

## CHAPTER FOUR

## ✦ The Mexican Revolution ✦

This bloodshed was only the opening skirmish in what was to become the first social revolution of the twentieth century. As it was, the death of Serdán came two days early, as Madero's Plan of San Luis Potosí had called for a rebellion against Díaz to begin at 6 pm on November 20. Authored in San Antonio, Texas, but backdated to avoid violating U.S. neutrality laws, the plan declared the 1910 elections null and void, proclaiming Madero provisional president. This plan initiated one of the great social revolutions of the twentieth-century world, a revolution that began with high hopes for creating a more democratic and fair society but soon disintegrated into chaos. It was not until the 1940s that a new system would replace the old one.

### THE FIESTA OF BULLETS, 1910–1920

Madero's call to arms found its greatest response in the northern state of Chihuahua. Independently, dozens of Madero supporters mobilized and armed makeshift rebel armies. Although campesinos constituted the bulk of these armies, the rebel cause attracted Mexicans from all walks of life, such as day laborers, shopkeepers, beggars, and intellectuals. Their reasons for joining the fight reflected many of the popular grievances against the Porfiriato: the closed and authoritarian political system, the favoritism toward foreigners, the loss of local autonomy, and the poor treatment of workers. After a few weeks, three leaders emerged to direct the Chihuahuan movement: the lawyer Abraham González, the cattle rustler Pancho Villa, and the former muleteer Pascual Orozco, upon whom devolved the military leadership of the movement. Over the next two months, much of the countryside in Chihuahua fell under rebel control. By February, Orozco's victories convinced Madero that it was time to return to Mexico to take command of the rebellion. By then, his supporters had risen up in several other states. Still determined, the Díaz regime defended its control over the cities of Chihuahua, and elsewhere in Mexico the army held the rebels in check.

The turning point came in May 1911, when Orozco's forces seized the border town of Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, located across the Rio Grande from El Paso, Texas. He did so against the advice of Madero, who feared U.S. intervention in case the fighting spilled over into U.S. territory. Angry at Orozco's insubordination, Madero left Orozco out of his provisional cabinet that was named in Ciudad Juárez only a few days after the rebel victory. As a result, Madero's coalition was strained from the start. Nonetheless, the capture of Ciudad Juárez augured the quick demise of the Díaz regime. Disheartened by the defeat, the federal army fell apart, with thousands of troops deserting.

In September 1910, the Díaz regime put on a grand show to commemorate the birthdays of the nation and the man who had ruled over it for so long. September 16 marked the centennial of the Hidalgo revolt that had begun the Wars of Independence, and don Porfirio celebrated his eightieth birthday five days later. The government spared no expense during the month-long festivities. It unveiled two massive monuments, the Angel of Independence and a monument to the niños héroes (boy heroes), at the Paseo de la Reforma and the entrance to Chapultepec Park, respectively. Foreign dignitaries and the Mexican upper class were treated to lavish balls overflowing with cocktails and French champagne. Of course, not all Mexicans could partake in the celebrations, and authorities forcibly removed beggars from the streets to give the fancy districts of the capital the appearance of a European city. This show of self-congratulation epitomized what the Porfiriato had become. The wealthy delighted in the celebration and interpreted it as proof that Mexico had arrived as a modern nation. For the poor majority, however, the opulent fiestas were offensive. While the lucky few sampled caviar and champagne, most Mexicans could only afford tortillas and beans; as the wealthy stuffed themselves at interminable banquets, parties, and receptions, thousands of children were dying of malnutrition. The celebrations consumed more money than the year's national educational budget in a nation plagued by an adult illiteracy rate of 85 percent.

The extravaganza would be the last great fiesta the Díaz regime would see. On November 18, 1910, less than two months after the celebrations, shooting broke out in the city of Puebla. When the dust had cleared, the police had killed Aquiles Serdán, the local leader of the Anti-Reelectionists, and his family.

