

BATTLEGROUND WOMEN: *SOLDADERAS* AND FEMALE SOLDIERS IN THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION¹

Revolution and women did not mix well, at least in the eyes of most leaders of the insurrection that swept Mexico in 1910-17. Moreover, common wisdom suggested that armies were no place for the “gentler sex” and hence the two kinds of women that did accompany men to the battleground—female soldiers and *soldaderas*—were generally regarded as marginal to the fighting and extraordinary, or strange, in character.²

Female soldiers received much notice in the press and arts during the revolution and in its aftermath. They were portrayed as fearless women dressed in men’s garb flaunting cartridge belts across the chest and a Mauser rifle on one shoulder. But they were invariably shown in the guise of curiosities, aberrations brought about by the revolution. *Soldaderas* received their share of attention too. They were depicted as loyal, self-sacrificing companions to the soldiers or, in less sympathetic renderings, as enslaved camp followers: “the loyalty of the soldier’s wife is more akin to that of a dog to its master than to that of an intelligent woman to her mate.”³ But even laudatory journalistic accounts, *corridos*, and novels did not concede

¹ This essay was written for the seminar on Revolutionary Armies of Mexico held at the University of Chicago in the fall and winter quarters of 1992-93. I want to thank all the members of the seminar. I am especially indebted to professor Friedrich Katz and to Christopher Boyer and Matthew B. Karush. Katherine Bliss, Peter Guardino, Mary Kay Vaughan, and Jaana Remes made valuable comments. I am also grateful to the editorial board of *The Americas* and the two anonymous readers for their suggestions.

² I use the terms *soldadera* and camp follower synonymously. Although some authors object to this usage on the grounds that it conveys negative overtones, the term is nevertheless apt to describe the unofficial status accorded to these women. *Soldadera* will not be italicized hereafter. By *female soldier* I mean a woman who volunteered as a soldier and who was officially recognized as such. She often commanded her own unit.

³ Fritz Arno Von de Ellen, “Mexican Camp-Followers,” *Harper’s Weekly* 58:19 (May 2, 1914), 19.

soldaderas a prominent role in the revolutionary process, much less in the success of the military campaigns.

More recently, historians have begun to reassess previous interpretations of women in the military.⁴ Here I continue these scholarly efforts but argue, first, that a clear distinction should be made between soldaderas and female fighters. Attempting to emphasize their versatility, recent studies have tended to lump all women of the battlefield together, portraying them simultaneously as loyal camp followers and fierce warriors.⁵ Unfortunately, this aggregation makes it exceedingly difficult to reach general conclusions about why these women decided to join the revolution and what was their contribution in the battlefield. I thus reexamine women's motivations and roles in light of this distinction.

Second, I try to put the experiences of soldaderas and female soldiers in context. Given the highly personal and fragmentary nature of the sources, studies of the battleground women have focused on individual exploits but have tended to disregard the larger context. In contrast, this paper is as much about the armies of the revolution as it is about the women participants. I examine the multifarious arrangements between the two genders in the different military factions and show how these arrangements changed in the course of the struggle. I first look at the involvement of women in the early Maderista and Orozquista bands and draw contrasts with the way women participated in the Federal army, in the large armies of the North (Villistas and Carrancistas), and in the regionally-based Zapatistas. No army of the

⁴ Most notably, Elizabeth Salas, *Soldaderas in the Mexican Military: Myth and History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990). Salas gathered a wealth of otherwise dispersed information. She builds upon the work of Angeles Mendieta Alatorre, *La mujer en la revolución mexicana* (Mexico City: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1961). Other studies also deal with the battleground women: Anna Macías, *Against All Odds: The Feminist Movement in Mexico to 1940* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982); Shirlene Ann Soto, *Emergence of the Modern Mexican Woman: Her Participation in Revolution and Struggle for Equality, 1910-1940* (Denver: Arden Press, 1990); Sandra McGee Deutsch, "Gender and Sociopolitical Change in Twentieth-Century Latin America," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 71:2 (1991), 259-306; Julia Tuñón Pablos, *Mujeres en México: una historia olvidada* (Mexico City: Editorial Planeta, 1987); Frederick C. Turner, *The Dynamic of Mexican Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968); and "Los efectos de la participación femenina en la revolución de 1910," *Historia Mexicana* 44:4 (1967), 603-20. See also Lillian Estelle Fisher, "The Influence of the Present Mexican Revolution Upon the Status of Mexican Women," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 22:1 (1942), 221-28. For recent historiographical reviews of this subject see Asunción Lavrin, "La mujer en México: veinte años de estudio, 1968-1988," and Carmen Ramos Escandón, "(Qué veinte años no es nada? La mujer en México según la historiografía reciente," in *Memorias del simposio de historiografía mexicanista* (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1990), pp. 545-79 and 580-93, respectively.

