

# EMILIANO ZAPATA

## 1879 - 1919



### **Expert in Guerrilla Warfare for Mexican Land and Liberty**

Emiliano Zapata led the peasants of southern Mexico in the Mexican Revolution. His slogan was Tierra y Libertad, or Land and Liberty. **In a nutshell, Zapata wanted the land that the huge hacienda owners had snatched from the peasants restored to them.**

Historians describe Emiliano Zapata as a skilled guerrilla warrior, an excellent horseman, and a very humble person. Only few could match his ability to ride long distances and few could equal his skill as a rider. It is also said that Zapata was shy and reserved, that he avoided personal glory, and that he could've become much more powerful, if power would've been what the man was after. Zapata's quiet assumption of power won him respect.

With a solid mustache, Emiliano Zapata was a tall man, although not as tall as Pancho Villa, which you might find surprising. Matching Zapata's physique was his voice - thin and high. Zapata was efficient and honest. The man was no fake and that was one main reason for his popularity. So what if it sounded funny when he spoke, soft spoken Zapata

was never a friend of many words anyway. When he did speak, his words were smart and to the point.

A true peasant in the best sense of the word, Emiliano loved the land and was ready to fight for it. What was Zapata's principal personality trait? Some people say it was his pigheaded stubbornness. Others say caution was a prime characteristic. Zapata looked always neat as a pin. Some interpret his style and choice of wardrobe as arrogant and cocky. Others say, he was merely dressing like any other typical village chief, who would wear his best clothes. In any event, Zapata had the reputation of being fair, cautious, yet forceful and resolute, a man who always kept his word.

Toward reporters Zapata was always polite but rather uncommunicative. He felt uncomfortable in the presence of politicians and preferred the company of ordinary villagers. And it is said that Zapata had a good sense of humor.



*EMILIANO ZAPATA AND HIS SOMBREROS IN 1914*

## **Emiliano Zapata's Background**

The issue in Emiliano's days was land grabbing. The big plantation owners tried to absorb all the land there was without exception, leaving high and dry the people who formerly lived off the land.

Thus, haciendas were suffocating villages. Many people didn't have any other choice than becoming a resident labor (gente de casa) who permanently moved onto a hacienda. By the way, what was produced on the plantations? Mexico's main products were **sugar, rum, and rice**. In **Morelos**, Zapata's home state, the rural leaders reacted against the expansion of the sugar estates.

## Emiliano Zapata's Family

Emiliano Zapata's father was **Gabriel Zapata**. He was a horse trainer and dealer. Of horses, that is. Gabriel Zapata was considered an expert when it came to horse training and breeding. Gabriel's brothers were Cristino and José, who fought against France in the **War of the French Intervention**.

Emiliano Zapata's mother was Cleofas Salazar. Cleofas' father was José Salazar, who fought against Spain in the **Mexican War of Independence**. Cleofas' brother was León Salazar, who in turn had a son named Amador Salazar Jiménez, who was also a busy revolutionary.

When living off the land became insufficient, the Zapata Salazar family started to sell and purchase animals and to specialize in small livestock breeding. This gave them some independence from the **Hacienda del Hospital**, which was the big sugar plantation that dominated the area.

