

Judgement Day in Morelos: Emiliano Zapata and Agrarian Reform

1909 1919

By JERRY KNUDSON*

"Rebels of the South! It is better to die on your feet than to live on your knees!"

—Inscription carved by machete on post at the Borda Garden in Cuernavaca, dated April 11, 1919, seen by Frank Tannenbaum in 1923. *Peace by Revolution, An Interpretation of Mexico* (New York, 1933), 179.

The sun was almost overhead when the small group of eleven horsemen approached the hacienda of San Juan de Chinameca in the state of Morelos, Mexico, on a crisp April morning in 1919. Beyond a deep barranca loomed the massive stone structure of the hacienda building surrounded by a cluster of adobe huts. All seemed peaceful in the spring sunshine which cast sharp black shadows on the green land of Morelos. Chinameca seemed a quiet backwater in a land scarred by revolutionary fighting for nine years, and the leader of the band of horsemen laughed at an old woman by the roadside who warned him of tragedy ahead.¹ Carefree and joking, the horsemen dismounted by a water fountain and with quick confident steps filed through the gateway to San Juan de Chinameca. Files of Federal soldiers inside snapped briskly to attention and brought their rifles up for the traditional salute of honor. But rather than presenting arms, they brought the rifles to their shoulders. Without warning, a volley of gunfire shattered the stillness of the morning. Three men and their leader fell crumpled to the ground. Emiliano Zapata was dead.²

Zapata was dead but his corpse refused to lie down. As a typical *corrida* expressed the belief of the people:

Enterraron a Zapata
en una profunda tumba
pues creían que se saldría
para volver a la lucha.³

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There are more statues of Zapata in Mexico today than of any other revolutionary leader.⁴ Schools, streets, and towns are named after him, and in Zacatepec one can visit the government-owned Emiliano Zapata Sugar Mill. The frescoes by Diego Rivera at Cuernavaca show Hernando Cortés on one side and a few feet and four hundred years beyond, Emiliano Zapata. In the murals in the National Palace in Mexico City, Rivera has portrayed Zapata twice; the only other figures duplicated are Cortés and Benito Juárez. The two Zapata brothers are shown at the top of the central panel with handlebar mustaches and belts of ammunition slung across their chests. A slight frown on his lean, ascetic face, Emiliano grasps a rifle in one hand and the Plan of Ayala in the other. Elsewhere, he is represented holding a banner, "Tierra y Libertad," just above a scene depicting the revolution for independence—indicating the artist's conception of the continuity of the two events.

Today in Morelos the surviving Zapatistas get a far-away look in their eyes as they talk of the dashing Emiliano, and to a man they refuse to admit that Zapata is dead—he still rides the hills of Morelos on his beautiful white horse and when his people need him, he will again appear.⁵ In the early months of World War II, German victories in Europe were attributed in Tepoztlán to the widely-held belief that Zapata had joined the *Wehrmacht*.⁶ Nicholas Zapata, eldest son of the guerrilla agrarian leader, refuses each spring to attend the government ceremonies on the anniversary of his father's death.⁷ In 1952 the Ministry of Interior banned the Twentieth Century Fox film production of *Viva Zapata* because "the historic truth is gravely altered by the script" to ridicule Madero and degrade Zapata.⁸ The people of Mexico will not allow their legend of Zapata to be tampered with, and they will not let Emiliano die.

The legendary Zapata and the historic Zapata are two quite different beings, and this paper shall examine the latter, focusing attention on the Plan of Ayala and Zapata's ideas and actions concerning agrarian reform. Specifically, this paper shall attempt to refute the sweeping statement of Eyer N. Simpson that "Zapata's famous *Plan* was hardly a program of agrarian reform and certainly not a well-integrated plan of action."⁹ On the contrary, if Zapatismo has any historical significance, it rests squarely on the Plan of Ayala and the actions which this statement of principle demanded. Until the Plan of Ayala was issued to the world from the mountain village of Ayoxustla on November 25, 1911, Emiliano Zapata was nothing more than an unspeakably bloodthirsty

bandit.¹⁰ But with this document he emerged as the heart and core of the Revolutionary movement, and his prophetic declaration was to be redeemed by future decades of Mexican statesmen.

Yet since the symbol stems from the man, we must briefly review the events which preceded the Plan of Ayala. Emiliano Zapata was born in the Morelian village of Anenecuilco just down the road from Cuautla sometime in the year 1877.¹¹ His father Gabriel Zapata had built the small adobe dwelling—preserved today as a national monument—after leaving the Hacienda de Hospital to marry Cleofas Salazar, daughter of an ancient family of the region.¹² Through the years his father had struggled to retain a few acres of stony hillside land from the steadily encroaching haciendas. Here in Morelos, “the sugar-bowl of the world,” where the “cane fields shimmer in the sunshine,” Emiliano Zapata grew to manhood.¹³ His uncle José Zapata had fought for Juárez and against Maximilian. Emiliano studied under Emilio Vara in the small school next to the church but he could not attend regularly because of ranch work. His mother died when he was sixteen, and his father followed her a few months later, leaving an injunction for his son: “What I ask you is that you look after your sisters and the land.”¹⁴ A neighboring hacendado stole five head of cattle and demanded one as ransom when Emiliano could not pay twenty-five pesos to redeem them. The young charro—splendid in his skintight trousers and huge sombrero—worked on the haciendas of Puebla, served six months under duress in the *Rurales* of Porfirio Díaz, and returned to ranchero life upon the intervention of a friendly young hacendado, Don Ignacio de la Torre, for whom Zapata later supervised stables in Mexico City.¹⁵

