



The Planters Progress

"... let them farm in a flowerpot ..."

ESCADÓN THOUGHT HE GOVERNED MORELOS WELL, but in the two years he held office, he snapped the few remaining threads of civic forbearance. Already by mid-1910 the result of his unjust and inept policies was clear: bitterness had not run so deep in Morelos since the War of Intervention, more than forty years before. He had practically wrecked the state's political system, and in one district had even provoked an agrarian uprising. When Escandón fled in terror in March 1911, the particular crisis he escaped was months old and largely of his own making.

And largely he made it as he ended it—with escapes, from Morelos and politics. After less than two weeks in office he asked the state legislature for permission to go to Mexico City "for affairs of public interest."¹ On April 23 he asked for a ten-day permit, on May 24 for three days, on June 3 for eight, on June 26 for ten, and so on through the rest of the year.² As for 1910, he spent fully half of it out of state, on three two-month permits.³

¹ *Semanario Oficial*, XVIII, 17, 1.

² *Ibid.*, XVIII, 20, 1; 24, 1; 26, 1; 29, 1; 33, 1; 38, 4; 41, 2; 42, 1.

³ *Ibid.*, XIX, 14, 1; 29, 1; 38, 2.

Politically these absences were ruinous. Without even a timid and indulgent supervisor like Escandón, district jefes did exactly as they pleased—which resulted in anarchy and petty despotisms. In Cuautla district, where special conciliatory care should have been taken, Dabbadie seemed intent on revenge. The main bridge in Cuautla caved in, and junk littered the city's streets and main square and park, all because Dabbadie refused to provide the regular public services.⁴ He also permitted the sale of pulque and rum on market days, in direct violation of Escandón's orders; and drunk as well as exasperated, the local peons and common people of the town began rioting.⁵ What aroused most indignation was that Dabbadie collected contributions to receive Governor Escandón on an official visit, and then never rendered any accounting of expenses. People in the district were certain he had embezzled their donations.⁶

In Cuernavaca, Cuautla, and Jojutla districts, the jefes continued to persecute former Leyvistas. The central Leyvista club in Cuernavaca had filed a complaint with the state legislature, petitioning that the recent elections be nullified. The deputies' reaction was not only to refuse the complaint out of hand but also to assert that the Leyvistas had lodged it only to resist the law that declared Escandón elected. Thus, they argued, the complaint amounted to a breach of the public order, and all who signed it should be arrested for sedition.⁷ When this tactic failed, other pretexts served as well. In April the Cuernavaca jefe político had the state's first Leyvista, Antonio Sedano, arrested "for not having washed down the street" in front of his store.⁸ Meanwhile, two months after the election, Dabbadie still held Pablo Torres Burgos and Octaviano Gutiérrez, Leyvista leaders from Villa de Ayala, in jail without charge.⁹ In June Sedano still sat in the Cuernavaca jail awaiting trial for his misdemeanor. In June also the two Leyvista leaders in Tepoztlán, Bernabé and Ezequiel Labastida, having disappeared soon after election day, were yet to be heard from. Their families presumed they had been conscripted into the federal army—although both were overage—because they had last been seen in a Mexico City military prison.¹ Bernabé Labastida was in fact to spend two years in

⁴ *México Nuevo*, May 15, 1909.

⁵ *Ibid.*, April 16 and May 1, 1909. *Diario del Hogar*, October 6, 1909.

⁶ *México Nuevo*, May 15, 1909.

⁷ *Ibid.*, April 7, 1909.

⁸ *Ibid.*, June 23, 1909. Sedano: *op. cit.*, pp. 20-1.

⁹ *Diario del Hogar*, April 17, 1909.

¹ *México Nuevo*, June 11 and 14, 1909.

a Quintana Roo labor camp, which he survived only by a miracle.² Noting these reprisals, village leaders who had already escaped, like Santa María's Genovevo de la O, remained in hiding.³

The retirement of the experienced Lieutenant Governor Flores in June 1909 and his death in February 1910 aggravated the state's corruption.⁴ District bosses fastened their grip more firmly on their victims and indulged themselves more extravagantly at the public's expense.⁵ By February 1910 four large businesses had to close down in Cuernavaca because of harassment from local officials.⁶

Even when Escandón stayed at home to govern, his vagueness and hesitation cost him respect. Impositions that before had at least been managed with dexterity and rigor were now openly botched. In mid-December 1909 the state inspector of prefectures arrived in Yautepec to fix the municipal elections there for the governor's favorites. The inspector muffed the job, and a slate of unacceptable candidates was elected. Escandón then sent the state police chief to nullify the elections. But the police chief could find no clear evidence and tried to force the councilors-elect to resign. As they had not yet formally taken office, he agreed to have them sworn in if they turned over their resignations immediately afterward. Some did resign; but others, once they were in office, refused. It was a rich scandal, and produced a full harvest of ill will against Escandón and his agents.⁷

Luck and common sense deserted the new governor completely when he organized his bureaucracy. He started by firing many officials appointed by Alarcón and replacing them with officials from out of state. These imported bureaucrats knew nothing about the persons their very personal business had to do with, and their ignorance compounded trouble when it developed.⁸ And Escandón's appointments often involved him with men worse than ignorant. He made a serious mistake in appointing as tax commissioner Felipe Robleda, a notorious extortionist from Jalisco whose operations soon enraged taxpayers great and small.⁹ The rich complained most loudly, but the changes in personnel in the tax office—and elsewhere

² Oscar Lewis: *Life in a Mexican Village: Tepoztlán Restudied* (Urbana, 1963), p. 231.

³ De la O in *Impacto*, December 31, 1949.

⁴ *Semanario Oficial*, XVIII, 25, 1; XIX, 7, 1.

⁵ *El Sufragio Libre*, December 15, 1909, and March 30 and May 25, 1910.

⁶ *Ibid.*, February 9, 1910.

⁷ *Ibid.*, December 29, 1909.

⁸ Diez: *Bibliografía*, pp. clxxxiv-v.

⁹ *Semanario Oficial*, XVIII, 19, 2. *Diario del Hogar*, July 16, 1909.