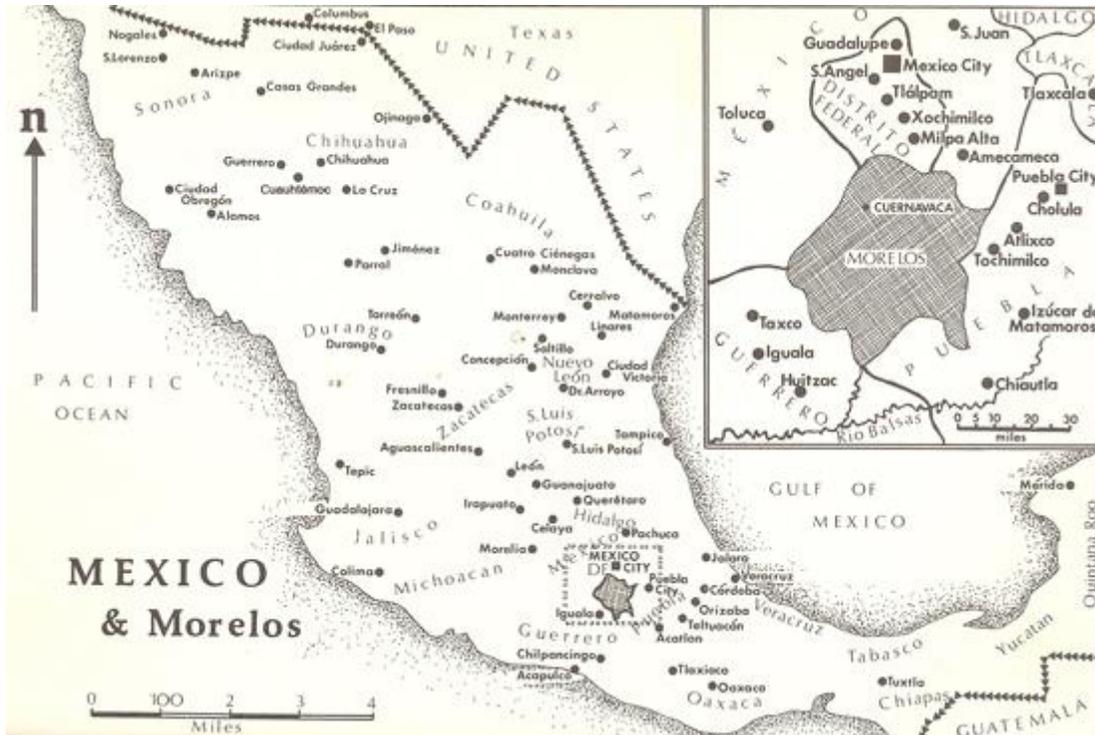
At the age of 16 Emiliano lost his mother and 11 months later his father as well. Emiliano was 31 years old when he married Josefa Espejo, the daughter of a livestock dealer in Villa de Ayala. By that time Zapata already had one child by another woman, Nicolas. Josefa spent much of the time with her husband, always quiet and keeping in the background. Emiliano Zapata had approx. 5 more illegitimate kids.

## Emiliano Zapata's Life

Zapata lived 39 years. He was born in the tiny peasant **village of Anenecuilco**, Morelos, which featured at the time around 90 houses. A stream of the same name, Anenecuilco, ran through the village. **Most villagers were employed on the haciendas. They worked as farm hands, functioned as slaves, and were officially treated as serfs.**

Following in his father's footsteps, Zapata became a horse trainer. Aged 26, Emiliano Zapata was one of the representatives for his village. The occasion? The residents of Anenecuilco and Villa de Ayala asked for a meeting with the governor of the state Morelos, Manuel Alarcón, as well as with the manager of the **Hacienda del Hospital** in order to bring the peasant's desperate situation to the attention of these men. The meeting did not bring any solution.

By the way, here is where it all happened:



MAP OF MORELOS, MEXICO - 1910

In the elections for governor of the state of Morelos, Zapata supported the independent candidate Patricio Leyva, who ran against President Diaz' favorite, the hacienda owner Pablo Escandón. Escandón won the elections. The year? **1909.**

The town elders of Anenecuilco elected Zapata to defend the villagers' right to have their own lands and to get back what had been stolen. This put Emiliano Zapata officially on the governmental blacklist and he was force-drafted into the federal army. Emiliano joined the Ninth Cavalry Regiment with headquarters at Cuernavaca. His commander was Colonel Ángel Bouquet.

Ignacio de la Torre y Mier was the owner of the **Tenextepango Hacienda**, as well as the son-in-law of Diaz, which always helps. Ignacio arranged Zapata's discharge and hired him as his chief groom and horse specialist at his Mexico City stables. Emiliano did not last long in this position and decided to return to his town, where the indifference of the government hadn't change a thing in favor of the peasants. Quite on the contrary.

Generally, the problem of the hacienda owners was that they didn't hear well when peasants tried to talk to them. Thus, Zapata and his men took action. They re-took the lands by force, and distributed it among themselves. The lands in question were llano de Huajar, Anenecuilco, Villa de Ayala, Moyotepec. The date? **Mid 1910.**

## **In detail:**

Zapata and approx 80 armed men marched to the fields they had recently been kicked off from by the *Hacienda del Hospital* management. When Zapata and his friends appeared, the hacienda guards and the farm hands cleared out.

