

pass, however, the old system returns, responses are slower and more tempered, and we are no longer disposed to resolve the transcendental issues that brought about the revolution in the first place.

This is why we have not resolved our agrarian problem, the principal dilemma of our country and one which deserves more of our attention. If the solution does not come from here, the Chamber of Deputies, the wound will be reopened.

Notes

1. During the Conquest era, as disease decimated the indigenous population, survivors would be relocated into newly founded villages called "reductions." See the selection in Part III by Zorita. *Ed.*
2. In the liberal lexicon of the nineteenth century, non-entrepreneurial institutions such as the indigenous villages or the church were referred to as "dead hands." See the selection by Luis González in the previous section. *Ed.*

Zapatistas in the Palace

Martín Luis Guzmán

The government of Francisco I. Madero was overthrown in February 1913, and soon thereafter both Madero and his vice-president, José María Pino Suárez, were killed. The regime which took over, headed by federalist General Victoriano Huerta, was authoritarian and reactionary, and had very little popular support.

Factions arose in various parts of the country to oppose the Huerta dictatorship; the most important was led by the governor of Coahuila, Venustiano Carranza, who was tenuously recognized by the insurgent armies as "First Chief." The revolution quickly entered a tremendously violent phase, one which did not end with Huerta's ouster in July 1914.

In October 1914 the several revolutionary factions met in the city of Aguascalientes to participate in the Sovereign Revolutionary Convention, whose goal was to establish a new government for all of Mexico. Sharp disagreements and clashes among leaders quickly led to a violent rupture between Conventionists (the populist forces of Zapata and Pancho Villa) on one side, and Constitutionists (led by the patrician Carranza) on the other. The president of the Conventionist faction was Eulalio Gutiérrez, though the real power was held by Pancho Villa in the North and Emiliano Zapata in the South. The two movements were remarkably different in character, and their prospects for a successful alliance were remote. Still, they were able to occupy Mexico City briefly from late November 1914 until late January 1915. The following excerpt presents a scene from that occupation.

*Martín Luis Guzmán (1887–1976) was the son of a federal army colonel from the northern state of Chihuahua. Eschewing his father's profession, he became one of Mexico's greatest literary figures. When the revolution broke out in 1910, the young Guzmán had just begun a career as a journalist. During the fight against Huerta he served as emissary from Venustiano Carranza to Pancho Villa, an experience that provided the material for his most famous books, *The Eagle and the Serpent* (1928) and *Memoirs of Pancho Villa* (1951), both works of fiction based on Guzmán's first-hand observations. In the vignette that follows, he provides a vivid portrait of the Zapatista leadership and their ambivalence toward political power. At the same time,*



Provisional President Eulalio Gutiérrez (*left*) and General Eufemio Zapata (*right*) after taking possession of the National Palace, December 4, 1914. (Reprinted by permission of Fototeca del INAH, Mexico.)

he graphically evokes the yawning cultural chasm that separated Mexico's humble peasant revolutionaries from urbane, middle-class intellectuals like himself.

Eulalio Gutiérrez wanted to visit the National Palace before he installed his government there. So that same afternoon he, José Isabel Robles [a Villista general appointed minister of war by Gutiérrez], and I presented ourselves there. Eufemio Zapata [the elder brother of rebel leader Emiliano Zapata], who was in charge of the building, came out to the main entrance to receive us and began to do the honors of the house. To judge by his air, he was taking his momentary role of receiving the new President in his government abode and showing him the splendors of his future drawing rooms and offices very seriously. As we got out of the automobile, he shook hands with each of us and spoke like a rough but affable host.

While the greetings were being exchanged, I looked around me. The car had stopped just past one of the arcades of the large patio. In the background the two lines formed by the white masonry of the arches and the shadow of the openings met at an angle. A short way off, a group of the Zapata soldiery stood observing us from the sentry chamber; others peered from between the columns of the massive white arches. What was the attitude of these men? Meek or suspicious? At the time, they aroused in me curiosity more than anything else, because of the setting of which they formed a part. That place,

which I had seen so many times and which always seemed the same, gave me on that occasion, practically empty as it was, and in the hands of a band of half-naked rebels, the effect of something new and strange.