Emiliano Zapata arrived at manhood with smoldering black eyes that flashed at times with the fire of fanaticism, a cavalier reputation among the young women of the district, and an all-consuming passion to defend and reclaim the lands of his native Anenecuilco. One who knew him well described Emiliano as soft-spoken, gentle, and “sumamente indio.”¹⁶ His biographer Edgcumb Pinchon wrote, “The kernel of him was a naked integrity terrible to lesser men, a single-mindedness that was a violent creative force.”¹⁷

The land situation in Morelos and in all of Mexico was indeed desperate. Manuel Gamio has written, “the agrarian question has been the most powerful factor in the development, past and present, of the Mexican people.”¹⁸ On the eve of the Revolution in 1910, “the greater part of rural Mexico was incorporated in about eight thousand haciendas,” Edward Alsworth Ross has

estimated.¹⁹ Another expert has declared that seventy percent of Mexico's working population is concentrated on seven percent of her land surface, and this seven percent represents the only arable land in the country.²⁰ There was little enough land available if it had been evenly distributed among all farmers, but this was far from the case. In Zacatecas the average estate was 72,500 to 125,000 acres.²¹ In the semi-arid north, estates of three hundred, five hundred, and even six hundred square leagues in the hands of one owner were not uncommon.²² It required eight hours for a train to crawl across the vast Terrazas hacienda of six million acres—about the size of the sovereign state of Costa Rica—in Chihuahua.²³ And of all the states, Morelos was the most destitute in land; only one half of one percent of heads of families held private land there in 1910.²⁴ Estimates of the number of great haciendas in Morelos vary from twenty-seven to forty-three, while George M. McBride has listed one hundred "ranchos" within the state.²⁵

The economic evil of land concentration in the hands of a few individuals was coupled with the social evil of the accompanying feudal outlook. An American consular official in 1920 quoted an unnamed hacendado concerning the peons: "They do not deserve gentle treatment—it spoils them; they are no better than brutes—the harsher the treatment they receive the better they work; they are insusceptible of education—they were made to be only hewers of wood and drawers of water."²⁶ A highly educated Mexican, Francisco Bulnes, went even further in his pathological opposition to land reform: "If we begin to . . . assert the property rights of aboriginal races, we shall arrive at a point where we shall have logically to return the lands to the zoological species inferior to man, until we end, if we believe in the theory of evolution, in granting the rights of property to the primitive, microscopic vegetable organisms."²⁷

When the storm clouds of Revolution broke in 1910, Francisco I. Madero told a heckler during one of his speeches, "The people do not want bread, but freedom!"²⁸ But the people demanded land. It was the great inchoate yearning behind a people in revolt. In the judgment of George M. McBride, "All may not agree that the problem of the land lay so deep about the roots of the revolution; but few, of whatever political creed, will disagree with the statement that the agrarian system was responsible for the conditions which made the upheaval possible."²⁹ Those conditions were concisely summed up by Helen Phipps: "The condition of the masses was far worse in 1910 than it had been in 1810."³⁰

At last the people were at bay; they could be driven no farther,

and hacienda owners began to notice a change of attitude. An American woman owning an hacienda in Mexico complained to her sister in the United States, "The Indians . . . are no longer apathetic, they are insolent and aggressive For reasons of their own the Indians are now making the most of their power, as they are unrestrained."³¹ The wife of an American diplomat in Mexico City added with foreboding: Those who know tell me that Zapata is atavistic in type, desirous of Mexico for the Indians [which] really means a sponging out of everything between us and Montezuma, and decidedly 'gives [cause] to think.'³²

On a Sunday afternoon in December 1910, while Porfirio Díaz still ruled from the National Palace, Emiliano Zapata in Morelos led the people of the village of Anenecuilco in a group as solemn as a religious procession to a cornfield where the Indian peasant leader personally directed the first land division in Mexico.³³ Since September 12, 1909, he had been president of a local junta formed to reclaim village lands from the Hacienda de Hospital with the aid of lawyer Ramirez de Alba.³⁴ When the Secretary General of the state would not give them permission to plant their corn lands pending settlement of the litigation, the villagers under Zapata's leadership decided upon armed resistance.³⁵ The villages of Ayala and Mayotepec joined Anenecuilco, and the land revolution in Mexico was underway.

