



## The Mexican Revolution

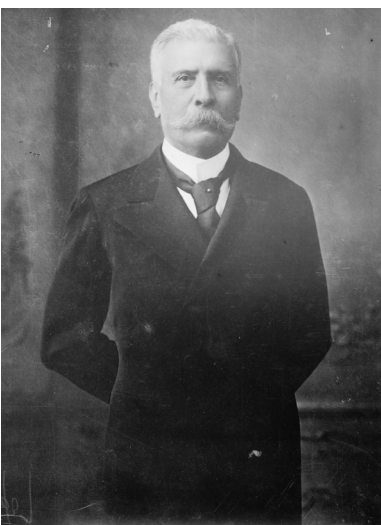
A student once told a history professor that “history is a nightmare from which I can never wake up.” If there is ever a section or time period of history that fits this description, it is the Mexican Revolution. Indeed, during the discombobulating years from 1911 through 1940 assassination of political leaders and coup d’états were commonplace in Mexico. This brief essay acts as an overview of the Mexican Revolution, hopefully thus avoiding a headache that might come if you further research the topic.

When Porfirio Díaz (his administration was known as the Porfiriato) was ousted from power in 1911, so began the Revolution. What did Díaz do that made him lose power in the first place? Well, lots of things. First, he suffered from chronic dishonesty. He was elected president in 1876 and soon afterwards created a no re-election policy. Nevertheless, after a new president from 1880-1884, Díaz would remain Mexico’s dictator for the next two and a half decades. Second, Díaz restructured the government so that instead of democratic elections, he himself appointed all district and municipal officials. As a result of this, the government was filled with his friends and family members. Third, he treated foreigners better than Mexican citizens. While he allowed multinational corporations to come in and exploit Mexico’s natural resources, he never improved the abysmal working conditions for Mexicans. Therefore, it was natural that when a world recession occurred in 1907 that caused millions of Mexicans to become unemployed, the Porfiriato was the easy scapegoat. Finally, in an interview to an American journalist in 1910, the 80 year old Díaz claimed he would not

seek re-election. In the end, he did seek re-election.

A northerner, Francisco Madero was disgusted with Porfirio Díaz. He wrote a book criticizing Díaz and then decided to run against him in. When Díaz realized that Madero would beat him in the elections, he had Madero arrested and thrown in jail. When Madero got out of jail, he organized a revolutionary movement in the northern states of Chihuahua and Durango. Pancho Villa—a Robin Hood meets Jesse James type—allied his army with Madero. In southern Mexico, a chronic drunk by the name of Emiliano Zapata organized forces against the Porfiriato as well. These combined revolutionary forces overwhelmed the Porfiriato. Consequently, the treaty of Juarez in 1911 officially ended the reign of Porfirio Díaz. An interim president was named, and when elections took place a couple of months later, Madero became the president of Mexico.

This is where the Mexican Revolution really becomes a headache. Madero did not hit the ground running into his presidency. The people wanted immediate change and Madero did not give it to them. This resulted in Madero being ousted from office by General Victoriano Huerta, a general whom Madero had appointed! Huerta had Madero assassinated by firing squad days later. Villa, Zapata, as well as other regional revolutionary forces including the army of Venustiano Carranza did not approve of this new president. Guess what happened? Huerta was ousted from power in 1914. It turns out the Woodrow Wilson did not like Huerta either; when Huerta was fleeing to America, he was arrested in El Paso



When ruthless President Porfirio Díaz (shown above) was ousted from office, so began the Mexican Revolution  
*Wikipedia Photo*

and spent the remainder of his life in jail.

After Huerta's ousting and another interim president, Carranza became president. However, Villa in the north and Zapata in the south decided that they did not like Carranza either. Carranza was ousted in 1915 but managed his way back in 1917. It was during this year that Carranza developed the Constitution of 1917. The Constitution called for a legislative, judicial, and executive branch of government each with equal power. Also, the constitution improved worker rights and conditions. Finally, it called for democratic elections. Although Carranza was the "father" of the Mexican constitution, he was assassinated the year he wrote it. Speaking of assassination, Zapata was murdered by his general and personal

secretary in 1919, and Villa was murdered while relaxing in retirement in 1923.

Although historians continue to debate over when the Mexican Revolution officially ended. Recently, many scholars have claimed that it did not terminate until 1940. This is due to the fact that throughout the 1920s and 30s there were revolutionary movements, unfair elections, and various civil wars in Mexico. All of this began to change when in 1934 Lazaro Cardenas was elected by the people—he hadn't fixed the elections like his predecessors. In 1940, after six years in office as president, Cardenas was voted out. What put Cardenas a head and shoulder above his predecessors is that he voluntarily relinquished office, that is, he was elected and removed from office democratically.



Mexican Revolution urban battle scene  
*Wikipedia Photo*