⁵ See Salas, *Soldaderas*, pp. 73,77.

revolution fought without women but each organized female participation in a distinct manner.

Maderistas, Orozquistas, and the Rise of the Female Soldier

If you love me as I love you,
let us both go to fight for Madero⁶

The Mexico City newspaper *El Imparcial* vividly described the triumphant entrance of Francisco I. Madero and his troops to the capital on June 7, 1911. Revolutionary leaders such as Robles Domínguez, Asúnsolo, Hernández, Zapata, Estudillo, Corona, and many others sent troops to celebrate the downfall of the dictator in a grand parade. The cheerful crowd in Mexico City was impressed by the fine horses and attractive garments of the revolutionaries, especially the northern fighters. The throngs of sightseers were also taken aback by the bizarre spectacle of a horsewoman in male's clothes brandishing her sabre while directing her escort. Esperanza Echeverría of Yautepec, Morelos caused such a stir that she rode through the parade constantly surrounded by a cloud of reporters and photographers.⁷

The cast of participants in this celebration is a sample of the Maderista revolution. It shows the various armies and bands that coalesced around local chieftains in Mexico's far North and in the state of Morelos. The Zapatistas were organized in an unusual fashion, and the Zapatista women, as we shall see, participated in an equally idiosyncratic manner. The northern bands on the other hand, while not identical to one another, had a lot more in common with each other than with either the Zapatistas or the Federal army. In the first place these northern bands—i.e., the Maderista troops of 1910-11 and the Orozquista rebels of 1912—had a similar composition: they were motley groups of members of the middle-class, unemployed or migrant workers, peasants, and hacienda peons.⁸ These armies also resembled one another in that soldiers did not bring women to the battlefield although the band leaders sometimes did.⁹ Maderistas and

⁶ Corrido "La chinita maderista," translated by Frederick C. Turner, *The Dynamic of Mexican Nationalism*, pp. 284-85.

⁷ *El Imparcial*, June 8, 1911.

⁸ Friedrich Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, the United States, and the Mexican Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 36-37. The exact composition of these bands is not well known. See Matthew B. Karush, "Assessing a Revolutionary Contribution: The PLM in Chihuahua, 1906-1912," unpublished paper, University of Chicago, 1993, *passim*.

⁹ The most famous women of the *Maderista* revolution were wives and relatives of the leaders: Sara Pérez de Madero, Francisco's wife; María Ochoa de Robles Domínguez, wife of Alfredo; Carmen Serdán, sister of Aquiles, and others. See Mendieta Alatorre, *La mujer en la revolución mexicana*, 66-77.

Orozquistas lacked camp followers first because their military operations were local and regional in scope. Troops remained close so there was no need to bring women if soldiers could go back to their families with relative ease. But a far more significant obstacle to the presence of camp followers was that Maderista and Orozquista bands, unlike Federal troops, relied more on cavalry and less on trains for transportation. Slow-moving contingents of soldaderas simply deprived cavalry units of their most precious asset: swiftness.

The absence of soldaderas, however, posed daunting problems of organization to the northern revolutionaries. Lacking a commissariat or formal medical attention, the rebels had to set up provisional support units often composed of the few women available as well as some fighting men. For example, in Tamaulipas a band of rebels rose under the command of Alberto Carrera Torres and took the town of Tula and held it for a few days. Immediately doña Juanita, the mother of the revolutionary leader, took charge of the logistics of the operation. She organized a squad for the purpose of obtaining food and ammunition and “exercised authority in all administrative affairs.”¹⁰ This kind of organization heralded the professional service unit but it had two serious drawbacks: it could only work in small bands, and it diverted soldiers from the fight. Later armies of the revolution very seldom resorted to this system.