The *Hacienda del Hospital* administration was gnashing teeth and demanded rent from the Anencuilco farmers, who refused. Brought before a judge, a ruling was issued in favor of the farmers. Zapata sent a letter to President Diaz, who also backed down. Soon, other villages followed the Anencuilco example. But Zapata and his men still saw the need for change on a higher level. **When Francisco Madero announced his Plan of San Luis Potosí, Zapata and his men couldn't agree more and decided to fight on Madero's side.**

It worked. Old dictator Porfirio Díaz resigned, appointed foreign secretary **Francisco León de la Barra** as interim president and Zapata's new problem became Madero. Zapata asked Madero to arrange for the hacienda owners to restore the lands to the peasants. Madero, now caught between many chairs, said No. Instead, Madero offered Zapata money to buy some land. Madero also told Zapata to lay down his arms. Madero meant it and Zapata took it to heart. Emiliano Zapata announced his retirement, went home, and got married.

However, things did not improve even after Madero was officially announced president. Action oriented Zapata therefore came up with **The Plan of Ayala** and declared the Revolution back in full motion as the main objective hasn't been met yet.

## **About the Plan of Ayala, November 1911**

Zapata had high hopes in Madero. But he quickly realized that Madero would not keep his promises regarding the return of the lands to the peasants. Zapata therefore thought up a plan that would replace Madero's **Plan of San Luis Potosí**. **A plan that would express the social goals of the Revolution and that would serve as guideline and principle for all future revolutionary actions.**

Although able to read and write, Zapata appreciated some academic help. This help materialized in the persons of **Otilio E. Montaña** and **José Trinidad Ruiz**.

As a result, *The Plan of Ayala*, basically put the following points on record:

- Contrary to earlier thinking, Madero is not the man who can bring about the goals of the Revolution, i.e. return of the lands.
- Therefore, the Revolution is recommenced with full force.

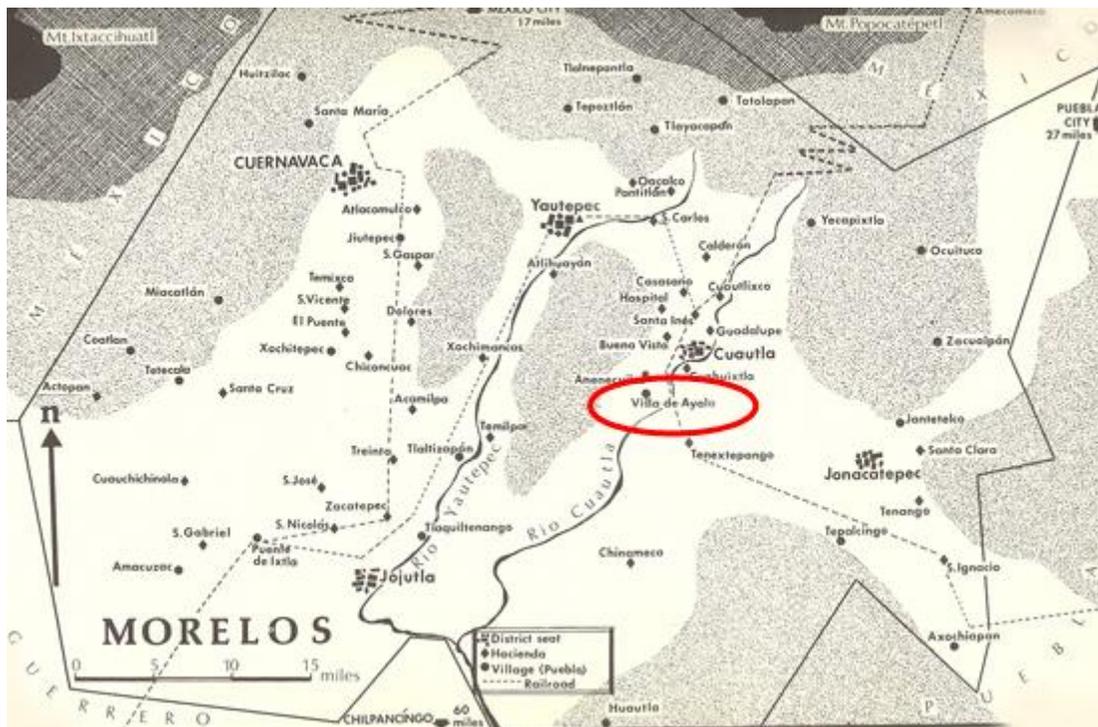
- The goal is to set up an interim government until free elections are possible.