—ultimately mattered little to them: after initial squabbles, nice understandings took shape: for those who could afford them, favors were still for sale. The people to whom the changes mattered greatly, however, were those without much money or many connections. The old bureaucrats had grown familiar with local problems, and although the balance of power was unfair, routines had evolved that still offered common people a vague promise of recourse. But now the familiarity and the routine and the hope disappeared. The rich could eventually buy peace from Felipe Robleda, but ordinary citizens had to suffer.

In appointing *jefes políticos*, Escandón bungled as badly. Only three weeks after being sworn in, he removed the Alarcón-appointed prefect of Cuernavaca and installed Higinio Aguilar, a brigadier general on active duty in the federal army.¹ It was clear that the recent campaign had slackened respect for official order and that the state government needed to reestablish the fear of authority. Also, since Escandón did not plan to spend much time in Morelos, he wanted someone masterful to run the capital district and act as a kind of auxiliary lieutenant governor.² But Aguilar was hardly the right choice. He felt no attachment to the people he ruled and let a sadistic police chief run loose in Cuernavaca and antagonize the whole city.³ In two and a half months Aguilar himself was suspended for defrauding the feeble-minded heir to a Cuernavaca fortune.⁴ Escandón finally replaced him with a reliable former municipal president and prefect of Cuernavaca currently serving in the state legislature.

Two other prefectural appointments that backfired, though in a different way, were those of José Vivanco and Eduardo Flores in Cuautla. The veteran chief there, Dabbadie, had made himself extremely unpopular during and after the election. But if Escandón wanted to replace him, he should have picked an official already experienced and locally respected. Instead he named Vivanco and then—after Vivanco left in November 1910—Flores.⁵ Neither had ever served as prefect or prefecture secretary anywhere in Morelos, and evidently they knew nothing of the work. Cuautla district was the most troublesome in the state, and in the summer

¹ *Semanario Oficial*, XVIII, 17, 1.

² There were even rumors that Escandón was going to name Aguilar lieutenant governor formally and then request a license to leave the state, in effect resigning and having Aguilar succeed him. *México Nuevo*, April 9, 1909.

³ *Ibid.*, June 23, 1909.

⁴ *Semanario Oficial*, XVIII, 30, 1. *México Nuevo*, August 7, 1909.

⁵ *Semanario Oficial*, XIX, 49, 3-4.

of 1910 rebel leaders began setting up their own order in its southern reaches, in Ayala municipality. Vivanco and later Flores acquiesced completely, and state authority disappeared in the area.⁶

Escandón's worst mistake was his replacement for Lieutenant Governor Luis Flores. When Flores resigned, Escandón should have made an extra effort to find a substitute at least acquainted with, if not versed in, the major problems of Morelos politics. The month Flores resigned, June, was a difficult time for Escandón—he had been in office just three months, he was enacting an unpopular bill to revalue real estate, the Aguilar scandal was just breaking—and he needed all the local powers he could mobilize. But though suitable native administrators were available at least temporarily, he called in Antonio Hurtado de Mendoza, an out-of-state judge with no effective connections or heft in Morelos.⁷

Harmful as they were, all these blunders remained venial: negligence, misinformation, or stupidity might explain them. But when Escandón moved from the organization of government to the practice of ruling, he carried out a policy that was too systematic and clear to be a mistake—the direct service of the planters' economic and political interests. Disputes between plantations and villages were no longer settled obscurely, as Alarcón had often managed. On the contrary, through executive decrees, new legislation, and reforms of the state constitution, Escandón turned openly against Morelos's villagers.

Escandón's actions were in part only another episode in the oppression traditional in those districts of Mexico. Since the sixteenth century, sugar plantations had dominated life there; in 1910 it was an old story that they crowded villages and independent farms, that hacienda lawyers finagled lands, timber, and water from weaker but rightful users, that hacienda foremen beat and cheated field hands. Still prevailing as the excuse was the lordly racism of viceregal times. For the young Joaquín García Pimentel, whose ancient and illustrious family owned the largest plantations in the state, it seemed that "the Indian . . . has many defects as a laborer, being as he is, lazy, sottish, and thieving."⁸ His pious and learned older brother, Luis, who managed the family's vast estates, felt the same way.

⁶ Sotelo Inclán: op. cit., pp. 184-8.

⁷ *Semanario Oficial*, XVIII, 25, 1. *México Nuevo*, June 13, 1909.

⁸ Joaquín García Pimentel: "Condiciones de la gente de trabajo en el Estado de Morelos antes de la revolución de 1910, durante el período de la lucha de 1911 a 1914, y desde esa época hasta la fecha" (MS, 1916), p. 10, Archivo de Luis García Pimentel, Jr. (henceforth AGP).

The local villagers' "natural inclination toward banditry" impressed him deeply, and he often lamented that "Jacobin governments" had removed the villagers' "only restraint and guide: religion," leaving the planters to impose their own cruder controls.⁹ On the plantation of another great Morelos family, the Amors, a visiting English "authoress" found the style resembling "that of England in the time of the Barons, when feudal laws reigned and hotels were unknown." The visitor came to understand that the senior Amor "has to look after the spiritual and bodily needs of his people," or "... they would only drink away the extra money" he gave them.¹

But Escandón's policy was also part of a new kind of oppression that had developed with increasing force since about 1880. Its economic source was the international competition the cane- and beet-sugar industries carried on through the nineteenth century. For cane growers the most valuable returns on the struggle were the technological improvements it produced, especially the new milling machines that extracted a much higher proportion of sugar from the stalk than the old presses. These machines became generally available by the 1870's. About the same time a period of political order and strong economic growth began in Mexico. Serious work started on a regular system of railroads, and the promise of a national market emerged. The Morelos planters saw the opportunity; and however much they cherished their bucolic isolation, they at once moved out of it to meet the new demand.² They astutely developed interests in processing and selling to match their interest in production. They brought the railroad into the state, imported the new machinery, and planned how to get more land to grow more cane. And as their production increased, they lobbied to reduce municipal and state taxes, to abolish the remaining interstate taxes, and to maintain or raise the national tariff protecting their industry.³

The social difference between the old and the new oppression was as profound as the difference between a manor and a factory. Before, various

⁹ Luis García Pimentel, Jr.: "Memorias" (MS, 1914), pp. 2, 64, AGP.