Maderistas and Orozquistas may have lacked soldaderas but they did count on female soldiers. Indeed for the first two years of the revolution the image of the female soldier captured the public’s imagination. Readers of Mexican and American newspapers followed the adventures of the likes of Rosa Bobadilla who together with her son commanded a cavalry unit in Morelos; Clara de la Rodia who stormed the minting house of Culiacán; and perhaps the most famous of them all “La Coronela” Carmen Parra viuda de Alaniz who started out with Madero at Casas Grandes and participated in the first battle of Ciudad Juárez.¹¹

Female soldiers, like male soldiers, decided to risk their lives in a rebellion only after a complicated calculation that involved pragmatism as well as

¹⁰ Mendieta Alatorre, *La mujer en la revolución mexicana*, pp. 94-95. For a more general description of this insurrectionary movement see Beatriz Rojas, *La Pequeña Guerra: Los Carrera Torres y los Cedillo* (Zamora: El Colegio de Michoacán, 1983), chapter 2.

¹¹ *El álbum de la mujer: antología ilustrada de las mexicanas*, 4 vols. (Mexico City, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1991), 4, pp.83-85, 236 includes a letter from a female soldier to Madero offering her services. See also Gustavo Casasola, *Historia gráfica de la revolución mexicana*, 5 vols. (Mexico City: Editorial Trillas, 1967), 1, p. 241; Mendieta Alatorre, *La mujer en la revolución mexicana*, pp. 77-78, 86, 89. For female soldiers with Orozco see *The Sun* (New York), September 21, 1913, William Buckley Collection of Papers (hereafter BP).

conviction. Political awareness played its part. For instance Sinaloan Generals Ramón Iturbe, Juan Carrasco, and Juan Banderas boasted unusually large contingents of women warriors which was, in part at least, a legacy of the contested gubernatorial elections of 1909.¹² Women took a very active role in that fierce electoral battle between Diego Redo, the Porfirian candidate, and José Ferrel, the independent opponent.¹³ Although the official candidate prevailed, his “triumph” left scars that prompted women to join the rebellion that broke out the following year.¹⁴

But ideals alone did not bring women to the fray; protection was another key ingredient. The life of female soldier Angela “Angel” Jiménez illustrates this point. Her father had been a prominent political opponent of Porfirio Díaz in Oaxaca. After the outbreak of the revolution a squad of Federal soldiers showed up at the family house looking for rebels. While searching the house an officer tried to rape Angela’s sister which resulted in a scuffle that left both the sister and the offending officer dead. Angela’s father then fled to the mountains and joined the revolution. Fifteen-year old Angela fearing further retaliations decided to put on men’s clothes and follow her father to the sierra.¹⁵ Something similar happened to “Chico.” In 1911 she was in Torreón while her father and brothers were fighting for Pascual Orozco. One day Federal troops came into the house and killed “Chico’s” mother and sisters. As the sole female survivor, “Chico” had few other options but to enlist with the Orozquistas to rejoin what was left of her family.¹⁶

Female fighters contributed with their military prowess to the revolution, but did not help to ease the problem of providing logistical support to the armies. In the northern bands of 1910-12 there was little or no division of labor, both men and women fought and both provisioned the troops. Had the Maderista and Orozquista revolts lasted more than a few months, the armies would have required more permanent arrangements. One alternative was to use fully professionalized support units as in modern armies. But this feat was never accomplished during the revolution. The other possible arrange-

¹² *La Opinión* (Los Angeles), October 19, 1930; *Excélsior* (Mexico City), November 23, 1930; Antonio Uroz, *Hombres y mujeres de México* (Mexico City: Editorial Lic. Antonio Uroz, 1974), p. 261; Mendieta Alatorre, *La mujer en la revolución mexicana*, p. 89.

¹³ *Excélsior*, November 23, 1930.

¹⁴ *La Opinión*, October 19, 1930; *Excélsior*, November 23, 1930. Photographic evidence can be found in Casasola, *Historia gráfica de la revolución mexicana*, I. p. 241.

¹⁵ Angela Jiménez, in James Kallas, Nina Kallas, and Esther Pérez eds., *Those Years of the Revolution, 1910-1920: Authentic Bilingual Life Experiences as Told by Veterans of the War*, (San José, CA: Aztlán Today, 1974), pp. 35-64.

¹⁶ *The Sun* (New York), September 21, 1913, BP.

ment was one in which men and women would specialize in different roles: the men fighting and the women looking after the men. The Federal army was an example of this latter system taken to perfection.