- Land should be restored to the peasants. Moreover, all lands formerly belonging to the big haciendas should be distributed among the people. The haciendas can keep a third. Haciendas that don't accept this rule get nothing.

- The new slogan is **Tierra y Libertad**, or Land and Liberty

## Why was it called The Plan of Ayala?

Because Zapata had his headquarters close to Villa de Ayala. Check the map below, Villa de Ayala is located in the state of Morelos and you can find it just underneath / left of Cuautla, pretty much center of the map.



## Implementing the Plan of Ayala, November 1911 (1)

Zapata meant what he said and expropriated as he went and executed if he had to. Here and there things gotten out of hand but basically Zapata and his men stayed true to their declared goals.

The idea of guerrilla warfare is to avoid open battle. Thus Zapata ambushed the rich, the national institutions, and the federal army wherever and whenever possible and thus supplied his men with food and ammunition.

It went reasonably well for Zapata. The peasants who received lands started working on it, keeping their arms within reach. However, Zapata had trouble going from guerrilla harassment to open warfare, which would have been desired in order to bring in a lasting victory. Equally annoying for Zapata was that his army constantly lacked trained soldiers and sufficient ammunition. Always suffering from a severe shortage of equipment, it was impossible for Zapata's men to hold the towns they had taken for any length of time.

### Meanwhile in Mexico City:

General Victoriano Huerta overthrew Francisco Madero and made himself president, or rather dictator. Zapata wasn't fond of this concept, he wanted an elected president. Hence Zapata joined forces with other revolutionaries, such as Pancho Villa, and supported Venustiano Carranza for president.

**Carranza was surrounded by a decently numbered following himself, also known as the Constitutionalist Army. Together they succeeded. Huerta was exiled.**

The Zapatistas and the Villistas wanted General Eulalio Gutiérrez as temporary president until elections could be held. The Carrancistas wanted Carranza as president. Fighting broke out.

Now on each other's throat were: **the Moderates, aka the Carrancistas, against the Conventionists, aka the Revolutionaries, who were the Villistas and the Zapatistas.**

In his neighborhood, Zapata reorganized and put reforms in place. He became the Agrarian Leader, which also was the title of a painting by Diego Rivera.



### AGRARIAN LEADER ZAPATA

By Diego Rivera, 1931  
Library of Congress

The painting shows Zapata in traditional Cuernavacan garb equipped with a sugarcane knife.

Finally Carranza's forces defeated Villa in 1915. Zapata managed to re-organize his home state Morelos and people were fairly content with their lives there.

One thing Zapata didn't accept was military officers who interfered in village affairs. Zapata refused to organize a state police. He thought that was the obligation of each individual village council.

All in all, life improved but these changes only covered the Morelos area, which prompted the people of Morelos to seek independence from the rest of the country. And there was no way the rest of the country would let them do that, of course.

By 1917 Villa was finished. Carranza became the official president and completely ignored Zapata reform and reorganization wise, which was a shame because Zapata had already managed to set up order and justice within his surrounding area, thus proving that **The Plan of Ayala** was indeed practical.



GENERAL EMILIANO ZAPATA AT STAFF MEETING

Library of Congress

## Emiliano Zapata's Death

Carranza wanted Zapata gone for good, and he put **General Pablo González** in charge of this task. González suggested an ambush. It went like this: **Colonel Jesús Guajardo** pretended he was ready to defect to the Zapatistas. He asked for a meeting with Zapata at Chinameca, Morelos. Zapata came, was shot, and his body buried in Cuautla.