Díaz decided to negotiate with Madero and agreed to leave his post by the end of the month as proclaimed in the Treaty of Ciudad Juárez. On May 25, Díaz and Vice President Corral tendered their resignations. In accordance with the treaty, Foreign Secretary Francisco León de la Barra became interim president and convoked national elections for October 1911. Díaz boarded a ship for exile in Paris, and he reportedly warned that Madero had “unleashed a tiger; let’s see if he can control it.”

Indeed, the rebel victory had been almost too easy. While Madero supporters danced in the streets and celebrated the end of the dictatorship, the terms of the treaty left the federal army intact. Most Porfirian officials in the national government and bureaucracy remained in their offices. During his six-month term as interim president, de la Barra and his government assiduously prepared a transition that would ensure the survival of the Porfirian political and military machine. Moreover, regional rebel leaders soon confronted de la Barra with their demands. Orozco was still fuming over Madero’s decision not to include him in his provisional cabinet, and he opposed de la Barra’s interim government, which included a majority of Porfirian officials. In the southern Mexican state of Morelos, campesinos under the leadership of Emiliano Zapata demanded the return of all lands seized by agribusinesses since the 1860s. Zapata was especially incensed that both de la Barra and Madero demanded the disarmament of his supporters, and he refused to comply with these orders. He also met with Madero to gain his support for his ideas on land reform, only to be disappointed when the presidential candidate did not make such a commitment. Madero underestimated the serious nature of these disagreements within the victorious coalition and believed that he would come to terms with both Orozco and Zapata as soon as he was president. Optimistically, he thought that free and fair elections and respect for local autonomy gave all Mexicans a voice in the political process and hence guaranteed the future solution of the country’s social as well as political problems.

Although Madero easily triumphed in the election, his delight at reaching the pinnacle of power was short-lived. Within his own ranks, he faced opposition from Francisco Vázquez Gómez, his vice presidential candidate of 1910 whom Madero had passed over as his running mate in favor of José María Pino Suárez. In Morelos, fighting had already begun following de la Barra’s attempt to disarm the Zapata rebels by force. Weeks before the election, Madero supporters had attempted to rough up a Porfirian opposition candidate, General Bernardo Reyes, who went into exile bitter about what he saw as a betrayal of Madero’s democratic principles. When Madero took office on November 6,

1911—almost a year after the beginning of the revolution—he already found powerful enemies arrayed against him.

The new government thus faced a series of revolts just weeks after its inauguration. First came Zapata’s “Plan of Ayala” of November 25, which sought the overthrow of Madero and the restitution of campesino land. In mid-December, Reyes crossed into northeastern Mexico from his self-imposed exile in San Antonio. As Reyes could not muster the support he had anticipated, he surrendered to federal troops on Christmas Day. Almost simultaneously, Madero received word of the rebellion of Emilio Vázquez Gómez, brother of the man he had passed over for vice president. In each instance, Madero needed to rely on the Federales (federal army), which remained under the leadership of Porfirian officers such as General Victoriano Huerta, who had spent the fall attempting to disarm the Zapatistas.

Madero compounded these difficulties by implementing policies that disappointed his supporters. To address land and labor reform, he created a National Agrarian Commission and a Labor Department but funded neither agency sufficiently to accomplish real progress. He also failed to deliver on his promise to boost educational expenditures, which remained stuck below 8 percent of the national budget. Finally, Madero revealed an unfortunate nepotistic tendency, awarding lucrative government posts to members of his immediate family. The main accomplishment of his presidency was the opening of the political process, which allowed those on the outside of the Porfirian circle to compete freely for power. As a result, Mexicans did not hesitate to express their grievances, and whereas a more authoritarian and powerful president would have been able to put a lid on the opposition, Madero fell short of the expectations he had created.