Women in the Federal Army

De edad de quince años
me cogen de leva,
y me hacen soldado
del quince de Puebla¹⁷

Federales had large contingents of women almost all serving as camp followers. Porfirio Díaz inherited this antiquated system but did not change it. Wary of the army, Díaz perpetuated its obsolescence in spite of the modernizing ideology of his regime.¹⁸ While the most advanced armies of the world had abandoned the tradition of taking women along—France barred army wives from the ranks in 1840, Britain as late as 1890—in Mexico women and children accompanied the Federal army well into the twentieth century.¹⁹

Soldaderas flocked to the army above all because there was a need for them. The Federal army had no formal commissariat for the bulk of the troops, therefore camp followers became the suppliers of food and other services to the lower ranks composed of Indians, vagrants, prisoners, and poor men.²⁰ The American vice consul in Saltillo referred to soldaderas as “that important division of the Mexican army . . . they are really the commissariat.”²¹ In the late Porfirian era supplying the troops was a thriving business. Soldaderas competed with each other providing food services: a typical soldadera “carried a food basket complete with tablecloth, decorative plates, and, for an added touch, a vase to fill with flowers.”²²

¹⁷ “Corrido del Desertor,” in Jesús Romero Flores ed., *Corridos de la revolución mexicana* (Mexico City: Costa-Amic, 1979), 30.

¹⁸ Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico*, pp. 27-29.

¹⁹ For women in European armies see Barton C. Hacker, “Women and Military Institutions in Early Modern Europe: A Reconnaissance,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 6:4 (1981), 643-71. For women in the U.S. Federal army see Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 25-26, 104-36, 287-327.

²⁰ Salas, *Soldaderas*, p. 36.

²¹ American vice consul John R. Silliman to State Department, Saltillo, May 17, 1913, National Archives, Washington D.C., Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929 (hereafter cited as SD), 812.00/7726, 422.

²² Salas, *Soldaderas*, p. 36.

Conscription practices further encouraged the presence of camp followers. In the Federal army the rank-and-file were held in bondage for several years. Men were reduced to virtual slavery for the duration of their contracts in what was euphemistically called the “volunteer system.” Thus many women decided to accompany their hapless husbands wherever they went; these women often chose to share the hardships and misfortunes of the field rather than be left alone for prolonged periods of time.²³

Anthropologist Jane Holden Kelley conducted extensive interviews with Chepa Moreno and Dominga Ramírez, two Yaqui women that became soldaderas in the Federal army and later in revolutionary armies.²⁴ Their life stories are immensely illuminating of the economic opportunities and the personal situation of camp followers. Both women lived originally in La Colorada mine, Sonora and were deported to Yucatán in the 1900s. Already a middle-aged woman, Chepa Moreno arrived with her husband to the hacienda Nokak. While he worked as an *enganchado*²⁵ in the henequen fields, she cooked for the male workers in the communal kitchen of the hacienda. Without knowing it, Chepa Moreno was training for her future army life in that kitchen. Dominga Ramírez was still a child during her years in Yucatán living with her mother and sister at the Tanihl hacienda.²⁶

Ironically when the *libertad* (the revolution) finally came, the lives of countless Yaquis, including Chepa Moreno and Dominga Ramírez, veered toward the Federal army. In 1911 slave labor was abolished in Yucatán. Most Yaqui workers of Tanihl, Nokak, and other haciendas walked exultantly to Mérida trying to find their way back to Sonora. But the emancipation decree created overnight a large pool of unemployed Yaqui Indians who were stranded thousands of miles away from home. Many of the men had to resort to army jobs to support themselves or were forcibly recruited by press gangs.²⁷ A correspondent of *The London Times* in Mérida, Henry Baerlein, narrates that in the late years of the Porfiriato army press gangs targeted escapees from nearby haciendas. These press gangs became very active

²³ John Rutherford, *Mexican Society During the Revolution: A Literary Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 296. See also Edwin Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism: The Rise and Fall of the Revolutionary Army, 1910-1940* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1968), pp. 4-5, 11.

²⁴ Jane Holden Kelley, *Yaqui Women: Contemporary Life Stories* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), pp. 127-98.