## Emiliano Zapata's Short Biography

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| August 8, 1879     | Birth in Anenecuilco, Morelos, Mexico  |
| April 15, 1906     | Represents his village at a meeting with the governor of Morelos to discuss the dire situation of the peasants |
| February 7, 1909   | Elections for Governor of the State Morelos  |
| September 12, 1909 | Becomes the man in charge for defense in his village   |
| February 11, 1910  | Joins army   |
| March 29, 1910     | Works for the stable of Ignacio de la  |

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
|                | Torre y Mier   |
| Mid 1910       | Back home and busy distributing lands among the peasants |
| June 22, 1911  | Announces retirement from revolutionary activities       |
| June 26, 1911  | Marries Josefa   |
| November 1911  | Madero elected president                                 |
| February 1913  | Huerta new president                                     |
| 1914           | Huerta flees, Zapata and Villa fight Carranza            |
| April 1915     | Carranza forces defeat Villa                             |
| May 1917       | Venustiano Carranza officially new president             |
| April 10, 1919 | Death in Morelos   |



GUERRILLA LEADER EMILIANO ZAPATA

Archivo Cassola

**Strengths:** Zapata's loyalty for his countrymen and their right to possess their own land. For this right he would fight anybody without compromise. Emiliano led an army, **the Ejército Libertador del Sur**, or *Liberation Army of the South*, fought a guerrilla war, and looked competent while doing it. His men paid

him respect. At its peak, the Liberation Army of the South consisted of about 25,000 troops.

**Weaknesses:** Some say Emiliano was a ruthless revolutionary. Others refer to the fact that he always tried to keep his men civil. When they entered a city, they humbly went from door to door asking people for food. Yes, there were some incidents of ruthless behavior, the Zapata supporters argue, but it was a revolution, not a picnic.



GENERAL EMILIANO ZAPATA IN 1914

Archivo Cassola

Source: (Retrieved May 2013)

[http://www.emersonkent.com/history\\_notes/emiliano\\_zapata.htm](http://www.emersonkent.com/history_notes/emiliano_zapata.htm)

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## 1) **THE PLAN OF AYALA – November 25, 1911** (ENGLISH TRANSCRIPT)

Liberating Plan of the sons of the State of Morelos, affiliated with the Insurgent Army which defends the fulfillment of the Plan of San Luis, with the reforms which it has believed proper to add in benefit of the Mexican Fatherland.

We who undersign, constituted in a revolutionary junta to sustain and carry out the promises which the revolution of November 20, 1910 just past, made to the country, declare solemnly before the face of the civilized world which judges us and before the nation to which we belong and which we call [sic, llamamos, misprint for amamos, love], propositions which we have formulated to end the tyranny which oppresses us and redeem the fatherland from the dictatorships which are imposed on us, which [propositions] are determined in the following plan:

1. Taking into consideration that the Mexican people led by Don Francisco I. Madero went to shed their blood to reconquer liberties and recover their rights which had been trampled on, and not for a man to take possession of power, violating the sacred principles which he took an oath to defend under the slogan "Effective Suffrage and No Reelection," outraging thus the faith, the cause, the justice, and the liberties of the people: taking into consideration that that man to whom we refer is Don Francisco I. Madero, the same who initiated the above-cited revolution, who imposed his will and influence as a governing norm on the Provisional Government of the ex-President of the Republic Attorney Francisco L. de Barra [sic], causing with this deed repeated sheddings of blood and multiplicate misfortunes for the fatherland in a manner deceitful and ridiculous, having no intentions other than satisfying his personal ambitions, his boundless instincts as a tyrant, and his profound disrespect for the fulfillment of the preexisting laws emanating from the immortal code of '57, written with the revolutionary blood of Ayutla;

Taking into account that the so-called Chief of the Liberating Revolution of Mexico, Don Francisco I. Madero, through lack of integrity and the highest weakness, did not carry to a happy end the revolution which gloriously he initiated with the help of God and the people, since he left standing most of the governing powers and corrupted elements of oppression of the dictatorial government of Porfirio Díaz, which are not nor can in any way be the representation of National Sovereignty, and which, for being most bitter adversaries of ours and of the principles which even now we defend, are provoking the discomfort of the country and opening new wounds in the bosom of the fatherland, to give it its own blood to drink; taking also into account that the aforementioned Sr. Francisco I. Madero, present President of the Republic, tries to avoid the fulfillment of the promises which he made to the Nation in the Plan of San Luis Potosí, being [sic, siendo, misprint for ciñendo, restricting] the above-cited promises to the agreements of Ciudad Juárez, by means of false promises and numerous intrigues against the Nation nullifying, pursuing, jailing, or killing revolutionary elements who helped him to occupy the high post of President of the Republic;