When Francisco L. Madero proclaimed against Díaz in the north of Mexico, Zapata recognized a possible ally and sent Pablo Torres Burgos to San Antonio to interview the man of Mexico's hour.³⁶ Torres Burgos returned to Zapata's mountain headquarters with the exciting news of Madero's proclamation, the Plan of San Luis Potosí of October 5, 1910. With his newly acquired ability to read, Zapata painstakingly made out the key paragraph of the document:

Through the abuse of the law of vacant lands, numerous small proprietors, the majority of them indigenous, have been despoiled of their lands. It being entirely just that the land of which they were despoiled so arbitrarily be returned to them, such actions are declared subject to revision, and those who acquired land in so immoral a fashion, or their heirs, will be required to restore them to their original owners, paying them moreover an indemnity for the damage suffered. In case these lands have passed to a third party before the promulgation of this *Plan*, the indemnity will be paid by those who profited by the despoilment.³⁷

With this moral reinforcement, Zapata launched his guerrilla warfare throughout the state of Morelos, fighting nine pitched battles in ninety days—at Axochiapan, Teotlalco, Jonacatepec,

Chiautla, Chietla, Matamoros, Zacualpan Amilpas, Metepec, and Atlixco—before reducing Cuautla itself on May 22, 1911. The town, held by the famous Golden Fifth regiment under General Francisco Mugica, fell after a grueling siege of five sleepless nights. Zapata's motley following had increased from a band of seven hundred peasants to an armed cavalry of three thousand, grown strong on captured arms, ammunition, and supplies.³⁸ Zapata boasted, "I have never bought a gun."³⁹

But with military victory came political disillusionment. The negotiations which Madero concluded in Ciudad Juárez, halting a revolution midway in its course by concessions to the *científicos*, seemed a betrayal to Emiliano Zapata.⁴⁰ After Madero arrived in Mexico City, Zapata conferred with him on June 8, 1911, troubled by the interim government's appointment of Juan C. Carreon, manager of the Bank of Morelos, as provisional governor of the state. Despite Madero's pleas, Zapata refused to disarm his troops until land reform was underway in Morelos.⁴¹ The guerrilla leader invited Madero to visit Cuautla to inspect the situation himself, and the two leaders again conferred in Cuernavaca on June 12 during Madero's four-day tour of Morelos and Guerrero.⁴² There Zapata finally agreed to a partial demobilization of his men under the supervision of Gabriel Robles Dominguez; in return, Madero recommended to Governor Carreon that revolutionaries from other states replace Zapata's forces as they were being disarmed.³⁴ Meanwhile, hacienda forces known as "Los Hijos de Morelos" and the red-shirted "Los Colorados" were organized to protect property as long as Zapata maintained his army.⁴⁴ The hacendados' newspaper *El Imparcial* contributed to the atrocity stories surrounding Zapata.⁴⁵

In the months to come, Morelos became the testing ground of the Revolution and the rock upon which Madero's ship of state foundered. The national leader summoned Zapata to another urgent meeting in Mexico City, conferred with Eufemio Zapata at Tehuacán, and visited the tense region three times in an effort to break the deadlock. But the complicity between provisional President Francisco León de la Barra and General Victoriano Huerta, dispatched with Federal troops to Morelos without informing Madero, exploded the incendiary situation. General Huerta seized Cuautla and full-scale warfare erupted in Morelos, raging through the months of September and October, 1911. A fifteen-day truce after October 8 ended with a daring sortie by Zapata to the gates of Mexico City itself. When Madero finally assumed the presidency on November 6, he immediately sent Gabriel

Dominguez to Morelos to arrange a peace, with the words: "Tell him [Zapata] that his rebellious attitude is causing great prejudice to my government, and I cannot tolerate the prolongation of such a situation for any reason; if he really wants to serve me, this is the only way he can do so."⁴⁶

But it was too late. Zapata, disgusted with the machinations of politics in Mexico City, turned against Madero and issued his own Plan of Ayala on November 25, 1911. The lines were drawn at long last, and the white-clad Indians of Morelos fought with a tenacity that resisted everything Mexico City could hurl against the rebels. For the next eight years bitter fighting raged back and forth across the state, and Morelos became a standing revolutionary pocket that led to the collapse of the Madero government on February 18, 1913.⁴⁷

It was a regional warfare that knew no rules, no limits, no end. Zapata and his men fought De la Barra, Madero, Huerta, and Carranza. They occupied Mexico City two times and promenaded down the Paseo de la Reforma with the Dorados of Pancho Villa, an event described by Edgcumb Pinchon:

It is a colorful and significant spectacle—this singing, bugling, drumming march of the sandaled armies of a despoiled people down the aristocratic Alameda, this climax of a twenty-times victorious and never-defeated drive through the heart of Mexico for a thousand miles, this nonchalant scraping of peon spurs on the gilt of the Palacio throne. But a spectacle only; a Revolutionary interlude—hardly more.⁴⁸

While the Zapatistas and their chief made a grand but empty gesture in Mexico City, their people at home suffered beyond endurance. As Stuart Chase has written, "Nowhere in Mexico was there such ruthless destruction Now the green fields are diminished and iguanas rattle over ruined hacienda walls."⁴⁹ Federal commanders dismantled sugar refining equipment and looted the haciendas; they resorted to a scorched-earth policy and massacred civilians. It was war to the death. Zapata evacuated all villagers behind his own lines, and in the winter of 1917-1918 the Indians of Tepoztlán lived in caves in the craggy cliffs behind their town, "coming down in the night to rob their own fruit trees."⁵⁰ In nine years of almost constant warfare, an estimated one-third of the population of Morelos was annihilated.⁵¹

During this time, the darkest days of the Revolution in Morelos, the Zapatistas fought with a will which could not be quenched because they fought with a purpose. They fought for the Plan of Ayala. In the sun-drenched plaza of Cuautla half a century

later, a gnarled old man who had ridden with Zapata told me in simple words that he had fought for "agua y tierra, eso era todo." He mentioned the "esclavitud de hacendados," and he remembered the signing of the Plan of Ayala which promised to break the bonds of that slavery once and for all.⁵²