In March 1912, Orozco took advantage of the growing discontent when he, too, rebelled against the government. Encouraged by Zapata’s plan that recognized him as the leader of his movement, Orozco proclaimed one of his own (March 25) that attacked the Madero family for occupying numerous posts in the federal and state governments and demanded a ten-hour work day and higher wages. Orozco’s plan also called for agrarian reform and the expropriation of the foreign-owned railroad system. Nonetheless, Orozco curried the favor of landowners in Chihuahua, and his ranks included many Porfirians who saw the rebellion as an opportunity to turn the tables on Madero. In April, Orozco assembled an army of eight thousand troops and marched them toward Mexico City. Near the Chihuahua-Durango border, Orozco routed the Federales under the command of José González Salas, Madero’s Secretary of

War. Humiliated, González committed suicide. At that moment, the Porfirian military proved to be the president's best ally. Just when the fortunes of the Federales looked bleak, General Victoriano Huerta, a veteran Porfirian military officer, assumed control over the troops. In late May, the Federales defeated Orozco's forces at Casas Grandes, Chihuahua.

Huerta's triumph at Casas Grandes marked the emergence of two rising stars in the Mexican Revolution without whom he could not have won this significant military victory: Doroteo Arango Arámbula, better known as Pancho Villa, and Alvaro Obregón Salido. Both Villa and Obregón commanded volunteer forces that grew from detachments of a few hundred into the largest rebel armies that had ever existed in Mexico. Many details of the life of Villa, a legendary revolutionary hero, remain in dispute. He was born in the northern state of Durango in 1878 into an illiterate campesino family. He worked as a sharecropper at a very young age to support his family following his father's death, and first gained renown by murdering an hacienda owner who had attempted sexual assault on Arango's younger sister. Arango fled to the neighboring state of Chihuahua with the police in pursuit. By 1910, he was known as Pancho Villa, and he and his bandits operated in both his native state and in Chihuahua. Villa joined the revolution upon meeting Abraham González, Madero's representative in Chihuahua and future governor, and he fought to break the economic and political power of the large landowners. His counterpart, Obregón, was born in Huatabampo, Sonora, in 1880. Like Villa, Obregón grew up in poverty, although his mother was descended from a wealthy family. Unlike Villa, however, he managed to build up a modest agricultural enterprise producing chickpeas and other foods, and he occupied several minor posts at the end of the Porfirian era. He joined the campaign against Orozco upon the request of Sonoran governor José María Maytorena, who was concerned that the unrest in neighboring Chihuahua would mobilize poor campesinos in the eastern part of his native state. As a latecomer to the revolution, he therefore represented the ascendant middle class in northern Mexico—a group interested in political stability and economic development, but not necessarily in the redemption of landless campesinos.

It was Huerta, however, who took immediate advantage from the victory over Orozco at Casas Grandes. He had emerged as the guarantor of political stability, and Madero increasingly depended upon his services. Three months later, Madero confronted yet another rebellion, that of don Porfirio's nephew, Félix Díaz, who rose up in Veracruz with a call to the Federales to depose Madero. Captured and court-martialed, the younger Díaz received the death sentence, only to have it commuted to life in prison by the lenient President

Madero. Again, Huerta was instrumental in Díaz's defeat. Díaz was escorted to federal prison in Mexico City, where he established contact with another imprisoned rebel, General Reyes.