¹ Tweedie: op. cit., pp. 339-41.

² For an interesting comparison with Brazilian sugar planters, who did lapse into an easygoing and uneconomic ruralism, see Celso Furtado: *The Economic Growth of Brazil. A Survey from Colonial to Modern Times* (Berkeley, 1963), pp. 125-6. It is the market-minded Brazilian coffee planters, as he describes them, who more closely resemble the Morelos sugar planters.

³ Daniel Cosío Villegas, ed.: *Historia Moderna de México. El Porfiriato. La Vida Económica*, 2 vols. (México, 1965), I, 79-81.

communities and economic enterprises had coexisted without question in Morelos. Sugar plantations, traditional villages, small-farm settlements, single independent farms, day laborers' hamlets, country towns, provincial cities—not all these different kinds of societies flourished, but they were all grudgingly able to survive. Oppression took place, but the individual cases lacked real momentum or coordination. Thus concentration of property in land was sporadic and irregular, for the usual motive was not so much economic calculation as personal greed. Morelos's sugar plantations still functioned in the main tradition of Mexican haciendas, more as symbols than as businesses.⁴ When the planters considered the villagers especially unguarded—when the federal or state government seemed unable or unwilling to protect the villagers—then they might take over fields they had long coveted. Sometimes villagers were actually deprived of independent livelihood and had to migrate, or move permanently onto the *real*, the hacienda grounds. But this crisis was more in the nature of an unintended, half-surprising accident: it was not really policy, and no one considered it irrevocable. Happily or not, social variety seemed eternal.

After 1880 this assumption crumbled rapidly. The planters' new chance for sustained profits forecast a new world and generated new social trends. Plantations in Morelos became company towns, their permanent populations ranging from 250 to almost 3,000. The planters organized their own medical and ecclesiastical services, their own stores, schools, police, and powerhouses, and their own regular corps of bricklayers, carpenters, blacksmiths, electricians, and mechanics. To operate the new machines, they imported foreign technicians. They even set up laboratories for research and hired chemists. And as directing agents, they installed new professional managers; the Spanish planters in the state recruited theirs from among Spanish, Cuban, or Canary Island immigrants in Mexico City, and the Mexican planters usually hired experienced Mexicans or trained their own sons. These were haciendas "*comme il faut*," as one proud Tepoztlán editor crowed.⁵

⁴ Fernando B. Sandoval: *La Industria del Azúcar en Nueva España* (México, 1951), pp. 125-46. For the classic essay on this general subject, see Andrés Molina Enríquez: *Los grandes problemas nacionales* (México, 1909), pp. 85-93. The best and fullest treatment is François Chevalier: *La formation des grands domaines au Mexique. Terre et société aux xvi-xvii siècles* (Paris, 1952).

⁵ Holt Büttner: op. cit., pp. 101-2. Tweedie: op. cit., pp. 338-40. J. García Pimentel: op. cit., pp. 5, 9. Luis García Pimentel, Jr.: "Recuerdos y reflexiones" (MS, n.d.), AGP. Personal interview with José García Pimentel. *El Progreso de Morelos*, June 4, 1892.

The plutocratization of the Díaz regime through the 1880's eased the planters' way. The Ministry of Public Works sold them almost all the public land left in the state and granted them favorable rulings on their requests for clear titles to other acquisitions. New federal legislation jeopardized previously recognized titles and water rights of many villages. And when the planters took advantage of this fortuity, subservient local courts approved the expropriations.⁶ In the late 1860's the planters, or their fathers, had fought hard to keep Morelos a part of Mexico State: they feared that otherwise Cuernavaca and Cuautla districts might break loose from their control.⁷ Twenty years later, under Díaz's patronage, they had more power there than before. Increasingly, only the plantations looked like legitimate, progressive institutions. It seemed that other kinds of communities existed as resources for them, that all human beings in Morelos must surrender their personal destinies, superior or inferior, and become mere factors in the planters' cosmopolitan enterprise. The process which individual greed had motivated now emerged as regular, científico practice.

By 1890 it was clear that in this novel boom several important towns, surrounded by plantations, had almost ceased to grow. Jonacatepec, for instance, once a flourishing mule center, now stood like an enclave in the García Pimentels' territory; its situation reminded one educated native of the depressed country towns of Ireland.⁸ In dismay at their low census the Cuautla city fathers debated whether their town would stagnate from "being confined between powerful haciendas whose extensive cane fields border on all sides." Some promoters judged that though the restriction would eventually limit the city, they could meanwhile increase its population by urban renewal: in the northern precincts were several unsightly pastures and orchards, belonging to "ragamuffins . . . at once bosses and peons . . . who lend no service to the society where they live"; these properties the promoters wanted to expropriate and subdivide into lots for "poor families who could pay them out in installments."⁹ But this was no solu-

⁶ Mazari: *op. cit.*, p. 109. For discussions of this process as a national policy, see Wistano Luis Orozco: *Legislación y jurisprudencia sobre terrenos baldíos*, 2 vols. (México, 1895), I, 337-85, and Molina Enríquez: *op. cit.*, pp. 165-96.

⁷ Díez: *Bibliografía*, p. clix. It was the many village petitions from the old Third District that moved the Fourth Congress to set up the state. See Tovar: *op. cit.*, I, 151-2, 310; II, 530, 532; III, 89, 422, 428, 508, 676.

⁸ *Diario de los Debates del Congreso Constituyente, 1916-1917*, 2 vols. (México, 1960), II, 1083. See also Fernando González Roa: *El aspecto agrario de la Revolución Mexicana* (México, 1919), p. 30.