The idea for a political pronouncement first occurred to Zapata in the village of Jumiltepec in the summer of 1911. Later, as relations with Madero and Del la Barra degenerated, Zapata and General Otilio E. Montano, a former Morelian schoolteacher, discussed details of the forthcoming plan somewhere on the plain of Chiautla between the villages of Ticumán and Villa de Ayala.⁵³ The plan was finally drafted by General Montano and General José Trinidad Ruiz, and on November 25, 1911, Zapata stood before his assembled troops at Ayoxustla and said. "Those who have no fear, enter to sign!"⁵⁴

General Carlos Reyes Avilés, present at the scene, described an historic moment in his book *Cartones Zapatistas*: "Montano [stood] on foot near a wooden table, small and of rustic manufacture, which the people of Ayoxustla saved as an historic relic, [and] with his harsh and grating voice in his accent of village schoolmaster, gave a lecture on the Plan of Ayala."⁵⁵ Outside, a small band played the national hymn, firecrackers popped, and a small bell stolen from a nearby church celebrated the event. A priest with a battered typewriter was hustled from a neighboring village and laboriously typed an original and three carbon copies of the Plan, interrupting his labor with exclamations of delight. One smudged carbon copy later reached the newspapers of Mexico City, and the Plan of Ayala was published to the world.⁵⁶

The preamble to the Plan states that it was drafted to complement the Plan of San Luis Potosí "to carry out the promises made to the country by the revolution of November 20, 1910."⁵⁷ Madero and interim President De la Barra had betrayed the Revolution for their "personal ambitions, excessive instincts of tyranny and their profound disrespect for the fulfillment of the pre-existing laws emanating from the immortal *Código* of '57, written with the revolutionary blood of Ayutla."⁵⁸ Madero had not destroyed the governmental power of Díaz and he had not carried out his Plan of San Luis Potosí; on the contrary, he had killed and oppressed the revolutionaries who put him in office. Vice-president José M. Pino Suárez was installed contrary to the will of the people, along with some state governors, such as General Ambrosio Figueroa in Morelos. These men were building dictatorships worse than that of

Díaz, plunging the states into "the most horrifying anarchy registered in contemporary history."⁵⁹

The Plan announced in favor of Pascual Orozco for president to redeem the Revolution; if he would not accept the post, it was to go to Zapata himself. "The Nation is tired of false men and traitors who make promises as liberators and upon arriving in power forget them and make themselves tyrants."⁶⁰

Zapata called for a return to the Plan of San Luis Potosí, with significant additions: ". . . that the terrain, mountains, and waters that the hacendados, científicos, or caciques have usurped in the shadow of venal justice, will enter into the possession. . . of the people or citizens that have titles, corresponding to those properties from which they have been displaced by the bad faith of our oppressors, maintaining at every peril the mentioned possessions with arms in their hands. . ." ⁶¹ One-third of all monopolized land would be confiscated "in virtue of the fact that the immense majority of the Mexican towns and citizens are not even owners of the ground they walk on, suffering the horrors of misery without being able to better in any way their social condition nor able to dedicate themselves to Industry or Agriculture. . ." ⁶² Those hacendados opposing the Plan of Ayala would lose all of their estates, the remaining two-thirds going for war expenses and pensions for widows and orphans or revolutionary soldiers. ⁶³

Concerning the procedure of confiscation, the laws of nationalization and disamortization of Juárez against the Church would be used. Politically, a junta of the principal chiefs of the Revolution from different states would designate an interim president who would call elections for the organization of federal powers. ⁶⁴ After calling for the resignation of Madero and the defection of his soldiers, the Plan addressed itself to the people:

Mexicans: Consider that the cunning and bad faith of a man is shedding blood in a scandalous manner, through being incapable of governing; consider that his system of government is strangling the country and destroying our institutions with the brute force of bayonets; and even as our arms raised him to Power, we shall turn against him for failing his promises to the Mexican people and for having betrayed the revolution initiated by him. . . We are not personalistas, we are partisans of principles and not of men! ⁶⁵

The Plan was signed by Zapata, seven generals, twenty-seven colonels, and four captains, composing the "Junta Revolucionaria del Estado de Morelos," at Villa de Ayala, November 25, 1911. After the defection of Pascual Orozco to Huerta, Zapata on March 14, 1912, wrote to Emilo Vázquez Gómez, then in San Antonio:

"You already know that my partisans and I proclaim you our future 'President of Mexico,' for we have faith in you, as the man who will know how to fulfill the Plan of San Luis Potosí, reformed in Villa de Ayala and in Tacubaya, so that. . . you will assure the happiness of the Mexican people, and positive national peace will be cemented."⁶⁶

An undated manifesto by Zapata in the summer of 1912 refused to recognize the government of Huerta or that of Felix Díaz, if his splinter revolution should prove successful. Zapata declared, "The provisional government of General Victoriano Huerta has been imposed by force, composed of a nucleus of científicos, neo-conservatives, and proselytes of the Porfirian system." Otherwise, the manifesto reiterated the provisions of the Plan of Ayala and concluded, "A las armas, Mexicanos, a las armas!"⁶⁷