Taking into consideration that the so-often-repeated Francisco I. Madero has tried with the brute force of bayonets to shut up and to drown in blood the pueblos who ask, solicit, or demand from him the fulfillment of the promises of the revolution, calling them bandits and rebels, condemning them to a war of extermination without conceding or granting a single one of the guarantees which reason, justice, and the law prescribe; taking equally into consideration that the President of the Republic Francisco I. Madero has made of Effective Suffrage a bloody trick on the people, already against the

will of the same people imposing Attorney José M. Pino Suárez in the Vice-Presidency of the Republic, or [imposing as] Governors of the States [men] designated by him, like the so-called General Ambrosio Figueroa, scourge and tyrant of the people of Morelos, or entering into scandalous cooperation with **the científico party, feudal landlords, and oppressive bosses, enemies of the revolution proclaimed by him**, so as to forge new chains and follow the pattern of a new dictatorship more shameful and more terrible than that of Porfirio Díaz, for it has been clear and patent that he has outraged the sovereignty of the States, trampling on the laws without any respect for lives or interests, as has happened in the State of Morelos, and others, leading them to the most horrendous anarchy which contemporary history registers.

For these considerations we declare the aforementioned Francisco I. Madero inept at realizing the promises of the revolution of which he was the author, because he has betrayed the principles with which he tricked the will of the people and was able to get into power: incapable of governing, because he has no respect for the law and justice of the pueblos, and a traitor to the fatherland, because he is humiliating in blood and fire Mexicans who want liberties, so as to please the científicos, landlords, and bosses who enslave us, and from today on we begin to continue the revolution begun by him, until we achieve the overthrow of the dictatorial powers which exist.

2. Recognition is withdrawn from Sr. Francisco I. Madero as Chief of the Revolution and as President of the Republic, for the reasons which before were expressed, it being attempted to overthrow this official.

3. Recognized as Chief of the Liberating Revolution is the illustrious **General Pascual Orozco**, the second of the Leader Don Francisco I. Madero, and in case he does not accept this delicate post, recognition as Chief of the Revolution will go to General Don Emiliano Zapata.

4. The Revolutionary Junta of the State of Morelos manifests to the Nation under formal oath: that it makes its own the plan of San Luis Potosí, with the additions which are expressed below in benefit of the oppressed pueblos, and it will make itself the defender of the principles it defends until victory or death.

5. The Revolutionary Junta of the State of Morelos will admit no transactions or compromises until it achieves the overthrow of the dictatorial elements of Porfirio Díaz and Francisco I. Madero, for the nation is tired of false men and traitors who make promises like liberators and who on arriving in power forget them and constitute themselves as tyrants.

6. **As an additional part of the plan we invoke, we give notice: that [regarding] the fields, timber, and water which the landlords, científicos, or bosses have usurped, the pueblos or citizens who have the titles corresponding to those properties will immediately enter into possession of that real estate of which they have been despoiled by the bad faith of our oppressors**, maintaining at any cost with arms in hand the mentioned possession; and the usurpers who consider themselves with a right to them [those properties] will deduce it before the special tribunals which will be established on the triumph of the revolution.

7. In virtue of the fact that the immense majority of Mexican pueblos and citizens are owners of no more than the land they walk on, suffering the horrors of poverty without being able to improve their social condition in any way or to dedicate themselves to Industry or Agriculture, because lands, timber, and water are monopolized in a few hands, for this cause there will be expropriated the third part of those monopolies from the powerful proprietors of them, with prior indemnization, in order that the pueblos and citizens of Mexico may obtain ejidos, colonies, and foundations for pueblos, or fields for sowing or laboring, and the Mexicans' lack of prosperity and wellbeing may improve in all and for all.