⁹ *La Idea Patriótica*, August 6, 1891.

tion, as the promoters themselves soon acknowledged. Cuautla's cemetery lay only three blocks from the main square and there was no room for more plots. Since the surrounding plantations went on "daily enclosing the city," one editor bitterly observed, "as in a ring of iron," the city fathers had to turn to a village over a mile away for new burial grounds.¹

In the countryside outside the towns, especially in Yautepec and Tetecala districts, the small, old-fashioned haciendas failed and then merged into the larger, modern enterprises. Some like Dolores retained a subsidiary identity in a grand, combined estate, but others like Apanquezalco or El Charco vanished from the map of Morelos forever. Ranchos, the little rural settlements that were independent but not incorporated as villages, collapsed too. In 1876 the records had carried fifty-three, in 1887 only thirty-six. In 1891 analysts of the recent state census traced the legal extinction of thirty-four ranchos in the last generation, almost a third of them in Tetecala district.²

Even villages began to disappear. Those isolated like Tepoztlán in the mountains in the northern part of the state remained fairly safe, but villages in accessible timber country, near railroads, or in the well-watered bottoms were very vulnerable.³ Although many were entrenched and thriving settlements that could trace their history back before the Conquest and their land titles back to the earliest viceregal times, none was secure in the current siege. In 1876, the year Díaz took power, there were 118 pueblos recorded in Morelos. By 1887, despite a small increase in state population, there were only 105.⁴

Of these failures the most awesome was no doubt Tequesquitengo's. The villagers there had offended the owner of nearby San José Vista Hermosa plantation, who retaliated by running his irrigation water into their lake and flooding out the whole pueblo. In time only the village church spire remained above water, a reminder of the risks of independence.⁵ Through the 1890's and after the turn of the century villages continued to

¹ Ibid., January 7, 1892.

² José María Pérez Hernández: *Cartilla de la geografía del estado de Morelos* (México, 1876), p. 23. Gobierno de Morelos: *Memoria sobre el estado de la Administración pública de Morelos, presentada al Hon. X. Congreso por el Gobernador constitucional General Jesús H. Preciado, Abril 12, 1887* (Cuernavaca, n.d., 1887?). *La Idea Patriótica*, April 2, 16, and 23, 1891.

³ Lewis: op. cit., p. 127. Diez: *Dos conferencias*, p. 59.

⁴ Pérez Hernández: op. cit., p. 23. *Memoria* (1887).

⁵ *El Eco*, May 19, 1889.

disintegrate. By 1909 only a hundred were registered.⁶ Hidden darkly in the fields of high, green cane, the ruins of places like Acatlipa, Cuauichinola, Sayula, and Ahuchuepan rotted into the earth.⁷ The stories of these doomed pueblos were widely known among Morelos's country people: kinfolk were often involved in the fights to save them. And their demise was a fearful lesson, leaving villagers no hope of rest.

In particularly tense areas the villages that survived still lost population. Villa de Ayala, for instance, declined from 2,041 inhabitants in 1900 to 1,745 in 1910; and Anenecuilco, in Ayala municipality, went down from 411 to 371.⁸ Bit by bit the villagers lost their land—like the orchard of Olaque in Anenecuilco in 1887—but they fought on year after year to preserve what was left. And when they finally lost too much to get by farming, they tried new kinds of work. The Zapata family began raising livestock, as did many around Cuautla when Hospital and Cuahuixtla haciendas had enclosed all the decent farmland.⁹

Not all, however, could go on independently—which was just what the planters counted on. Dispossessed and destitute, many villagers started sharecropping the scrubbiest of the plantation fields.¹ Then, as their debts mounted, they hired themselves out as field hands, still living in their villages but working in contracted gangs. They found wages very high, by the day up to 65 centavos in the dry winter season and a peso during harvest in the spring, and by the job even more, from 75 centavos to 1.25 or 1.50 pesos daily. But they also found prices very high: since Morelos produced only sugar, rice, and rum in volume and had to import cloth and staples like corn and beans, they paid as much to live as in Mexico City.² Living in

⁶ *Semanario Oficial*, XVIII, 44, 6. Diez: *Dos conferencias*, p. 61.

⁷ Magaña: op. cit. (1951-2 edn., here and subsequently), I, 82-4. Diez: *Dos conferencias*, p. 59. *La Idea Patriótica*, April 16, 1891.

⁸ Holt Büttner: op. cit., pp. 94-7.

⁹ Sotelo Inclán: op. cit., pp. 155-8, 170. *La Idea Patriótica*, December 17, 1891.

¹ If they were lucky, or had local connections, they might contract for land good enough to truck-farm on. Emiliano Zapata sometimes sharecropped on de la Torre y Mier's Tenextepango hacienda. He and Eufemio experimented with varieties of watermelon from Veracruz. Personal interview with Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama. For Ayala's truck trade, see the prefectural reports in *Semanario Oficial*, XIV, 8, 1-2; XVI, 17, 3-4; XVII, 3, 4; 19, 3; 29, 4; 42, 4-5; XVIII, 17, 1-2.

² On wages, see J. García Pimentel: op. cit., pp. 7-8; also George M. McBride: *The Land Systems of Mexico* (New York, 1923), p. 32; Lewis: op. cit., p. 94; and *The Mexican Yearbook, 1909-1910* (New York, 1910), p. 392. Anenecuilcans earned only 37 centavos a day in the slack season at Hospital—see Sotelo Inclán: op. cit.,

terms of money, they fell deeper in debt. Finally they left the village for good and like many ex-rancheros moved their families onto the plantation grounds as gente de casa, permanent resident laborers. There on the *real*, if they behaved well, they could at least count on the necessities of life.

Thus, besides land, the planters acquired a dependent labor force. They encouraged this transfer of residence onto the *real*, as Joaquín García Pimentel noted, with "every effort possible." For the "secure and constant labor" of the gente de casa permitted a more efficient specialization of chores within the plantation and, during the rush seasons, relieved the managers of the dangerous and humiliating reliance on local villagers, who hated them and who might desert them for a higher wage elsewhere. Resident labor was especially important for hacendados like the Amors in Tetecala and the García Pimentels in Jonacatepec district, where villages and the seasonal gangs coming out of them were fewer than in the more densely populated central districts; and on the plantations in those relatively remote areas the largest permanent populations concentrated. But other planters, too, regarded it as "a great advantage" to settle workers on their grounds. The relocation did not proceed as rapidly as the planters liked; the Morelos villager, Joaquín García Pimentel observed, "is very attached to the land he was born on and moves only with much difficulty, even when he sees palpably that he would do better"—which often forced plantation managers to bring in migrant labor from Puebla or Guerrero.³ But in all boldness these entrepreneurs only raised the tempo of their struggle against the villages.

