

The Mexican Revolution

TOWARD A GLOBAL COMMUNITY (1900 – PRESENT)

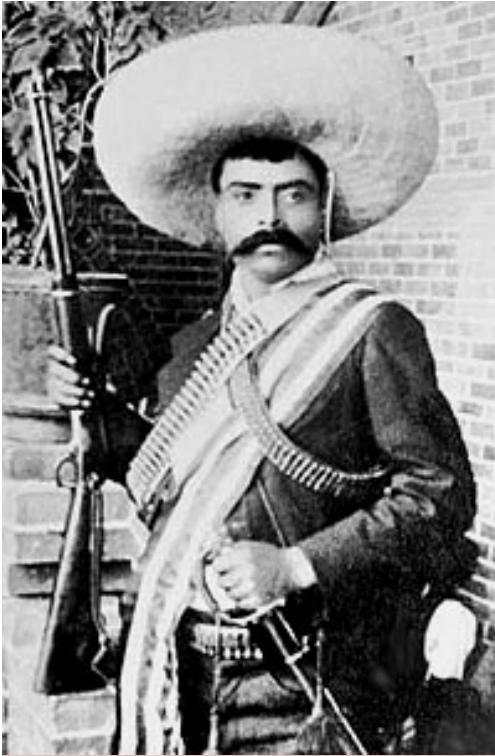


- Unlike much of Africa & India that had to wait until after WWII for independence, most of Latin America became independent in the early 1800s.
- However, the region had great difficulty in maintaining order:
 - Democracy was often replaced with military dictatorships.
 - Regionalism and nationalism sparked conflict amongst states.
 - The political, social, & cultural role of the Catholic Church complicated matters.
 - Lack of industrialization made them prey to industrial powers.
 - Societies were split between wealthy landowners and peasants.
- Many of these problems continued into the 1900s in Mexico as well as Argentina & Brazil.

- Despite General Porfirio Diaz's motto "Liberty, Order, and Progress," Mexico was anything but that in the late 1800s early 1900s.
 - 1% of the population owned 85% of the land.
 - Foreign companies dominated railroads, mines, & plantations.
 - Bribes and threats were used to maintain order.
- Diaz also tried to replace traditional Mexican food and fashion with European styles in the name of *progress*.
- Only a handful of Mexicans ever benefited from the Diaz rule. Without the ability to voice an opposition a revolution was bound to take place.

- To the small educated middle class foreigners had too much influence over Mexico. In 1911 uprisings and a revolution began where Mexican leaders one after another were replaced by someone else with different revolutionary goals.
 - Porfirio Diaz, ousted in 1911
 - Francisco Madero, ousted in 1913
 - General Victoriano Huerta, ousted in 1914
- The Constitutionalist led by Venustiano Carranza came into power in 1914, but by then the country was being ripped apart.





- The Mexican Revolution transformed into a civil war when Emiliano **Zapata** and Francisco "**Pancho**" **Villa** began attacking haciendas & criticizing the government.
- Both men sympathized with Mexican peasants and attempted to seize land from the wealthy in order to have it redistributed to Indians & the poor.

- Zapata and Villa each had large followings in rural areas, but the government had better weapons and controlled the cities; it was only a matter of time before they were defeated.
- Before Pancho Villa and Zapata were killed, the Constitutionalists decided to adopt their agrarian reform ideas.



- **The 1917 Constitution** promised many changes for the country:
 - A new constitution in 1917 promised universal suffrage
 - free education for the poor, which would no longer administered by the Catholic Church, but now by the state (i.e. government)
 - laws designed to protect laborers
 - restrictions on foreign ownership
- The constitution of 1917 signaled a change in Mexico one toward equality for Indians, whites, mestizos, and peasants.
- Therefore in the early 1920s the desire for more revolution was subdued. *Some consider the election of Alvaro Obregon in 1920 as the end of the revolution. Why?*
 - People were tired of decades of violence
 - Disfranchised Mexicans finally felt represented

- However, the implementation of the 1917 Constitution was slow. As a result, the revolution once again gained steam. This time a single political party, the Mexican Revolutionary Party (PRM) would come to dominate and monopolize power in Mexico. *This party is most often referred to as PRI.*
- Under the presidency of PRM's Lazaro Cardenas in the 1930s *real change* finally came:
 - The foreign oil industry was seized and nationalized
 - 44 million acres of land were redistributed
 - Railroads and schools were nationalized
 - Generals were removed from government positions

The legacy of the Mexican Revolution (1911-1920 – 1940?)

- By the time of WWII no longer did a handful of wealthy people or foreigners control the resources of the country.
- Social, political, economic reform gave Mexicans of various backgrounds representation and a more just country.
- On the other hand, a single political party would control the government for the next 80 years and the nation remained a place of mostly poor farmers with little industrialization.
- A sense of nationalism and pride came to Mexico.