This fourth victory over rebel movements, not counting Zapata's ongoing insurrection, was to be Madero's last triumph. Díaz and Reyes spent several months plotting a coup from their separate prison cells, and on February 9, 1913, they escaped with the help of federal troops that had deserted to join their rebellion. Reyes died during the escape, but Díaz survived and directed his troops to march toward the National Palace, where Federales repelled them. The rebels then occupied the Ciudadela, or armory, west of downtown Mexico City. Once again, Madero turned to Huerta to quash this latest rebellion. By this point, however, Huerta had reached the conclusion that Madero was unfit to be president. Huerta negotiated with Díaz and allowed supplies to reach the Ciudadela, even as the Federales engaged the rebels. On February 18, he joined forces with Díaz in an agreement brokered by U.S. Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson and other foreign diplomats. Huerta had Madero and Pino Suárez arrested and forced their resignations, and a few hours later, Congress confirmed him as president. All at once, the gunfire in Mexico City ceased, and what has become known as the *decena trágica*—the Tragic Ten Days—had resulted in the defeat of Madero's democratic government. General Huerta was not content with usurping the presidency, however. Three days later, Madero and Pino Suárez were shot dead while Huerta's men were transporting them to prison. Although the exact details of the murders have never been elucidated, most evidence points to Huerta and/or Díaz as being responsible for the crime. A few days later, Huerta's minions assassinated Chihuahua governor Abraham González as well.

The deaths of Madero, Pino Suárez, and González only augured the spilling of more blood. The wealthy landowner Venustiano Carranza, the governor of Coahuila and a friend of the slain ex-president's family, denounced the coup in the Plan de Guadalupe, which proclaimed Carranza interim president. A few weeks later, the provisional state government of Sonora followed suit, declaring that it would not recognize the Huerta regime in Mexico City. To defend this decision, Obregón's volunteer army took the field to drive the Federales out of their garrisons throughout the state. In González's stead, Villa led the anti-Huerta forces in Chihuahua. In April 1913, representatives from all three of these northern movements met at Monclova, Coahuila, to sign a plan that named Carranza *primer jefe*, or First Chief, of what the rebels called the Constitutionalist Army. In the south, Zapata, whose forces had firsthand experience with Huerta's iron-fisted Federales, roundly rejected the new gov-

ernment and even ordered the execution of the agents sent to negotiate with him. As in the case of Madero's alliance, the loose coalition against Huerta represented widely divergent goals, and the rebels agreed on little other than his removal. Although most of them operated under the Constitutionalist umbrella, these rebels became known by the name of their leader. Thus the Carrancistas wished to restore Madero's short-lived democracy, the Villistas sought local autonomy and freedom from powerful landowners, the Zapatistas desired land reform, and the Obregonistas fought, among other things, for the freedom of their state from the interference of the central government. Initially, most of Mexico remained under Huerta's control, and the dictator even undertook some modest reform measures to co-opt the opposition. The governments of three great powers—Britain, France and Germany—were firmly in his corner.

Over the next year, however, the rebel forces began to gain ground against the Huerta regime. In Washington, the newly elected President Woodrow Wilson, a Democrat, disavowed the actions of the U.S. ambassador, who had been nominated by his Republican predecessor, William H. Taft. A former college professor, the intellectual Wilson supported a people's right to self-determination and democratic rule and opposed dictatorships such as Huerta's that had come to power through violence. Although Wilson initially embargoed the export of weapons to both Huerta and the Constitutionalist, the rebels controlled several strategic border towns and managed to smuggle arms across the border. In Chihuahua and Morelos, Villa's and Zapata's forces carried out effective guerrilla warfare and ransacked haciendas held by Huerta supporters. In Chihuahua and Sonora, Villa's and Obregon's troops attacked Federal garrisons and gradually expanded the territory held by the Constitutionalist armies. This war proved far more brutal than the campaign against Díaz, and the longer the insurrection continued, the more the tide turned against Huerta. As casualties mounted, underpaid Federales deserted to the rebel armies, forces composed primarily of makeshift battalions of young volunteer fighters. For the first time in Mexican history, women played an active role in the fighting, and popular music and art commemorated the heroism of these female soldiers, the *soldaderas*. In Mexico City, workers took up arms against the Huerta regime under the Casa del Obrero Mundial (House of the World's Worker), a radical labor union affiliated with the Industrial Workers of the World. In February 1914, Wilson allowed the Constitutionalist to purchase weapons in the United States. With the supply lines from the United States open, Obregon's and Villa's northern armies began to march on central Mexico. In particular, Villa's División del Norte, or Division of the North, became the largest rebel

army, larger than those of Carranza, Obregon, and Zapata combined. Once again—as in the nineteenth century—central authority had disintegrated in favor of regional warlords.