In Mexico City, these pronouncements from the south weakened and ultimately crushed Francisco Madero. The meticulous president carefully filed letters from such men as Miguel Macedoy Arsen, who claimed he was "experienced in the division of lands," for in December 1911 Madero believed he could still carry out the provisions of the Plan of San Luis Potosí.⁶⁸ In his own defense, Madero later wrote to the Spanish Minister sometime in 1911:

The crisis which has pierced the Mexican Republic in these last years has been a necessary crisis; it is one of the motives that even now make it necessary for the people to shed blood, because for a people anxious to win their liberty, no sacrifice is too great.⁶⁹

In the South, however Zapata did not see the necessity for shedding any blood when his agrarian demands could have been met.⁷⁰ On July 19, 1914, he issued the "Acta de Ratificación del Plan de Ayala," which reaffirmed the original plan and stated the purpose of the Revolution as "the economic betterment of the great majority of Mexicans." In a letter of September 4, 1914, Zapata enunciated "three great principles" of agrarian reform—"restitution of lands to the people or citizens; expropriation for public utility, and confiscation of the goods of the enemies of the Plan of Ayala." Most important of all was "the implantation of agrarian principles" in the habits of the people.⁷¹ In a letter of September 3, 1914, Zapata's secretary Manuel Palafox referred to the "Social Revolution" underway and commented, "The Revolution of the South has socialist tendencies, but not anarchical, because our country is not in a condition to implant these theories."⁷²

On April 5, 1914, Zapata confiscated all lands, mountains,

and waters held by enemies of the Revolution.⁷³ But that he did not regard agrarian reform as an end in itself was revealed by his manifesto of April 20, 1917, issued from Tlaltizapan. This document indicated a profound deepening of his social theory, undoubtedly under the guidance of Díaz Soto y Gama:⁷⁴

The Mexicans, united by means of wise and generous politics that give guarantees to the campesino and to the worker the same as to the merchant, the industrialist, and the man of business, [will have the opportunity to] improve their future and to open wider horizons to their intelligence and activities; proportioning work to those who lack it; encouraging the establishment of new industries, of grand centers of production, of powerful manufactures that will emancipate the country from foreign economic domination; calling all to free exploitation of the land and of our natural riches; alleviating the misery of homes and procuring moral and intellectual betterment of the workers, fulfilling highest aspirations; such are the propositions that animate us in this new stage which has brought us, surely, to the realization of noble ideals, sustained without dismay for six years, despite all obstacles and at the cost of the greatest sacrifices.⁷⁵

This was the last will and testament of Emiliano Zapata, his last public pronouncement before being shot down two years later by the soldiers of Jesús Guajardo, acting under orders of General Pablo Gonzales.⁷⁶ Had the years of planning and fighting ended only at the hacienda of San Juan de Chinameca and death? John W. Dulles has written, "Zapatistas, their leader wiped out, ceased to molest the federal government."⁷⁷ This is not true. Five days after the assassination of Zapata, the surviving chiefs issued a manifesto pledging to carry on the fight.⁷⁸ Dr. Vázquez Gómez continued to be recognized as the Supreme Chief of the Revolution until September 4, 1919, when a meeting at Huautla transferred this post to Gildardo Magaña. The Zapatista bands finally broke up late in 1919. The last to lay down their arms were Generals Genovevo de la O and Everardo Gonzales.⁷⁹

Emiliano Zapata died on April 10, 1919. The first land division in Anenecuilco did not take place until November 30, 1922, and even then only seven hundred hectares (about 1,750 acres) of land was apportioned to the villagers.⁸⁰ The ejidal lands of Tepoxtlán were not restored to that town until November 29, 1929.⁸¹ Morelos, cradle of the agrarian revolt, was the last state to receive substantial land division.

What had Zapata accomplished, after all? A Mexican has written that the Plan of Ayala was "mere literature, full of indeterminations, vagaries, and opportunistic topics."⁸² American writers

have condemned Zapata as "that passionate rebel and pure-hearted terrorist"⁸³ and "a strange blend of killed and messiah."⁸⁴ Even George M. McBride felt compelled to straddle this issue: "Zapata, in Morelos, made it [land reform] his one great aim, though many of his half-savage followers seemed bent only upon vandalism."⁸⁵ Yet Oscar Lewis found in Tepoztlan that "most informants attribute to the Carrancistas the greatest brutalities."⁸⁶

In all of the charges and counter-charges which have been lodged against Zapata, perhaps Edgcomb Pinchon as a sympathetic biographer came closest to the truth when he wrote that "Zapata's sane and yet imaginative adaptation of the principles of Indian communism and modern municipal ownership to the social reconstruction of his state remains the single constructive achievement of the Revolution."⁸⁷

This is only just for the man who once wrote, "the Revolution is the only thing that can save the Republic."⁸⁸ José N. Ramirez Gutierrez has concluded that Zapata's movement in Morelos produced few changes in the economic condition of the campesino but did increase his political rights, and that Zapatismo gave the original impetus to legislative reform of the agrarian situation.⁸⁹ Today more than half the land in Mexico formerly held by wealthy hacendados has been returned to the people under Article 27 of the Constitution of 1917.⁹⁰ Those few lines of words constitute the real monument to Emiliano Zapata, not the statues scattered around the countryside, for the guerrilla leader was in harmony with a great national revolution which swirled about him and carried him to fame and death. He of all people, a simple horseman from peasant stock, perceived the essence of the Revolution of 1910 and embodied it forever in his Plan of Ayala.