After the turn of the century economic pressures on the planters increased sharply. Their immediate problem was more intense competition within Mexico for the protected domestic sugar market. Not only were their traditional rivals in Veracruz, Puebla, Michoacán, and Jalisco expanding and modernizing their works, but also new rivals appeared in Sinaloa, Tepic district, and most ominously in tropical Veracruz, where American capitalists were investing heavily in large operations. The northern threat Morelos planters could control: they arranged alliances in Puebla

p. 185—but this was still well above the national average, 25 centavos a day. On the high cost of living, see "¿Por qué existe y cómo se desarrolla el zapatismo en el E. de Morelos?" *La Tribuna*, May 29, 1913.

³ J. García Pimentel: op. cit., pp. 1-6. *La Idea Patriótica*, April 2, 1891. Mazari: op. cit., p. 109.

and Veracruz, dumped produce on the market, and expelled the intruders from their commercial domains. But the Americans in Veracruz were different. The Gulf lowlands yielded ordinarily around 30 per cent more cane per acre than the Morelos uplands, which moreover required expensive irrigation and more frequent replanting. If the American effort became a going concern, it might severely damage Morelos's position as the country's leading producer.⁴

Another pressing problem was that national production of sugar now exceeded the domestic demand. Exporting the surplus was the obvious answer, and in 1902 major exports began.⁵ Although Morelos planters did not at first take part, leaving the trade to Veracruz and the north, several began exports at least as early as 1905. Leading them was Ignacio de la Torre y Mier of Tenextepango, the state's then most productive hacienda.⁶ But the new business only opened a new arena of competition. The costs of production were still high in Morelos, and the international market, lurching from crisis to crisis, was too erratic to depend on.

Also alarming was the new threat of native beet-sugar production, which cane growers assumed would destroy them. From 1906 on agronomists noted "remarkable possibilities" for the new industry. Sonora ranchers declared their vital interest in its foundation, and the federal government offered generous concessions to an American company to start beet-growing in the Federal District or Mexico State.⁷ The projects did not materialize, but the danger that they might heightened the Morelos planters' competitive spirit.

Besides these troubles, there was the ultimate menace of exhausting Morelos's rich soil. Estimates were that it could stand constant cultivation of cane without fertilizer for about thirty years; then it would have to lie fallow.⁸ So the boom that began around 1880 would begin deteriorating after 1910. The prospect hardly agitated all Morelos planters, but to some—

⁴ Cosío Villegas: *Vida Económica*, I, 81. U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of Manufactures: *Monthly Consular and Trade Reports*, October 1908, p. 155; April 1908, p. 140; July 1905, pp. 193-6. International Bureau of the American Republics: *Mexico. Geographical Sketch, Natural Resources, Laws, Economic Conditions, Actual Development, Prospects of Future Growth* (Washington, 1904), pp. 195-6.

⁵ Cosío Villegas: *Vida Económica*, I, 81-2.

⁶ *El hacendado mexicano y fabricante de azúcar*, XI, 123 (March 1905), 65.

⁷ *Consular Reports*, September 1906, p. 101; March 1907, p. 20.

⁸ *Ibid.*, September 1906, p. 102. *Mexico. Geographical Sketch*, p. 194.

especially the Ruiz de Velasco family, which had the best scientific training in agriculture—it had long been disturbing.⁹

The increased pressure drove the planters to greater investments, either to diversify the grades of refined sugar or to produce more rum. The Araoz family, for example, imported new machinery worth \$350,000 for their Cuahuixtla hacienda.¹ To keep their expensive machines at work, the planters needed to grow still more cane—which obliged them to enlarge their landholdings further. This accelerated expansion was fast turning Morelos into a network of rural factories. By 1908 the seventeen owners of the thirty-six major haciendas in the state owned over 25 per cent of its total surface, most of its cultivable land, and almost all of its good land.² And as the planters took over increasingly scrubbiest fields, they required increasing supplies of water to irrigate them. Investment in irrigation works probably went as high as that in milling machinery. For his Tenango hacienda Luis García Pimentel put \$166,000 into construction of tunnels, canals, aqueducts, dams, sluices, bridges, and cutoff valves, to bring water from the Cuautla River sixty miles away. And along the same river Ignacio de la Torre y Mier and Vicente Alonso together invested over \$210,000 in water works for their plantations.³ During 1908 domestic sugar prices rose considerably, because the government doubled the import duty on sugar to protect the native growers; and surer, fatter profits encouraged further investment and bigger production.⁴

Morelos haciendas thus became famous as the most modern in Mexico.⁵ They deserved their reputation. In 1908 the twenty-four mills in the state accounted for well over a third of the country's total sugar production. After Hawaii and Puerto Rico, Morelos was the most productive cane-

⁹ See Ángel Ruiz de Velasco: *Estudios sobre el Cultivo de la Caña de Azúcar* (Cuernavaca, 1894), pp. 3-6, and Felipe Ruiz de Velasco: *Historia y Evoluciones del Cultivo de la Caña y de la Industria Azucarera en México, Hasta el Año de 1910* (México, 1937), pp. 73-4.

¹ "La industria azucarera en Méjico," *Revista Azucarera*, VII, 74 (June 1900), 160-1.

² See the map in Diez: *Dos conferencias*, p. 60.

³ Gobierno de Morelos: *Memoria sobre la Administración Pública de Morelos, en los periodos de 1895 a 1902*. Gob. Sr. Col. Don Manuel Alarcón (Cuernavaca, n.d., 1902?), pp. 59-60.

⁴ H. C. Prinsen Geerligs: *The World's Cane Sugar Industry, Past and Present* (Manchester, 1912), pp. 164-5. *Consular Reports*, March 1908, p. 236.

⁵ Figueroa Doménech: op. cit., II, 374. F. Ruiz de Velasco: op. cit., pp. 30, 74-5.

sugar region in the world.⁶ The planters, having committed themselves deeply, were in no mood to relax: between 1905 and 1908 they raised their production over 50 per cent.⁷ And they maneuvered for still more land, more water, and more resident laborers. In this development, this planters' progress, the village as a community had no place. The imminent utopia was a plantation.