The U.S. government played a significant role in hastening Huerta's demise. In April 1914, Mexican officials in Tampico, a Gulf Coast city still held by the Federales, arrested a group of nine visiting U.S. soldiers stationed on a gunboat offshore, reportedly for entering a prohibited zone. Incensed, U.S. commander Henry Mayo demanded a twenty-one gun salute to the United States flag on Mexican soil and the punishment of those responsible for the arrests. Huerta apologized but refused to salute the U.S. flag. As tempers flared, Wilson on April 20 requested congressional authorization to use force to obtain the apology Mayo had demanded. The following day, Wilson awoke to learn that the German gunboat *Ypiranga* was approaching the harbor of Veracruz, Mexico's major Gulf Coast port, to unload a shipment of weapons for Huerta at Veracruz later that day. In an effort to keep the Germans, future enemies in World War I, from supplying the Federales, Wilson immediately ordered the U.S. occupation of Veracruz, Mexico's principal port. He did so without consulting either Huerta or Carranza, the nominal head of the insurrection. Although Carranza complained loudly, his faction gained the most from the incident, as Carrancista forces operated close to the city and moved in shortly after the U.S. occupation. Carranza set up his provisional government in Veracruz long before the Marines departed in November 1914. The U.S. occupation of Veracruz was therefore very significant for the revolution. It gave a decisive boost to the Carranza faction; it led to an outburst of nationalist fervor that would later find its expression in the Constitution of 1917; it broke Huerta's sole supply line from his allies in Europe; and it demoralized the Federales. In June, Villa seized the strategically significant silver mining town of Zacatecas, and one month later, Huerta went into exile as Carranza's and Obregon's forces occupied Mexico City.

Unfortunately, once again, internal divisions rendered asunder the revolutionary coalition that had united to overthrow a dictator. At the beginning of the war against Huerta, Carranza had claimed the title of provisional president under the Plan of Guadalupe, and the Monclova Convention, which both Obregon and Villa had signed, had designated him primer jefe. But Zapata was not a party to this agreement, and Villa resented Wilson's favoritism toward Carranza as evidenced by the U.S. occupation of Veracruz. Villa also regarded Carranza as an aristocratic, conservative landowner, and he believed that Carranza had once given him military directives to stop his southward advance in order to allow his own and Obregon's armies to reach Mexico City before

the División del Norte did. For his part, Carranza considered Villa merely a bandit, and he arrogantly refused to negotiate with him on equal terms. At the same time, in early August 1914, the beginning of World War I complicated matters, as the Germans sought to play the Mexican revolutionary factions against one another.

This was actually the case, anyway, even without much German assistance. Tempers flew at the Convention of Aguascalientes of October 1914, convened to discuss the political future. Each of the four major factions sent a number of delegates to this convention that corresponded to their military strength. Villa's was by far the largest army, thus his delegates moved to terminate Carranza as primer jefe and to select one of their men, Eulalio Gutiérrez, as provisional president. Incensed about the convention's decision to pass over Carranza for the presidency, the Carrancistas walked out of the meeting. Obregón initially waffled and then entered into negotiations with Villa. These talks ended with Villa making death threats to Obregón, and the Sonoran ultimately sided with Carranza, while Zapata allied with Villa. Because they recognized Gutiérrez as the president chosen by the Convention of Aguascalientes, the Zapatistas and Villistas became known as Conventionists, while their adversaries kept the name Constitutionalists.