It is no mystery that, in the words of Carleton Beals, "When the sky grows dark and it thunders, people run to the doors of their thatched cabins to see Zapata galloping across the heavens. His figure is outlined in the clouds; his voice echoes in the winds."⁹¹

1. Alfonso Taracena, *La tragedia Zapatista* (Mexico, D.F., 1931), 89.
2. Interview with Filiberto Zúñiga, 76, at San Juan de Chinameca, Morelos, Mexico, June 27, 1961. Zúñiga was present at the assassination of Zapata and described these events at the site. See also the official report of Zapata's death written by his private secretary, Salvador Reyes Avilés, on the day of his master's death, April 10, 1919, printed in full in Porfirio Palacios, *Emiliano Zapata, Datos biográficos-históricos* (Mexico, D.F., 1960), 282-285. This is the standard account used in most books about Zapata and indicates the falsity of the version by Harry H. Dunn, *The Crimson Jester, Zapata of Mexico* (New York, 1933).
3. Baltasar Dromundo, *Emiliano Zapata, Biografía* (Mexico, D.F., 1934), 256.
4. Betty Kirk, *Covering the Mexican Front, The Battle of Europe versus America* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1942), 118.
5. Interviews in Cuautla and San Juan de Chinameca, June 26-27, 1961. Ricarda Ayonn,

- 75, who rode with Zapata and viewed his corpse in the square of Cuautla on April 11, 1919, insisted that the body was not that of Emiliano Zapata.
6. Oscar Lewis, *Life in a Mexican Village, Tepoztlán Restudied* (Urbana, Illinois, 1951), 46.
 7. Interview with Mateo Zapata, 43, Emiliano's youngest son, in the Casa Municipal, Cuautla, June 27, 1961.
 8. Tomme Clark Call, *The Mexican Venture, From Political to Industrial Revolution in Mexico* (New York, 1953), 203.
 9. Eyer N. Simpson, *The Ejido, Mexico's Way Out* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1937), 51-52.
 10. The classic statement of the alleged misdeeds of Zapata is found in Antonio D. Melgarejo, *Los crímenes del Zapatismo, apuntes de un guerrillero* (Mexico, D.F., 1913?) To a credulous public Melgarejo announced that Zapata skinned the feet of a prisoner and made him dance the *jarabe*; tied a cord around the genitals of one man and dragged him around the room until dead; placed a stick of dynamite in the rectum of a Federal soldier and detonated it; hanged *Rurales* to telegraph posts, and nailed one Andonegui to a cross. *Ibid.*, 102-104 and 130-131. These spurious atrocity stories were carried over into English by Harry H. Dunn, who reported that Zapata's favorite method of torture was staking a man stomach-down over an *agave* cactus starting to bud, leaving the blossom stalk to puncture the victim's body overnight.
 11. Gildardo Magana, *Emiliano Zapata y el agrarismo en Mexico*, I (Mexico, D.F., 1951), 94. The records of the Registro Civil in Anenecuilco and Villa de Ayala were destroyed by the Revolution. Emiliano was next to the youngest of ten children: Pedro, Celsa, Eufemio, Loacto, Romana, María de Jesús, María de la Luz, Jovita, Emiliano, and Matilde.
 12. Jesús Sotelo Inclán, *Raíz y razón de Zapata* (Mexico, D.F., 1943), 169.
 13. Erna Fergusson, *Mexico Revisited* (New York, 1955), 238.
 14. Sotelo Inclán, *Raíz y razón de Zapata*, 171-172.
 15. *Ibid.*, 172-173. Gildardo Magana, *Emiliano Zapata y el agrarismo en Mexico*, I, 95, credits the story that Zapata's outrage against the hacienda system developed from his stable duties in Mexico City, where he observed horses living in marble stalls, while his people in Anenecuilco sickened and died in miserable huts.
 16. Interview with Ricarda Ayonn, 75, in Cuautla, June 26, 1961. Asked why she joined Zapata's troops, Mrs. Ayonn replied, "Porque todos los hombres se iban del pueblo, como no!" Policarpo Castro, 73, interviewed in Anenecuilco, said, "De todos de los hijos, Mateo es el unico que se parece a su padre."
 17. Edgcomb Pinchon, *Zapata the Unconquerable* (New York, 1941), 59.
 18. Manuel Gamio, foreword, George McCutchen McBride, *The Land Systems of Mexico* (New York, 1923), ix.
 19. Edward Alsworth Ross, *The Social Revolution in Mexico* (New York and London, 1923), 82.
 20. Tom Gill, *Land Hunger in Mexico* (Washington, D.C., 1951), 4.
 21. Samuel Guy Inman, *Intervention in Mexico* (New York, 1919), 69.
 22. Pedro Gonzalez-Blanco, *De Porfirio Díaz a Carranza. Conferencias dadas en el Ateneo de Madrid en los meses de marzo y abril de 1916* (Madrid, 1916), 228.
 23. Ross, *The Social Revolution in Mexico*, 83.
 24. McBride, *The Land Systems of Mexico*, 154. In the state of Mexico the percentage was the same, and only in Oaxaca was it lower (.2 of one percent).
 25. A Mexican writer states flatly that the monopoly of land was greatest in the state of Morelos. See Antenor Sala, *Emiliano Zapata y el problema agrario en la republica mexicana. El sistema Sala y el Plan de Ayala. Correspondencia sostenida con el jefe suriano y su secretario Manuel Palafox* (Mexico, D.F., 1919), 5. Above citation, McBride, *The Land Systems of Mexico*, 98. In 1910 only the state of Quintana Roo and the Federal District had fewer ranchos, 24 and 60 respectively. *Ibid.* On the other hand, Ernest Gruening, *Mexico and Its Heritage* (New York and London, 1928), 142-143, n. 3, maintains that "Despite a great deal of subsequent revolutionary propaganda to indicate that the unusually oppressive conditions in Morelos led to its being the 'cradle of agrarian revolt,' . . . in my judgment the outburst in Morelos, based on feudal conditions which to be sure existed there but were little different from those elsewhere in Mexico, was due to the accident of Zapata's personal leadership."
 26. Quoted in William B. Davis, *Experiences and Observations of an American Consular Officer During the Recent Mexican Revolutions* (Chula Vista, California, 1920), 245.
 27. Francisco Bulnes, *The Whole Truth About Mexico, President Wilson's Responsibility* (New York, 1916), 56.
 28. Quoted in Nathaniel and Sylvia Weyl, *The Reconquest of Mexico, The Years of Lázaro Cárdenas* (London, New York, and Toronto, 1939), 31.
 29. McBride, *The Land Systems of Mexico*, 157-158.
 30. Helen Phipps, *Some Aspects of the Agrarian Question in Mexico, A Historical Study* (Austin, Texas, 1925), 132.
 31. Daisy Caden Pettus, ed., *The Rosalie Evans Letters from Mexico* (Indianapolis, 1926), 40.
 32. Edith O'Shaughnessy, *Diplomatic Days* (New York and London, 1917), 101-102.
 33. Kirk, *Covering the Mexican Front*, 107. Gildardo Magana, *Emiliano Zapata y el Agrarismo en Mexico*, II, 308, cites the first distribution of land as that of April 30, 1912, at Ixcamilpa, Puebla.
 34. Palacios, *El Plan de Ayala*, 11.
 35. Sotelo Inclán, *Raíz y razón de Zapata*, 177-187.
 36. *Ibid.*, 189. Because Torres Burgos returned with a commission from Madero as commanding general of the "Army of the South," some writers have unjustly credited him with starting the agrarian revolt in Morelos. Actually, Torres Burgos soon resigned his