Villagers did resist these trends, most famously in a case involving Pablo Escandón himself. In 1903 Escandón had directed the manager of his family's Atlihuayán hacienda to put up a fence which took in about 3,500 acres of Yautepec's communal pasture land. Villagers' cattle used to grazing there knocked down the fence in places and wandered back into the territory now under the hacienda's claim. Hacienda guards corralled them and returned them only on payment of a stiff fine. Some impounded cattle died for lack of feed. Others were sold. Others' owners were jailed for letting them trespass. But the villagers would not quit their cause. After months of protesting in vain, the offended persons chose a local farmer, Jovito Serrano, to represent them before the authorities. Serrano took their complaints first to the Yautepec court, which ruled against him. When the Yautepec jefe político refused to review the decision, Serrano appealed to the Cuernavaca district court, which heard the case but upheld the original decision and imposed a hundred-peso fine on the plaintiffs. Still undaunted, Serrano appealed to the Federal Supreme Court and led a commission of seventy Yautepecans to interview President Díaz in Mexico City.⁸ Less formally but no less obstinately, villagers elsewhere—in Santa María, Janetelco, Coatlán del Río, Tepalcingo, and many other pueblos—defied local bosses and tried to defend their ancient claims.⁹

But all resistance the planters or their managers readily disposed of. In most cases the disposition was local, unofficial, and brutal—a proper beating, maybe murder.¹ If these measures were inconvenient, the prefects

⁶ Diez: *Dos conferencias*, pp. 17-19.

⁷ Prinsen Geerligs: *op. cit.*, p. 164.

⁸ Records of the Atlihuayán-Yautepec dispute are in the Archivo de Zapata (henceforth AZ), Box 30, File 2. For the court record, see *Semanario Judicial de la Federación. Tribunal Pleno. Amparos* (February-March 1905), 4th ser., XXII, 428-37. There is a legend, repeated most recently in John P. McNeely: "Origins of the Zapata Revolt in Morelos," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, XLVI, 2 (May 1966), 155, that Zapata took part in the commission. This is unlikely; his name figures in no record of the case.

⁹ Mazari: *op. cit.*, pp. 109, 112. Magaña: *op. cit.*, I, 79-80.

¹ For an example, see *ibid.*, I, 81-2.

would usually order a rebellious farmer's conscription into the army, which was also brutal. And in the few cases that became public affairs the planters could always appeal to Don Porfirio for an obliging resolution, again brutal. Thus, though the President told the Yautepecans he supported them, and it looked at last as if they might win, their legal exertions suddenly and mysteriously brought them to grief. While Serrano was in Mexico City tending to final details, he was arrested and the Yautepecan land titles and other documents seized. And on June 21, 1904, the Supreme Court upheld the earlier rulings against the villagers. The last that Serrano's family heard of him was a letter he smuggled out as he passed through Veracruz destined for a labor camp in Quintana Roo. With him were thirty-five other Morelos natives, farmers like himself from Tepoztlán, San Andrés de la Cal, Santa María, and San Juanico who had obstructed the planters' progress. Serrano died in Santa Cruz de Bravo, Quintana Roo, in November 1905.²

So this new oppression became the common practice. The first generation of planters engaged in it—the ruthless pioneers of the 1880's—had betrayed a nagging fear about the future: the old owner of Cuahuixtla had kept as a personal guard a pack of mean-looking dogs named after the days of the week, Sunday through Saturday, and then the months, at least through March.³ But the succeeding generation—the ruthless heirs of the 1890's and 1900's—worked in full confidence. In these years the Amor brothers built up an impressive stable of polo ponies, trotters, and racing thoroughbreds on their San Gabriel hacienda, and they imported greyhounds and fox terriers as well.⁴ At Santa Clara and Tenango the García Pimentels furnished their magnificent buildings so sumptuously that to a young Cuernavacan they seemed like “the palaces that lie along the Thames.” At Oacalo the owner had a ten-acre garden superbly landscaped, complete with a central kiosk, radiating avenues lined with palms and fountains, a bowling lawn, and a tomb for his dead dog. Miacatlán was often the scene of concerts and lavish parties, and Atlihuyán struck visitors as “a delicious mansion one would never want to leave.”⁵ These Edwardian luxuries were displays not only of new fortunes but also of a new attitude among younger Morelos planters, a serene conviction that they could maintain and even strengthen the controls benefiting them.

By 1909 they were ready to consolidate their system. Where Alarcón

² *Ibid.*, I, 85–6.

³ Robelo: *op. cit.*, pp. 79, 84–5.

⁴ Tweedie: *op. cit.*, pp. 342, 347.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 320–2. Robelo: *op. cit.*, pp. 5, 30, 54, 61–2, 116–17.

had equivocated, it was Escandón's responsibility as a good científico planter to establish the practice of oppression as policy. The villagers were already weak, their leaders and advocates jailed or driven into hiding because of their Leyvista sympathies in the recent election. And Escandón proceeded without hesitation. The state government's refusal to do justice became a clear rule. Many villagers around Chinameca hacienda lost cattle to the roundup there in 1909, and their complaints were never heeded. The village of Tetelpa lost much of the water it needed for its orchards when, in a dispute over rights to Apatlaco River, the local court ruled for San Nicolás Obispo hacienda. The hacienda manager soon went even beyond the court and cut the village's water off completely. Local orchards were ruined, the village's fruit business and truck farming were finished, and its residents began migrating. In the northern municipalities the contracts for cutting timber off the mountain slopes, always a rich source of corruption, became even more scandalous. Villagers not only lost their timber but the money paid them for it.⁶ The most flagrant injustice occurred in Jojutla in the late summer of 1909. There a rice plantation appropriated extra use of the city's water supply. The city council protested, but against Escandón's favorites not even a district seat got effective recourse. And the dispute went on through the fall—with the rice growers using the water.⁷

Escandón's treatment of the pueblos was not merely to make life difficult for them but to break them as independent institutions. In April 1910, for instance, the leaders of Anenecuilco wrote to him in desperation. "As the rainy season is about to begin," they declared, "we poor workingmen must begin getting the land ready for planting. For this reason . . . we turn to the Superior Government of the state, imploring its protection so that, if it please, it might concede to us its backing so we can plant the fields without fear of being plundered and run off by the proprietors of Hospital hacienda. We are disposed to recognize whoever turns out to be the owner of these fields, be it the village of San Miguel Anenecuilco or someone else. But we want to plant the fields so as not to be ruined, because farming is what gives us life. From it we get our sustenance and that of our families."