The following year was the bloodiest in modern Mexican history. The war between the factions pitted Villa's and Zapata's campesinos against a city-based alliance with national goals. While the Conventionists never defined common goals, Carranza operated a provisional national government in Veracruz that passed laws ending debt peonage and promising labor reform to workers. In February 1915, Obregón made a crucial agreement with the Casa del Obrero Mundial that gained him the support of the union's Red Battalions, the armed workers who had played an important role in defeating the Huerta regime. The Casa saw Obregón as a logical ally. The general had demonstrated a radical streak during his army's occupation of Mexico City after Huerta's fall, when he had imposed special taxes on the rich and forced those unwilling to pay them to sweep the streets. The outcome of the fighting was decided in April and May 1915 at the battles of Celaya and León, where Obregón's machine guns mowed down the Villistas on horseback. Eager to back the winner, the Wilson administration gravitated toward the Constitutionalists, allowing arms shipments to Carranza's and Obregón's forces and awarding Mexico de facto diplomatic recognition in October 1915.

But Villa, reduced to a few hundred supporters, was not quite finished fighting and decided to draw Mexico into an international conflict. He was incensed that the U.S. government had recognized and supported the Consti-

tutionalists. For example, in the fall of 1915, the Wilson administration had allowed Obregón's troops to make a loop across southern Arizona in order to elude Conventionist forces in neighboring Sonora and then attack them from the rear. To exact revenge and to incite a conflict between the United States and Mexico that would weaken his enemies, on March 9, 1916, Villa's men sacked Columbus, New Mexico, in the only attack on the continental United States in the twentieth century. Wilson responded by sending a "Punitive Expedition" into Chihuahua, the second time in two years that his administration had decided to undertake a military intervention in Mexico. The invasion force under the leadership of General William Pershing chased Villa across Chihuahua but failed to capture him. The Punitive Expedition made Villa into a popular hero, someone who had stood up to the United States and gotten away with it. Although Villa never regained his prior significance in Mexican politics, he had acquired new value as a patriot.

The Punitive Expedition also angered Carranza, who responded by making nationalist speeches that assailed the privileges of foreigners in Mexico. So strained were relations between Wilson and Carranza that German diplomats sought to exploit these tensions for their own benefit in World War I. As British intelligence learned by way of an intercepted telegraph communication, the Zimmermann Telegram, the German government authorized its diplomatic representatives to approach Carranza with an offer of a German-Mexican alliance in case of war between the United States and Mexico. Written at a time when the United States still remained neutral in the war, the Zimmermann Telegram even included assurances that Germany would support Mexico in the recovery of all lands lost to the United States during the nineteenth century. Carranza did not respond to these German overtures, but Wilson's ensuing declaration of war—a declaration facilitated in large part by the public outcry in the United States over the intercepted telegram—indirectly came to his assistance. Following the U.S. entry into World War I in April 1917, Wilson withdrew Pershing's battle-tested troops from Chihuahua to deploy them in France against the German army.

Meanwhile, the Constitutionalists turned to the difficult project of national reconstruction. When the fighting was ended, much of the country lay in ruins. Paper currency was now worthless, overland trade had broken down in many areas, and the revolutionaries had blown up railroad tracks and port facilities. Carranza and Obregón also knew that the revolution had transcended its earlier, narrowly political goals. Obregón's alliance with the Casa del Obrero Mundial promised assistance to labor unions, and in January 1915 Carranza had proclaimed his support for comprehensive land reform.