We did not go up the main stairway, but used the staircase of honor. Eufemio walked ahead of us, like a janitor showing a house for rent. He was wearing the tight trousers with a broad fold down the two outside seams, a cotton blouse tied at the belly, and a huge broad-brimmed hat; as he mounted step after step, he seemed to symbolize the historic days in which we were living, in the contrast of his person, not meek, but uncouth and clumsy, with the cultivation and refinement presaged by the staircase. A flunky, a coachman, an official, an ambassador would have been in place there; each would have had the dignity, small or great, that went with his position, and that had its place in the hierarchy of dignities. Eufemio looked like a stableboy who was trying to act like a president. When his shoe touched the carpet, there was a clash between carpet and shoe. When his hand rested on the banister, there was an immediate incompatibility between the two. Every time he moved his foot, his foot seemed surprised at not getting tangled up in brush and undergrowth. Every time he stretched out his hand, it seemed to feel in vain for a tree trunk or boulder. One only had to look at him to see that everything that should have formed his setting was lacking, and that everything that surrounded him was superfluous as far as he was concerned.

But at this moment a terrible doubt assailed me. What about us? What kind of impression would the three of us who followed Eufemio have made on anybody who saw us? Eulalio and Robles in their stetson hats, unshaven and with their unmistakable plebeian aspect, and I with that everlasting air of the civilian in Mexico who at the hour of violence goes into politics, a mere instrument assuming the attitude of intellectual adviser to a successful military leader, at best—at worst, of criminals passing themselves off as leaders?

After we had ascended the stairs, Eufemio took great pride in showing us one by one the different rooms of the palace. Our steps alternately were echoed on the waxed floors, so polished that we could see ourselves dimly reflected in them, broken by the different colors of the marquetry, or were hushed by the velvet of the carpets. Behind us we could hear the soft slapping of the sandals of the two soldiers who followed us at a short distance through the empty rooms. It was a meek, gentle sound. Sometimes it ceased for a long time while the two soldiers stopped to look at a picture or examine a piece of furniture. Then I would turn back to look at them through the long perspective of the rooms. They formed a double figure, strangely quiet and remote, as they stood close to each other, looking at things in silence, their heads with their lank heavy hair uncovered, and their palm-leaf hats humbly

clasped in both hands. Something sincere and worthy of respect was unquestionably represented by their rapt, embarrassed, almost religious humility. But we, what did we represent? Was there anything fundamentally sincere and serious in us, who were making joking comments on everything we saw, and had not bothered to take off our hats?

Eufemio made some remark about everything we passed, and his observations were often primitive and ingenuous. They revealed a cheerful, childlike conception of the gubernatorial functions. "This is where the government meets to talk." "This is where the government eats." "This is where the government has its dances." It was evident that he supposed we had never seen a tapestry nor had the slightest idea of the uses of a sofa or an armchair or a corner table, and he went along illuminating us. He said everything in such good faith that it positively touched me. When we reached the presidential chair, his tone became triumphant, almost ecstatic. "This is the chair." And then in a burst of enviable candor he added: "Ever since I've been here, I come every day to look at it, just to get used to it. Because—can you imagine in it?—I always used to think when I heard them talk about the President's seat that they meant his saddle." Eufemio laughed heartily at his own ignorance and we laughed too.

For some time Eulalio had been aching to take a dig at General Zapata, and he saw his opportunity. Turning toward Eufemio and putting a hand on his shoulder, he fired this arrow in his gentle, modulated voice:

"Not for nothing is one a good horseman, partner. The day this seat becomes a saddle, you and your friends can all be presidents."

The smile disappeared from Eufemio's face as if by magic, and a gloomy, sinister look replaced it. Eulalio's witticism had been too cruel and perhaps too apt, and it had flicked him on the raw.

"Well," he said a few seconds later, as though there were nothing more worth seeing, "let's go downstairs now and see the stables. Then I'll take you to the rooms where my men and I are quartered."

We went over the stables from one end to the other, though with greater satisfaction on Eufemio's part than on ours. Amidst the array of collars, bridles, bits and halters—all smelling of grease and leather—he displayed an amazing store of knowledge. And the same with the horses; he knew all about breeding them, training them and showing them. His enthusiasm for these things took his mind off the incident of the chair, and then he led us to the quarters he and his men occupied in the palace. Eufemio—and in this he gave evidence of his sincerity—had found rooms to his taste in the poorest, most out-of-the-way rear court. He seemed well aware of how miserable his ac-

commodations were, and to forestall criticism, he quickly explained why he had chosen them.

"I picked this place because I've always been poor and I didn't feel right in better rooms."