8. [Regarding] The landlords, científicos, or bosses who oppose the present plan directly or indirectly, their goods will be nationalized and the two third parts which [otherwise would] belong to them will go for indemnizations of war, pensions for widows and orphans of the victims who succumb in the struggle for the present plan.

9. In order to execute the procedures regarding the properties aforementioned, the laws of disamortization and nationalization will be applied as they fit, for serving us as norm and example can be those laws put in force by the immortal Juárez on ecclesiastical properties, which punished the despots and conservatives who in every time have tried to impose on us the ignominious yoke of oppression and backwardness.

10. The insurgent military chiefs of the Republic who rose up with arms in hand at the voice of Don Francisco I. Madero to defend the plan of San Luis Potosí, and who oppose with armed force the present plan, will be judged traitors to the cause which they defended and to the fatherland, since at present many of them, to humor the tyrants, for a fistful of coins, or for bribes or connivance, are shedding the blood of their brothers who claim the fulfillment of the promises which Don Francisco I. Madero made to the nation.

11. The expenses of war will be taken in conformity with Article II of the Plan of San Luis Potosí, and all procedures employed in the revolution we undertake will be in conformity with the same instructions which the said plan determines.

12. Once triumphant the revolution which we carry into the path of reality, a Junta of the principal revolutionary chiefs from the different States will name or designate an interim President of the Republic, who will convoke elections for the organization of the federal powers.

13. The principal revolutionary chiefs of each State will designate in Junta the Governor of the State to which they belong, and this appointed official will convoke elections for the due organization of the public powers, the object being to avoid compulsory appointments which work the misfortune of the pueblos, like the so-well-known appointment of Ambrosio Figueroa in the State of Morelos and others who drive us to the precipice of bloody conflicts, sustained by the caprice of the dictator Madero and the circle of científicos and landlords who have influenced him.

14. If President Madero and other dictatorial elements of the present and former regime want to avoid the immense misfortunes which afflict the

fatherland, and [if they] possess true sentiments of love for it, let them make immediate renunciation of the posts they occupy and with that they will with something staunch the grave wounds which they have opened in the bosom of the fatherland, since, if they do not do so, on their heads will fall the blood and the anathema of our brothers.

15. Mexicans: consider that the cunning and bad faith of one man is shedding blood in a scandalous manner, because he is incapable of governing; consider that his system of government is choking the fatherland and trampling with the brute force of bayonets on our institutions; and thus, as we raised up our weapons to elevate him to power, we again raise them up against him for defaulting on his promises to the Mexican people and for having betrayed the revolution initiated by him, we are not personalists, we are partisans of principles and not of men!

Mexican People, support this plan with arms in hand and you will make the prosperity and well-being of the fatherland.

**Ayala, November 25, 1911**

Liberty, Justice, and Law  
Signed,

General in Chief **Emiliano Zapata**; Generals **Eufemio Zapata, Francisco Mendoza, Jesús Morales, Jesús Navarro, Otilio E. Montaña, José Trinidad Ruiz, Próculo Capistrán**; Colonels **Felipe Vaquero, Cesáreo Burgos, Quintín González, Pedro Salazar, Simón Rojas, Emigdio Marmolejo, José Campos, Pioquinto Galis, Felipe Tijera, Rafael Sánchez, José Pérez, Santiago Aguilar, Margarito Martínez, Feliciano Domínguez, Manuel Vergara, Cruz Salazar, Lauro Sánchez, Amador Salazar, Lorenzo Vázquez, Catarino Perdomo, Jesús Sánchez, Domingo Romero, Zacarías Torres, Bonifacio García, Daniel Andrade, Ponciano Domínguez, Jesús Capistrán**; Captains **Daniel Mantilla, José M. Carrillo, Francisco Alarcón, Severiano Gutiérrez**; and more signatures follow.

[This] is a true copy taken from the original. Camp in the Mountains of Puebla, December 11, 1911. Signed, General in Chief Emiliano Zapata.

*From: John Womack, Jr, Zapata and the Mexican Revolution (New York: Vintage Books, 1968, 400-404)*

[http://www.emersonkent.com/historic\\_documents/plan\\_of\\_ayala\\_1911.htm](http://www.emersonkent.com/historic_documents/plan_of_ayala_1911.htm).

(Retrieved May 2013)