

CANADIAN CLUB CONFERENCE

NOVEMBER 8, 2017

“MEXICAN REVOLUTION”

Antecedentes:

1---Leyes de Reforma de Benito Juárez, guerra de Reforma (3 years of civil war Liberals vs. Conservatives), political instability, Maximiliano and 2nd. Imperio, restored republic

2---Porfiriato: 32 year dictatorship; “Orden y Progreso.” Heavy-handed control, repression, censorship, violence (los rurales...Brown shirts, “ley de fuga”), technological advances, railroad, highways, telegraph, new ports both Gulf of Mexico and Pacific

3---In 1908, in an interview with James Creel, a U.S. journalist, Porfirio Diaz declares he has been in power for so long because Mexico needed him to restore order but that he would not seek reelection. He lied.

4---We celebrate the “Grito” of Independence at 11:00 pm on the 15th September because Porfirio Diaz in 1910 was celebrating 3 events: his birthday, 100 years since the Grito and his reelection. There was a huge party at Chapultepec Castle attended by the elite society and the entire diplomatic corps with cases and cases of French champagne and hors’oeuvres. Revisionist history! In reality, Hidalgo gave the famous “grito” at dawn of the 16th, he rang the church bells. If he shouted anything, it was “Long live the Virgen of Guadalupe and Death to the Gachupines.”

FRANCISCO I. MADERO

A rich kid from Chihuahua, big land-owner family, raising cattle and cotton. He studied in Berkley, CA and was a spiritualist who practiced and participated in séances and a staunch tea-tootler. Launched his bid for president once Diaz declared he wasn't running, formed the "Anti.reeleccionista" party (another Mexican negative), gained great popularity and was eventually jailed in San Luis Potosí. He didn't vote in the 1910 election. He was freed on the condition he stay under house arrest in San Luis. He did escape and fled to San Antonio, Texas where he published the "Plan de San Luis" which called for an uprising against the Porfirio dictatorship on November 20.

By May, 1911, with thousands of people on the zócalo calling for his ouster, Porfirio Díaz and Carmelita, took a fast train to Veracruz and sailed to France, where he died in 1915 and is buried.

MADERO is elected in November and becomes Mexico's legitimate president! One would expect that to be the end of the Revolution. But no, the violence and bloodshed will continue for another 6 or more years.

1---Madero's one aim was to oust Porfirio Diaz, which he did accomplish. Unfortunately, he had no further political agenda, no plan of action, no vision for post-dictatorship Mexico. He kept a majority of Porfirio's "científicos" on his cabinet (fox in the hen coop), confident in his idealism that by his good example, his detractors could be turned around for the "good of Mexico;" he did not move on the land reform issue and Emiliano Zapata turned

against him, and all the small-time local bosses (caudillos) and unemployed military vied for power and regional conflicts were rampant all over Mexico.

2---There was blatant treason afloat. Madero names his supposed ally, General Victoriano Huerta, as head of the federal forces and sends him to Monterrey to arrest and bring back a rebel general and local political boss Bernardo Reyes who is stirring things up. Unfortunately, Huerta and Reyes become co-conspirators against Madero and plot Madero's overthrow with the collusion of the U.S. Ambassador, Henry Lane Wilson. They actually met at midnight in the U.S. Embassy. This is February 1913. What ensued was a 10-day bombardment between the Citadel, a federal prison, and the federal palace on the main plaza in Mexico (the ZÓCALO). This is called the DECENA TRÁGICA and resulted in the death of 100's of innocent civilians. In fact, the first shelling occurred on a Sunday when Mass was letting out from the Cathedral, also on the zócalo. For 10 days, bodies were piled on the plaza and doused in gasoline and burned. The stench in downtown Mexico City was overwhelming not to mention the destruction and loss of business. Curiously, so many deaths but relatively few soldiers lost their lives. Eventually, Huerta had Madero and his vice-president, Pino Suarez, arrested and 2 days later, both were assassinated as they were being transferred to another jail. News reports said they were killed in cross-fire in an ambush between police and Madero's fanatic supporters although this was never proven. Huerta assumes the presidency as a blatant usurper. Madero lasted only about 13 months as President but he is revered as the Hero of the Mexican Revolution.

3---For the next 2 years, there is a virtual race for Mexico City from different parts of Mexico. Pancho Villa from the north, Venustiano

Carranza from the Pacific west, Emiliano Zapata from the south, each with his own army, tearing up the countryside, terrorizing the towns, destroying crops and infrastructure and forcibly recruiting soldiers. The country is in utter chaos. Meanwhile Victoriano Huerta has been ousted from the presidency and you'd have to check what day it is to know who was president.

4---Venustiano Carranza wins the race and the presidential chair. He calls for a Constitutional Convention in Querétaro. It was attended by 220 delegates from all regions of Mexico and representing all sectors of Mexican society. What is remarkable is that amid the chaos and disorder, the delegates were elected by popular vote in each of their regions. There was no nepotism or usurpation. After 5 months of debates and negotiations, the CONSTITUTION OF 1917 is approved and is the current constitution which governs Mexico to this day. You will recognize Venustiano Carranza's face on the \$100 peso bill. Historians have rated the 1917 Mexican constitution as one of the "most enlightened and progressive documents of the western hemisphere" of its time.

Venustiano Carranza came to a violent end as he too was assassinated as he was fleeing Mexico City with significant booty from the federal treasury. He was betrayed by his closest ally and was gunned down while he slept in Puebla. News reports said that he committed suicide but that didn't explain how his body was riddled by 17 bullet wounds.

5---It is worth noting the important role of women in the Mexican Revolution. They rode next to their husbands and fought side-by-side on the front lines, bullets strapped across their breasts, pig-tails flying. They were known as "soldaderas" or "Adelitas" and

gained fame as fierce and fearless Amazonian warriors. You've seen their dress in the popular Mexican folkloric costume from Jalisco.

6---There are many interesting, even curious, footnotes here. U.S. President Woodrow Wilson was furious with his ambassador Henry Lane Wilson's involvement in Madero's assassination and recalled him to Washington where he slowly faded away into oblivion in the tense atmosphere of pre-WWI.

7---The Constitution of 1917 was truly an avant guard document for its time. Social questions are seriously addressed such as education, health care, workers' rights, equality for women and national sovereignty. Those of you who have invested or are interested in investing in Mexico are aware of the "51%" rule which requires all businesses to be 51% owned by Mexicans, avoiding a repeat of Porfirio Diaz's policy of selling off Mexico's natural resources to foreign interests. Mexico's recognition and acceptance of racial diversity is much more sophisticated than the U.S. at the time (1910 to 1920) which was still under the influence of Social Darwinism and the Gilded Age of robber barons such as the Rockefellers, Rothschilds and Roosevelts.

And so Mexico has the first SOCIAL REVOLUTION of the 20th century, seven years before the Russian revolution and before the Chinese revolution. New armaments were experimented with, trains were used extensively for troop movement, aerial warfare and trench warfare gave a preview of what was to come during WWI in Europe, and Mexico moved one step closer to closing the enormous gap between the rich and privileged and the poor and down-trodden, and obviously, is still working on it.