State governors close to Obregón such as Salvador Alvarado of Yucatán and Plutarco Elías Calles of Sonora issued decrees favorable to workers, and they increased taxation on foreign-owned companies. But Carranza and Obregón disagreed on how to address these social and nationalist demands, and their discord manifested itself during the Constitutional Convention held in the city of Querétaro in central Mexico between late 1916 and early 1917. The convention was composed of Constitutionalist delegates from all states, primarily civilians with university degrees. Carranza charged the convention with updating the liberal Constitution of 1857 and asked the delegates to elect him president in the absence of general national elections. But Obregón's representatives viewed the redrafting of the constitution as a vehicle for economic and social change. They inserted clauses into the new document that sought to provide guarantees for Mexican workers and campesinos while abrogating the special privileges of the Catholic Church and foreign investors. Article 3 of the constitution reiterated the commitment to a secular society, one in which the Church would tend only to the souls of its parishioners rather than play a political role in the country. In an attempt to repeal the reforms of the 1880s that had facilitated the foreign acquisition of vast land holdings and mining enterprises, Article 27 proclaimed the land and the subsoil the patrimony of the Mexican nation, for use by foreigners only upon application to and the consent of the federal government. Article 27 also promised a land reform to benefit landless campesinos. Article 33 threatened foreigners who refused to submit to Mexican law with extradition, and Article 123 provided important guarantees to workers, including an eight-hour day and a six-day week. Approved on February 5, 1917, the new constitution was the first in the entire world that contained a social agenda.

If the drafting of the new constitution had gone relatively smoothly, implementing its new provisions was a different matter. Putting these into practice would have not only antagonized foreign investors, but also Mexican proprietors and the Catholic Church. For the moment, Carranza decided not to enforce the radical changes of the constitution. Free to act in Mexico after its victory alongside the western Allies in World War I in November 1918, the U.S. government weighed in against implementation of Article 27, putting Carranza further on the defensive.

Frustrated on that front, Carranza focused on reasserting central control over the regional warlords who, true to form, had taken advantage of the revolution to carve out independent spheres of power. Apart from Villa in Chihuahua, Carranza confronted Félix Díaz in Oaxaca and Zapata in Morelos. The latter proved to be the biggest thorn in Carranza's side, having already

defied Díaz, Madero, and Huerta, so Carranza decided to get rid of him. On April 10, 1919, a Carranza ally lured Zapata to the hacienda of Chinameca, in the state of Morelos, under the pretext of intending to desert to the Zapatistas. When Zapata entered the hacienda, Carranza's loyalists gunned him down. The president then moved against Obregón, who had returned to Sonora, where his allies Plutarco Elías Calles and Adolfo de la Huerta led a state government too radical for Carranza's taste. Behind the scenes, Carranza attempted to choose his own successor, who was slated to be elected by popular vote in 1920. Now he prepared to spurn the presidential ambitions of Obregón, who had helped him win the war between the factions, in favor of the bland Ignacio Bonillas, a civilian and the Mexican ambassador to the United States. In April 1920, Carranza sent a military expedition to Sonora, an action Governor de la Huerta interpreted as an attempt to unseat him.

Carranza's challenge to Obregón and the other Sonorans, however, led to his own downfall and the last violent change of power until the present day. De la Huerta and Calles responded to the provocation of the federal government with the Plan de Agua Prieta, which withdrew recognition from the Carranza government and called for its overthrow. Within a month, Obregón and General Pablo González, who harbored presidential aspirations of his own, had chased Carranza out of the capital. Carranza fled by train to Puebla, whence he hoped to reach Veracruz, which previously proved hospitable to his political ambitions. But the rebels had blown up the railroad track, and when the train stopped east of Puebla Carranza and his entourage were forced to continue the trip on horseback. On the evening of May 20, 1920, Carranza's group arrived in the small village of Tlaxcalantongo in the Sierra Madre. By the next morning, the party had been attacked, most likely by Obregón supporters, and Carranza lay dead. We will probably never know the circumstances of the president's death, but it proved a significant watershed. Not only was it the last assassination of a sitting president in Mexican history, but it ushered in more than two decades of consolidation that defined the extent of revolutionary change.

### CONSOLIDATION UNDER THE SONORAN DYNASTY, 1920–1934

It fell to the three Sonoran leaders who headed the Agua Prieta rebellion—de la Huerta, Obregón, and Calles, a trio also known as the “Sonoran Triangle”—to lead the consolidation of the new regime during the 1920s and early 1930s. The effort involved placating a U.S. government determined to protect foreign