- "commission" and was shot, with his two sons, by *Rurales*. See Pinchon, *Zapata the Unconquerable*, "The Little Inkpot Resigns," 126-133.
37. Quoted in Gruening, *Mexico and Its Heritage*, 142, n. 1. The source cited is Memoria de la Secretaria de Gobernación, Document 34; the full text of the Plan also may be found in Mario Mena, *Figures y episodios de la historia de Mexico, Zapata* (Mexico, D.F., 1959), 75-79.
 38. For an account of Zapata's military campaigns, see Pinchon, *Zapata the Unconquerable*, 113-197.
 39. Tannenbaum, *Peace by Revolution*, 120. Later, Zapata had an army of 40,000 men. *Ibid.*, 178.
 40. Eugene Maur Braderman, *A Study of Political Parties in Mexico Since 1890* (Urbana, Illinois, 1938), 7.
 41. Magana, *Emiliano Zapata y el agrarismo en Mexico*, I, 158-161.
 42. Rosa E. King, *Tempted Over Mexico, A Personal Chronicle* (Boston, 1935), 68.
 43. Charles Curtis Cumberland, *Mexican Revolution, Genesis under Madero* (Austin, Texas, 1952), 173-174.
 44. Pinchon, *Zapata the Unconquerable*, 226.
 45. Cumberland, *Mexican Revolution*, 174.
 46. and 47. In retrospect, it seems that Zapata judged Madero too harshly. The latter was weak and ineffective, but he did all he could to maintain peace in Morelos. Madero once said, "I know what they are saying about Zapata in Mexico City, and it is not correct. . . The hacienda owners hate him because he is an obstacle to the continuation of their abuses and a threat to their undeserved privileges." Stanley R. Ross, *Francisco I. Madero, Apostle of Mexican Democracy* (New York, 1955), 195-196.
 48. Edgcomb Pinchon, *Viva Villa! A Recovery of the Real Pancho Villa, Peon. . . Bandit. . . Soldier. . . Patriot* (New York, 1934), 301. Zapata first occupied Mexico City from November 21 to December 1, 1914, and again from March 11 to July 15, 1915. Hudson Strode, *Timeless Mexico* (New York, 1944) gives a delightful description of this interlude: "At the National Palace, just for the fun of it, Villa threw his great bulk into the presidential chair crowned with the winged eagle in gold leaf, and posed for photographers, first in one position and then another, smiling with expansive satisfaction whichever way he sat. In a more humble chair at his left curled the wide-eyed tense Zapata, almost hidden behind his massive hat and looking as ill at ease as a woods animal caught in city traffic." (p. 247)
 49. Stuart Chase, *Mexico, A Study of Two Americas* (New York, 1931), 7.
 50. Chase, *Mexico, A Study of Two Americas*, 7.
 51. Tannenbaum, *Peace by Revolution*, 179.
 52. Interview with Policarpo Castro, Anenecuilco, June 26, 1961.
 53. Palacios, *El Plan de Ayala*, 44.
 54. *Ibid.*, 54.
 55. Palacios, *El Plan de Ayala*, 14.
 56. *Ibid.*, 17-18.
 57. *Plan de Ayala* (Imprenta Comercial, Puebla, 1913), 6.
 58. *Ibid.*, 7.
 59. *Ibid.*, 8-10.
 60. *Plan de Ayala*, 11-12. Orozco fled to the United States on September 14, 1912, foregoing his claim as "Chief of the Revolution." After the Huerta *cuartelazo* in February 1913, Orozco returned to Mexico. Zapata declared him a traitor by decree of June 14, 1912, and promised he would shoot Orozco in the back the day he fell into his power.
 61. *Plan de Ayala*, 12-13.
 62. *Ibid.*, 13.
 63. *Ibid.*, 14.
 64. *Plan de Ayala*, 15.
 65. *Ibid.*, 16-17.
 66. Zapata to Emilio Vázquez Gómez, March 14, 1912, from Jilquero, National Archives, Mexico City.
 67. *Manifiesto del General Emiliano Zapata*, National Archives, Mexico City.
 68. Miguel Macedoy Arsen to Francisco Madero, December 11, 1911. Madero Correspondence, National Archives, Mexico City.
 69. Francisco Madero to Lorenzo Cortez Huerta, undated. Madero Correspondence, National Archives, Mexico City.
 70. Even Francisco Bulnes conceded this, writing in 1916, "The state of Morelos is one of the few states in the Republic in which the distribution of land might be undertaken at once with great possibilities of a successful issue." *The Whole Truth About Mexico*, 176-177.
 71. Antenor Sala, *Emiliano Zapata y el problema agrario en la Republica Mexicana*, 24. In the "Act de Ratificación del Plan de Ayala," Zapata had substituted himself for Pascual Orozco since the latter had gone over to Huerta, and he declared the Revolution would not end until the agrarian reforms of the Plan of Ayala had been carried out, and all Huertistas and members of the old regime had been purged. *Acta de Ratificación del Plan de Ayala*, July 19, 1914, San Pablo Oxtotepec. National Archives, Mexico City.
 72. Antenor Sala, *Emiliano Zapata*, 66.
 73. *Ibid.*, 63.
 74. Frank Tannenbaum, *Peace by Revolution*, 155, has referred to Soto y Gama as "the greatest orator of the Revolution" who "wrote the intellectual programs of Zapata, and is supposed to have taught him how to read by the light of the campfire. . . He was for many years the most eloquent voice of the Mexican *agraristas* (155-156). . . with a capacity for sarcasm and emotional concentration that has rarely been equaled, and