²⁵ The *enganche* was an advancement given to a laborer who then had to work off the debt thus acquired. In Yucatán this system was so corrupted that it resembled bondage.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 130-38, 157-63.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 138-39, 163.

during the Maderista revolution and came alive again in 1912 when the Orozquista rebellion broke out.²⁸

Conscripted men were kept in two large *cuarteles* in Mérida: La Mejorada and El Castillo. These two concentrations of soldiers became magnets for jobless women. Abandoned by her husband, Chepa Moreno started making a living at La Mejorada. But given the bad economic conditions prevailing in Yucatán, she decided to seek a new start in Mexico City. At first she begged in the streets and washed dishes for street vendors, but she soon realized that, as in Mérida, there were better opportunities working for the army. Chepa Moreno's room was close to a *cuartel*, so she started catering to soldiers who had no women to cook for them. She fed Federal soldiers in her house and peddled tortillas at the neighboring *cuartel* for two years.²⁹

Back in Mérida the life of Dominga Ramírez had followed a similar path. Together with her mother and sister, Dominga started a food business around El Castillo. They moved to an adjacent small house and set themselves to grind corn and sell tortillas to the troops. When a few months later the Yaqui battalion was dispatched to Valladolid, the three women followed their clients. Their livelihood now depended on selling food to the troops.³⁰ The experiences of Chepa Moreno and Dominga Ramírez underscore the social and economic forces that made women gravitate toward the Federal army during the Porfiriato and early phase of the revolution. Most camp followers were quite simply the wives of bonded soldiers or entrepreneurial women who were ready to exploit what amounted, literally, to a captive market.

This system changed during the second revolutionary wave that started in 1913. Self-appointed president Victoriano Huerta, facing a double revolt from the North and South, resorted to aggressive conscription practices in which not even women were spared.³¹ In October Huerta signed a decree increasing the standing army to 150,000 men. In the following weeks press gangs throughout the country worked tirelessly to fill the enlarged quota.³² In Mexico City the wife of the American chargé d'affaires, Edith O'Shaughnessy, described how press gangs took any likely-looking person: fathers of

²⁸ Henry Baerlein, *Mexico: The Land of Unrest* (Philadelphia: Herbert and Daniel, 1913), pp. 30-31.

²⁹ Kelley, *Yaqui Women*, pp. 139-40.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 165-66.

³¹ Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 2: 78-79.

³² John Womack, "The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920," in *Cambridge History of Latin America*, ed. Leslie Bethell, 7 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 5, p. 98; Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism*, pp. 19-20.

families, only sons of widows, unattached men. “After the bull-fight on Sunday, seven hundred unfortunates were seized, doubtless never to see their families again.”³³ O’Shaughnessy was particularly concerned that not only men but women were forced into the army. Women were drafted to work in the state-controlled powder mills or were sent to the front to serve as cooks for the field troops.³⁴ The inclusion of women in the dreaded *leva* did not go unnoticed in the American press: “even the [Mexican] government has a hand in bringing women under the yoke of degradation . . . not content with the wholesale impressment among men to fill the depleted ranks of the Federal columns, women by hundreds are seized by Huerta’s orders and forced to abandon their homes.”³⁵ The *leva* continued unabated through early 1914 as Huerta expanded the army to 200,000 in February, and 250,000 in March.³⁶ It is now impossible to determine how many of these women ended up in the battlefield but we know that many did.

Regardless of whether the women served the Federal army willingly or not, they were essential to its functioning. Apparently a helter-skelter mob of criminals, vagabonds, beggars, Indians, and untidy women and children, the Federal army operated nevertheless on the basis of a clear division of labor along gender lines; men and women had distinct and well-defined tasks.³⁷ Soldaderas not only freed soldiers from occupations such as foraging and cooking but they also carried out other assignments like spying on the enemy and smuggling arms from the United States. Their potential became evident during the revolutionary wave that started in 1913; this round was fought entirely by armies that boasted large contingents of female camp followers. The only exception to this were the troops commanded by Emiliano Zapata.

Women and Zapatistas

Las mujeres azoradas
se decían en baja voz:
allí vienen los surianos
¿qué haremos?, -vágame Dios!³⁸

³³ Edith O’Shaughnessy, *A Diplomat’s Wife in Mexico* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1916), 58, 66-67.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 58, 67; Salas, *Soldaderas*, p.40.

³⁵ *The World* (New York), December 1, 1913, BP.

