elected by the people, they have lost the few titles of legality they might have by committing and supporting with the elements the people put at their disposal for the defense of their interests the most scandalous electoral fraud recorded in the history of Mexico.

Third. In order to avoid, as far as possible, the upheavals inherent in every revolutionary movement, all the laws promulgated by the present administration and their respective regulations, except those that are manifestly repugnant to the principles proclaimed in this plan, are declared to be in force, with the reservation to amend, in due time, by constitutional methods, those that require amendment. Likewise the laws, decisions of tribunals and decrees that approved the accounts and management of funds by the functionaries of the Porfirist administration in all its departments, are excepted; for as soon as the revolution triumphs the formation of investigating commissions will be initiated for the purpose of reporting as to the liabilities incurred by the functionaries of the federation, of the States, and of the municipalities.

In every case the obligations contracted by the Porfirist administration with foreign Governments and corporations prior to the 20th *proximo* [next] will be respected.

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

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

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

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

Sixth. The provisional President, before delivering the power, shall make a report to the congress of the union of the use he has made of the powers the present plan confers upon him.

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

Eighth. When the authorities offer armed resistance they shall lie compelled by force of arms to respect the popular will, but in this case the laws of war shall be rigorously observed, attention being especially called to the prohibition against the use of expansive bullets, nor shall prisoners be shot. Attention is also called to the duty of every Mexican to respect foreigners in their persons and interests.

Ninth. The authorities who offer resistance to the realization of this plan shall be put in prison, to be tried by the tribunals of the Republic when the revolution is ended. As soon as each city or town receives its liberty

the principal officer in command shall be recognized as the provisional legal authority, with power to delegate his functions to any other prominent citizen, who shall be confirmed in his office or removed by the provisional governor.

One of the first measures of the provisional government shall be to put all political prisoners at liberty.

Tenth. The appointment of the provisional governor of each State that has been occupied by the forces of the revolution shall be made by the provisional President. This governor shall be under strict obligation to issue a call for election of the constitutional governor of the State as soon as may be possible in the judgment of the provisional President. From this rule are excepted those States that have within two years had democratic campaigns for change of government, since in those States the person who was the candidate of the people will be considered as the provisional governor, provided he adheres actively to this plan.

In case the provisional President has not made the appointment of governor, this appointment has not reached its destination, or the person appointed does not accept for any reason, then the governor shall be designated by the vote of all the commanding officers who operate in the territory of the respective State, on condition that his appointment be ratified by the provisional President as soon as may be possible.

Eleventh. The new authorities will dispose of all the funds found in the public offices for the ordinary expenses of administration and for the expenses of the war, keeping accounts with due scrupulousness. In case the funds are not sufficient for the expenses of the war they shall contract for loans, either voluntary or forced, these latter only with citizens or national institutions. Of these loans scrupulous account shall also be kept and receipts in due form shall be given to the parties in interest, to the end that when the revolution triumphs the amounts loaned may be returned to them.

Transitory.—(a) The officers of the volunteer forces shall assume the grade that corresponds to the number of the forces under their command; in case military and volunteer forces operate together, the officer of the higher grade shall have the command of them, but in case both officers have the same grade the command shall belong to the military officer.

Civil officers shall have said grade while the war lasts, and once it is ended, those appointments, on application of the parties in interest, shall be revised by the war department, which shall ratify them in their grade or reject them, according to their merits.

(b) All officers, civil as well its military, shall enforce the strictest discipline over their troops, and they shall be responsible to the provisional government for the misdeeds committed by the forces under their command, unless they show it was impossible for them to restrain their soldiers and that they had inflicted on the guilty the punishment they deserved.

(c) If the forces and authorities that sustain Gen. Díaz shoot prisoners of war, not for that reason nor by way of reprisal shall the same thing be done with theirs who fall in our hands; but in exchange, the civil or military authorities in the service of Gen. Díaz who, once the revolution is started, have ordered, in any manner disposed, transmitted the order, or shot any of our soldiers shall be shot within 24 hours after summary trial.

Not even the highest functionaries shall be exempted from this penalty. The only exception shall be Gen. Díaz and his ministers on whom the same penalty shall be inflicted in case they order said executions or permit them, but after having been tried by the tribunals of the Republic, when the revolution has terminated.

In case Gen. Díaz orders that the laws of war be respected and that the prisoners who fall in his hands be treated with humanity, his life shall be spared, but in every event he must answer before the tribunals as to how he has managed the funds of the nation and as to how he has complied with the law.

(d) As an indispensable requisite in the laws of war that belligerent troops wear some uniform or distinguishing mark, and as it would be difficult to uniform the numerous forces of the people who are going to take part in the conflict, a tricolored ribbon on the hat or on the arm shall be adopted as the distinguishing mark of all the liberating forces.

Fellow citizens, if I call upon you to take up arms and overthrow the government of Gen. Díaz, it is not only because of the unwarranted act he committed during the last elections, but to save the country from the gloomy future that awaits it under his dictatorship and under the government of the nefarious scientific oligarchy which, without scruple and in great haste, are absorbing and wasting the national resources, and, if we permit him to continue in power, in a very short time they will have completed their work; they will have led the people into ignominy and will have degraded them;

they will have sucked all their wealth and left them in the most absolute misery; they will have caused the bankruptcy of our finances and the dishonor of our country which, weak, impoverished, and manacled, will find itself without arms to defend its frontiers, its honor, and its institutions.

In so far as concerns me, I have a tranquil conscience, and no one can accuse me of promoting the revolution for personal ends, for it is within the knowledge of the nation that I did everything possible to reach a peaceable arrangement and was disposed even to resign my candidacy, provided Gen. Díaz had permitted the nation to designate although it be the vice president of the Republic; but, dominated by incomprehensible pride and unheard-of haughtiness, he did not heed the voice of the Fatherland and preferred to precipitate it into a revolution rather than yield a point; rather than return to the people an atom of their rights; rather than comply, even at the end of his life, with a part of the promises he made at Noria and Tuxtepec.

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

If the interests of the Fatherland had had greater weight in the mind of Gen. Díaz than the sordid interests of himself and his advisers, he would have avoided this revolution by making some concessions to the people; but, since he did not do so...so much the better;...the change will be more rapid and more radical, since the Mexican people, instead of lamenting like a coward, will accept the challenge like a brave man, and now, when Gen. Díaz proposes to rely on brute force to impose an ignominious yoke upon them, the people will have recourse to the same force to shake off that yoke, to eject that woeful man from power, and to recover their liberty.

San Luis Potosi, October 5, 1910. Francisco I. Madero

Questions

- (1) Of what does Madero accuse General Diaz and what, in general terms, actions does he propose that the Mexican people take?
- (2) Compare "San Luis Potosi" to the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen" (Document 15-3); are there parallels? Explain.
- (3) In what ways does Madero believe that Indians have been done an injustice, and what does he propose?

23-2

Getulio Vargas: Brazil's architect of unity.

Brazil, Latin America's largest state, was long more of a federation of provinces where policy was most often determined by powerful local interests which vied with each other for paramount influence. The revolutionary seizure of power in 1930 by Getulio Vargas (1893-1954), a defeated Presidential candidate, would forever alter this concept. Vargas established a dictatorship from 1930-1945, which he administered according to an ill-defined "Estado Novo." What is clear about "Estado Novo," however, is that it