The request was urgent, and easy enough to grant and arrange. But the reply, when it finally came, was a bureaucrat's insult. Eight days later, a secretary in the state executive office wrote them: "Informed of your note of the 25th of April last, in which you ask that you be permitted to prepare

⁶ Diez: *Dos conferencias*, pp. 59, 63.

⁷ *Diario del Hogar*, August 31 and September 1, 1909.

and sow the fields which you have claimed, . . . the governor ruled that you be told that you ought to identify the fields to which you refer."

The Anenecuilco leaders wrote back immediately. Frantic at the approach of the rainy season, they suggested various ways the dispute could be settled. They even agreed to pay the hacienda rent for the fields in question—although they had never done so before, and doing so now was in effect recognizing its title—if only the hacienda would let them go ahead with their work. After a week the same secretary replied again: "The proprietor of Hospital hacienda has already been informed of your notes of the 25th of April last and of the 8th of the current month, so that he might say what he considers proper on the request you make in the said notes."⁸ Thus Escandón clarified his regime's policy.

His major task, however, was to press the new policy into legislation. The "new orientation," as he later called it, began with the General Revaluation Law for Real Estate, enacted June 21, 1909. In part this law regulated land titles, but its main intention was to devalue the plantations for tax assessments. Planters were now to pay even less tax on their land than before, while the burden was to increase on the already heavily indebted small farmers and other small or middling property owners. A young civil engineer from Cuernavaca, later the best authority on Morelos history, astutely judged this law Escandón's "greatest error."⁹ It could not have cost the governor popularity in the villages, where he had none to lose. But in the towns it definitely antagonized merchants and shopkeepers, who might otherwise have accepted his rule but who now filed protest after protest against the new rates; the Cuautla weekly *La Época* became a regular forum for their complaints.¹ In the short run, however, these little people hardly mattered, and Escandón could easily ignore them. Although their resentment was profound, it remained so diffuse politically that even he could manage its suppression. In arranging the new law, the planters who had installed Escandón, men like Manuel Araoz and Luis García Pimentel, had simply decided to drive the state's agrarian crisis to its breaking point and then, unchallenged, snap it in their own favor. It was their first official step in establishing their utopia.

It went so smoothly that during the fall Escandón's aides prepared other

⁸ This correspondence is quoted in Sotelo Inclán: op. cit., pp. 179-82.

⁹ Diez: *Bibliografía*, p. clxxxv.

¹ *Semanario Oficial*, XIX, 26, 1. For data about the planters' lower taxes, see *ibid.*, 16, 3; 33, 2; 39, 2-3.

Through the end of the year, however, the complications in the state would not dwindle away. Indeed they multiplied. Far off in Chihuahua the Maderista revolution remained alive, and a crisis developed in Mexico City as the government too slowly mobilized the repression; encouraged, political and criminal fugitives in Morelos began to form bands and emerge from hiding, to test for the first time in nearly two decades the strength and morale of local officials. The bands were small and poorly armed: the group Genovevo de la O collected in the mountains north of Cuernavaca had only twenty-five men, and only de la O had a gun, a .70-caliber musket.⁵ But the rebels always appeared in random, difficult places, and Escandón found that his officials could not catch and crush them. Even more disturbing than these renegades, however, was that out in the countryside villagers also began violent resistance to the utopia Escandón had believed secure.

Of the hundred pueblos in the state in 1910, there was probably not one that was not involved in a freshly embittered legal dispute with a neighboring hacienda. And in the current confusion many desperate villagers calculated whether they might serve the cause better by taking direct action. That they would calculate in favor of revolt was most likely around traditional centers of independence and agrarian discontent, like Tepoztlán, Santa María, Tlaquiltenango, and Cuautla. Petty acts of protest, in effect minor rural strikes, did occur in various communities.⁶ Almost all these little revolts, however, either disintegrated or plantation managers suppressed or compromised them locally; there is no record of Escandón using federal police or troops to keep order in these weeks.

But one case of village defiance that Escandón and the managers let mature proved fatal. This was the revolt in the troublesome Cuautla district, in its southern Ayala municipality. The four farming communities in this county-sized municipality had struggled for years against the encroachments of Hospital and Cuahuixtla haciendas, and together they were able to carry on a small but direct truck trade with Cuautla and Mexico City. This commercial independence, sustained against great

⁵ De la O in *Impacto*, December 31, 1949. See also Mazari: "Bosquejo," p. 115.

⁶ Lewis: op. cit., p. 94.

pressure, was coupled with a deep local pride in the role the region had played in the War of Independence.⁷ Common people here were probably readier to defend themselves than anywhere else in the state. Farmers in Ayala municipality had never surrendered and paid blackmail to the marauding bandits of the 1860's. They had armed themselves, organized as vigilantes, and fought back. Into the 1890's Ayala remained probably the most militant and most heavily armed rural municipality in Morelos.⁸ And this insubordinate tradition endured. In the summer of 1910, when Escandón's war against the state's villages reached its critical stage, it was no surprise that Ayala should be the region where armed resistance developed. Nor was it surprising that of the four settlements in the municipality the little village of Anenecuilco should produce the leader. It had happened before, in the 1860's, and with the same Zapata family.

The new councilmen Anenecuilco elected in September 1909 had first followed the familiar procedure of restudying the village's land titles and trying to find a reliable lawyer to represent it in court.⁹ The first lawyer for whose services they contracted (at a stiff fee) proved of little help, and they let him go.¹ They then sought advice from several other sources in Mexico City—among them Paulino Martínez and possibly Jesús Flores Magón, both well-known opponents of the Díaz regime.² But all this was of no avail. Even worse, probably for dealing with these controversial figures, the council president, Emiliano Zapata, was drafted into the army

⁷ The municipality and its seat, Villa de Ayala, were named for the local hero of the war, Francisco Ayala. See Sotelo Inclán: op. cit., pp. 141-6.

⁸ Gobierno de Morelos: *Memoria sobre el estado de la Administración Pública de Morelos. Presentada al H. XI. Congreso por el Gobernador Constitucional General Jesús H. Preciado. Abril 25 de 1890* (Cuernavaca, n.d., 1890?).