³⁶ Womack, “The Mexican Revolution,” p. 101.

³⁷ Some of the most scornful descriptions of the Federal army include: *The Evening Sun* (New York), November 18, 1913, BP; and Report of the USS Minnesota Flagship to the Secretary of the Navy, June 26, 1913, SD 812.00/8017, 61.

³⁸ *Corrido* “La entrada a México de las fuerzas obregonistas,” Romero Flores ed., *Corridos de la revolución mexicana*, p. 212.

“The Zapatistas were not an army, they were a people in arms” remarked Rosa King, an Englishwoman who lived through the revolution in Morelos.³⁹ Nowhere is her insight more apparent than in the organization of the Liberating Army of the South. Unlike Federales, Villistas, and Carrancistas, the southern fighters always retained a symbiotic relationship with the neighboring villages and towns.⁴⁰ This association determined how women contributed to the rebellion of the South.

Army and village were tied together primarily through the food link. Rebels set up their military camps in the mountains and sierras where they could hide but remained close to a village in order to obtain food. A witness relates how this was done: “la alimentación en los campamentos se obtenía en los pueblos, bajaba un grupo con un coronel con cuatro o cinco a comprar maíz porque Zapata mandaba dinero. Compraban, no robaban, compraban el maíz, subían seis, siete, ocho cargas de maíz que compraban ahí en Ixtapan de la Sal, harina, frijol, arroz”⁴¹ This exchange was no common transaction. It often involved a commitment of the townspeople to support the rebellion. A resident of Tepoztlán said that village officials, *ayudantes de demarcación*, made rounds to the town twice a day to collect tortillas in large sacks and then carried them to the Zapatista soldiers. According to the observer most women gave the tortillas voluntarily.⁴² The southern army thus flourished in symbiosis with the people of Morelos. It was an army that relied, so to speak, on long distance commissariat and cooking services. Women did not need to be in the military camps; for the most part they remained in the towns and pueblos. From their homes Zapatista women were better prepared to supply the troops and had more access to provisions.

The life of Esperanza Martínez sheds light on the connections between rebels and villagers. In detailed interviews with anthropologist Oscar Lewis, she recounted that during the first years of the revolution Zapatistas came

³⁹ Rosa King, *Tempest Over Mexico: A Personal Chronicle* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1935), p. 94. Quoted in Salas, *Soldaderas*, p. 39; and Macías, *Against All Odds*, p. 41.

⁴⁰ Womack points out that far from an autonomous military corporation, the revolutionary army that took shape in Morelos in 1913-14 was simply “an armed league of the state’s municipalities.” John Womack, *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), p. 225. See also Womack, “The Mexican Revolution,” pp. 109-10.

⁴¹ Irene Copado Viuda de Reyes, Archivo de la Palabra, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City, Programa de Historia Oral (hereafter cited as PHO), Z/1/10. Quoted in *El álbum de la mujer*, 4, p. 82-83.

⁴² Oscar Lewis, *Life in a Mexican Village: Tepoztlán Restudied* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963), p. 233.

down regularly to Azteca, her home town, and sent someone from house to house asking for tortillas.⁴³ According to Esperanza Martínez the townspeople liked the Zapatistas so they cooperated. But precisely because village women were so crucial in maintaining the Zapatista insurgency the whole strategy to stamp out the rebels was often directed against the women. On one occasion Carrancista troops were dispatched to Azteca to fight the Zapatistas; as they occupied the town they gathered all the women in the plaza and forced them to make tortillas for them. The Carrancistas were thus killing two birds with one stone: obtaining food and cutting the supply line of the insurgents.⁴⁴ On another occasion Carrancista troops resorted to a more drastic method removing the women of Azteca, Tepoztlán, and other neighboring pueblos and marching them to the city of Cuernavaca.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, as soon as the women were released and came back to their villages they resumed their contribution to the rebels. Finally Carrancistas opted for the “resettlement” strategy which consisted in burning villages to the ground and forcing the residents to disperse into the hills eliminating, once and for all, the supply points of the insurgents.⁴⁶

Food was not the only tie between Zapatistas and villagers. Lacking women at the camps, Zapatistas went to great lengths to obtain sexual gratification. All troops that took part in the revolution raped women occasionally but the Zapatistas were notorious; all kinds of stories of brutality and savagery haunted the southern rebels. *The Mexican Herald* reported that in a small village within two kilometers of Jojutla the entire female population consisting of more than forty women was carried away by the rebels.⁴⁷ The anti-Zapatista press of Mexico City was not the only source of such diatribes. In her account Esperanza Martínez pointed out that Zapatistas came every night into Azteca to take away some women who gave terrible shrieks as they were carried away. At daybreak the women would be back in their houses. Esperanza Martínez always refrained from asking the victims what had happened, “people would say: why do you want to know? If you want to know, let them take you out tonight!”⁴⁸

⁴³ Oscar Lewis, *Pedro Martínez: A Mexican Peasant and His Family* (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 93.