- perhaps never surpassed, in Mexico." (159) at the Aguascalientes Convention in October 1914, Díaz y Soto proclaimed Zapata as the heir of Karl Marx, Francis of Assisi, and Jesus Christ. Parkes, *A History of Mexico*, 349.
75. Palacios, *El Plan de Ayala*, 3-4.
 76. Guajardo collected his 50,000-peso reward but met death a few months later while pursuing the fleeing Carranza. General Gonzalez spent twenty years in exile in Canada before returning to Mexico under the General Amnesty Law passed during the administration of Lázaro Cárdenas. Kirk, *Covering the Mexican Front*, 235.
 77. John W. Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico, A Chronicle of the Revolution 1919-1936* (Austin, Texas, 1961), 78.
 78. Taracena, *La tragedia Zapatista*, 92. Signers were Francisco Mendoza, Genovevo de la O, Everardo Gonzalez, Jesús Capistran, Pedro Saavedra, Fortino Ayaquica, Valentín N. Reyes, Adrian Castrejon, Gildardo Magaña, Rafael Cal y Mayor, Angel Barrios, Francisco Alarcon, and Díaz Soto y Gama. Significantly, the name of Eufemio Zapata is not included. Three informants in Cuautla told me that Eufemio had betrayed his brother to Guajardo and was later lynched.
 79. Taracena, *La tragedia Zapatista*, 92.
 80. Sotelo Inclán, *Raíz y razón de Zapata*, 190.
 81. Lewis, *Life in a Mexican Village*, 41.
 82. Gonzalez-Blanco, *De Porfirio Díaz a Carranza*, 242.
 83. Pinchon, *Viva Villa!*, 173.
 84. Frank L. Kluckhohn, *The Mexican Challenge* (New York, 1939), 170.
 85. McBride, *The Land Systems of Mexico*, 159.
 86. Lewis, *Life in a Mexican Village, Tepoztlán Restudied*, 232.
 87. Pinchon, *Viva Villa!*, 302.
 88. Zapata's manifesto of October 20, 1913, quoted in Sotelo Inclán, *Raíz y razón de Zapata*, 76.
 89. Jose N. Ramirez Gutierrez, *Zapata y la reforma agraria en Mexico* (Mexico, D.F., 1951), 65.
 90. Full text of Article 27 is given in Frank Tannenbaum, *The Mexican Agrarian Revolution* (New York, 1929), 518-527.
 91. Carleton Beals, *Mexican Maze*, (Philadelphia and London, 1931), 23.