Really the place was abominable. I thought I should smother as I went in. The room was not large and had only one door and no windows. There must have been from fifty to a hundred officers from Zapata's army there, of all ranks, when we came in. The majority were standing up, side by side, or in groups with their arms around each other. Others were sitting on the table, and some were lying on the floor in the corners and along the wall. Many of them had a bottle or a glass in their hand. The air was foul and sour and a hundred odors were mingled with the heavy pall of smoke. Everybody was drunk, some more, some less. A soldier stood by the door to keep it shut against the light or against inquisitive eyes. Two small electric lights glimmered feebly through the asphyxiating fog.

At first nobody paid any attention to us. Then as Eufemio went from group to group, whispering something in a low voice, they began to look at us without suspicion and even make certain signs of welcome. But they were faint, almost imperceptible expressions. We had, beyond question, fallen into a world so different from our own that our mere presence was a source of perturbation in spite of everything they and we did to overcome this. With the exception of a few, they avoided looking straight at us and watched us instead out of the corner of their eyes. Instead of talking with us they whispered among themselves. And every now and then they would turn their backs to take a long swallow from their bottles or empty their glasses.

Eufemio and those around him invited us to have a drink.

"Here, let's have some glasses," shouted Eufemio. Timid hands reached out to set five or six dirty glasses on the edge of the table. Eufemio set them in a row and poured out fresh drinks of tequila on the dregs at the bottom of the glasses.

We drank in silence. Eufemio poured out more tequila. We drank again. Once more Eufemio filled up the glasses. . . .

As we drank, Eufemio began to warm up. At first he became happy, jovial, and then thoughtful and gloomy. At about the fifth or sixth glass he happened to remember Eulalio's joke about the presidential chair.

"This comrade," he said, addressing his men, "thinks that Emiliano and I, and others like us, will be presidents the day they saddle horses with seats like the one upstairs."

There was a profound silence, broken only by Eulalio's sarcastic laugh.

Then the rustle of voices began again, but there was a vague, new note in it, excited and menacing. Nevertheless Eufemio went on serving tequila as though nothing had happened. Once more the glasses were handed round and we drank upon each other's sticky leavings. But at this point Robles began to look at me hard and then, almost imperceptibly, make signs to me with his eyes. I understood; draining my glass, I took leave of Eufemio.

An hour later I was back at the palace, and Robles's entire guard was with me; but just as we came up to the entrance, I saw Eulalio and Robles calmly walking out the same door through which we had entered in the early afternoon.

"Thanks," said Eulalio when he saw me. "Fortunately we don't need the soldiers now. They were so busy drinking that they could not waste time fighting with us. But, anyway, the precaution was thoughtful. What amazes me is how you and Robles understood one another without saying a word."

Mexico Has Been Turned into a Hell

William O. Jenkins

One of the first major battles of the ugly, factionalized war that broke out after the convention of 1914 was fought in the city of Puebla, some sixty miles southeast of Mexico City. The city was taken easily by the Zapatista forces in December 1914 when the Constitutionalists abandoned it. The Constitutionalists, intent on retaking the city, invaded in force in early January 1915. U.S. Consul William O. Jenkins here paints a vivid picture of the ferocity which would characterize this phase of the revolution, known to historians as the "war of the factions." His jaundiced view of Mexicans in general, and of revolutionaries in particular, were typical of many foreign observers, who were quick to find the remedy for Mexico's woes in foreign intervention and who appeared to believe that Mexicans would welcome such a violation of their sovereignty.

William O. Jenkins (1878-1963) was a prominent and controversial figure in Mexico's twentieth-century history. A native of Shelbyville, Tennessee, in 1901 he moved to Mexico where he soon proved himself a shrewd—and reportedly ruthless—businessman. He built up a string of textile and stocking factories in various parts of the country and was named U.S. Consul for the Puebla region. While he was clearly unhinged by the events he describes below, Jenkins did not abandon his interests in Mexico, but rather found ways to profit from the chaos and violence of the revolution, largely by loaning money to desperate landowners and later foreclosing on them. By the end of the war, he had become the dominant figure in the Mexican sugar industry. His close ties to influential political figures—notably, the notorious General Maximino Avila Camacho, the political boss of Puebla during the 1930s—helped him to acquire many other interests, ranging from popsicle-making to a nearly complete monopoly on Mexico's movie theaters. In 1960, Time magazine declared him to be the richest man in Mexico. Perhaps Jenkins's greatest notoriety came in 1919, when he was kidnapped and held for ransom by Mexican rebels. When the kidnappers released him, he was immediately arrested by the government and charged (probably falsely) with engineering his own kidnapping. The episode caused a brief flare-up in tensions between Mexico and the United States. Jenkins is mostly remembered in Mexico today for his vast fortune and for the Mary Street Jenkins Foundation, founded in the 1950s

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