⁹ Sotelo Inclán: op. cit., pp. 176-7.

¹ They paid the first lawyer, Luis Ramírez de Alba, one hundred pesos. The receipt he gave Zapata, as president of the village council, is dated October 16, 1909, in ASI.

² There is a version that Zapata dealt with the notorious anarcho-syndicalist Ricardo Flores Magón. See Sotelo Inclán: op. cit., p. 217. But this is impossible. Ricardo was in American jails from 1907 to August 1910, and then went to Los Angeles to direct the invasion of Baja California. See Lowell L. Blaisdell: *The Desert Revolution. Baja California, 1911* (Madison, 1962), pp. 9, 15 ff. Both Jesús Flores Magón, a brother of Ricardo's, and Martínez had been active Anti-Reelectionists, and Martínez had spoken at the Leyvista rally in Cuautla on January 31, 1909. See the *Diario del Hogar*, February 2, 1909.

—were practically in alliance. The situation in the countryside was a precarious, armed truce between the local farmers, captained by Zapata, and the hacienda field guards. And until Hospital could arrange for a more reliable prefect, who would protect the hacienda's valuable machinery, irrigation works, and cane, the hacienda preferred to avoid open violence.

In mid-November Vivanco resigned and, after a farewell festival arranged by Zapata, left the state.⁷ But his replacement, Eduardo Flores, served the haciendas in the district no better. Officials throughout the country were very nervous during those weeks because of the revolution in Chihuahua, and they were anxious to hedge against reforms by winning local popularity. Thus accommodated, Zapata widened the sphere of his activity. Villanos from the municipal seat joined him now, as well as farmers from the little settlement of Moyotepec farther to the south. Many contributed to the Anenecuilco defense fund and respected Zapata's rulings on village titles and individual allotments.⁸ In each disputed area Zapata had the hacienda fences taken down, conferred with the local farmers, and assigned lots. And as the pride of those farmers grew in their defiance, so grew Zapata's reputation.

With reports circulating everywhere about revolts and insurrection, the new jefe finally felt he had to take stock of his district's trouble. He went out with an escort and located Zapata seeing to the distribution of some hacienda-claimed land. What mattered was what always matters in such confrontations—firepower. Zapata had over a hundred armed men with him; Flores's escort numbered ten. Put on the defensive, Flores had to explain his interference. He told Zapata the word was out that he and his men were revolting as Maderistas. Zapata denied the report and said they were only dividing up fields that belonged to them. On that score Flores made no complaint; he asked only if he could count on Zapata and his people if Maderistas did turn up in the area. Zapata assured him he could, Flores left, and the farmers went back to their business.

By the winter of 1910-11 Zapata was the effective authority in that part of the state. The size of the area he controlled was not large, but it was of major economic value and so of strategic importance. Moreover the defiance he and his followers had shown provided a dangerous example for hard-pressed villagers elsewhere. The armed truce throughout the countryside could easily break down in several places. True, the danger the Ayala revolt constituted for the planters' long-range plans to reorganize Morelos

⁷ *Semanario Oficial*, XIX, 49, 3-4.

⁸ Sotelo Inclán: op. cit., pp. 217-18.

was not ultimate, or even serious—even if it led to defiance elsewhere. In the last resort the federal government could send in troops, crush the insurrection, and jail or shoot the leaders. Even the great Indian rebels of nineteenth-century Mexico were not able to hold out permanently. And as in Yucatán and Sinaloa the past June, the government would have certainly suppressed this much smaller disturbance in Morelos, and Zapata would have been lucky to escape alive—if the Maderista revolution had not succeeded. But over the winter of 1910-11 the movement in the north held together, almost miraculously, and the high politicians of the country floundered in their attempts to have it crushed or bought off. In the confusion that mounted in those months, the Ayala uprising—at first very local and limited in its origins and intentions—took on national significance.

would mean the end of a human community some seven centuries old. Adding insult to injury, the Hospital manager rented the lands to farmers from Villa de Ayala, the municipal seat, and the villanos, as they were called, began to plant in the rows already hoed by Anenecuilcans.

This was the decisive point, and it was lucky for Anenecuilco that Zapata had just returned, cranky and resentful, from his gilt-edged centennial opportunity with de la Torre y Mier's stables. Something extraordinary had to be ventured to resolve the local crisis. As president of the village council, Zapata took the decision. Regular procedures having failed, Anenecuilco would act for itself. Zapata gathered together some eighty men in the village, had them arm themselves, and went out to the fields where the villanos were working. He told them he had no interest in fighting with them; that there were Placencias, Merinos, and Salazars in both villages, but that the land was Anenecuilco's and Anenecuilcans would farm it. The villanos retired, along with the hacienda field guard, and Zapata proceeded to assign lots to the farmers from his village. The news went quickly around the state. Even in her Cuernavaca hotel Governor Escandón's friend Mrs. King heard about Zapata during the summer of 1910—about "a fellow over near Cuautla . . . who's been stirring up the people."⁶

Hospital left the Anenecuilcans alone for the next few months, but eventually claimed rent for the use of the land. When they refused to pay, the hacienda appealed to the district prefect and a hearing was called in Villa de Ayala—before the prefect, Vivanco, and the Ayala municipal president, Refugio Yáñez, who had helped Anenecuilco before in land disputes and had served in 1909 as head of Villa de Ayala's Levyista club. Speaking for Anenecuilco, Zapata explained that bad weather had caused a bad harvest and there was no produce or money to pay with. Hospital insisted that the Anenecuilcans sell their cows or work the sum out in day labor in the fields, but the jefe finally decided in favor of the villagers. They would pay no rent at all for 1910, and only what they could in 1911.

It was an astounding victory, but Anenecuilco could not rest on it. Zapata sent a delegation to President Díaz to get the disputed land definitely returned to the village. A ruling favorable to Anenecuilco arrived, and the jefe político passed it on to the hacienda manager and Zapata. The manager disliked the decision, but there was little he could do at the moment. By late 1910 Zapata and the local authorities—Vivanco and Yáñez

⁶ King: *op. cit.*, p. 59.