⁴⁴ Lewis, *Pedro Martínez*, p. 93; Lewis, *Life in a Mexican Village*, p. 237.

⁴⁵ Lewis, *Pedro Martínez*, 85. The Carrancista anti-insurgency strategy was condemned in the American press. See *The World*, December 1, 1913, BP.

⁴⁶ Lewis, *Life in a Mexican Village*, p. 237; Lewis, *Pedro Martínez*, 85-86; Womack, *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution*, pp. 138-140, 158, 173-76. See also interview with Ignacia Peña viuda de Fuentes, Huitzilac, PHO/Z/1/18. Reproduced in *El Álbum de la mujer*, 4, pp. 81-82.

⁴⁷ *The Mexican Herald*, April 13, 1913. Quoted in Salas, *Soldaderas*, p. 40.

⁴⁸ Lewis, *Pedro Martínez*, p. 92.

Whereas Esperanza Martínez's life underscores the ties between military camp and village, the life of her husband, Pedro Martínez, sheds light on the crippling disadvantages of not having soldaderas. Zapatistas did not take soldaderas in their military campaigns as it is documented in the descriptions of the Zapatista occupation of Mexico City in November 1914. Pedro Martínez left Azteca without his wife as most other Zapatistas did.⁴⁹ The throngs of curious sightseers in Mexico City were "anxious to behold the southern revolutionaries about whom such hair raising stories have been current during the last four years," but they only found "scattered groups of men" clad in shirt and drawers, some barefooted, and not attempting to conceal their interest in automobiles, streetcars, and other city sights unusual to them.⁵⁰

Pedro Martínez recalls the harshness of army life without soldaderas. After a grueling battle in the district of Milpa Alta Zapatista men had to beg for tortillas and coffee in neighboring houses.⁵¹ From his account it becomes clear that the ineffectiveness of Zapatista forces outside Morelos arose largely from the lack of camp followers. The southern rebels evolved in symbiosis with neighboring towns and villages and thus never constituted an autonomous army meant for long campaigns outside the state.

In spite of its all-male character the Liberating Army of the South included some famous female soldiers.⁵² I mentioned Esperanza Echeverría of Yautepec who attracted so much attention at the parade in Mexico City after Madero's triumph. I also referred to Rosa Bobadilla. Together with her son she fought under general Francisco Pacheco. By 1915 she had attained the rank of colonel and was famous for the unyielding discipline of the troops under her command.⁵³ Margarita Neri was another celebrated warrior of the South, but her fame derived from her cruelty.⁵⁴ These women contributed with their fighting abilities to the revolutionary cause, but did not ease the problem of lack of support services for the Zapatista troops.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 91, 101.

⁵⁰ *The Mexican Herald*, November 26, 1914. See also Silliman to State Department, December 2, 1914, SD 812.00/13957, 1275.

⁵¹ Lewis, *Pedro Martínez*, p. 100.

⁵² King, *Tempest Over Mexico*, p. 69. *The Mexican Herald* reported that a band of 400 Zapatista rebels, including about 20 women, were seen in Michoacán, *The Mexican Herald*, June 20, 1913.

⁵³ See interview with doctor Juan Olivera, PHO/Z/1/11. Reproduced in *El Álbum de la mujer*, 4, pp. 83-85. There is also a photograph of Rosa Bobadilla with the military staff of General Pacheco.

⁵⁴ General Rubén García provides the description in *El Nacional* (Mexico City), November 29, 1959. Reproduced in Mendieta Alatorre, *La mujer en la revolución mexicana*, pp. 92-93. If we are to believe the General's account, Margarita Neri was a cold-blooded fighter ready to torture and kill. She stoned a man to death and cut a young woman's breasts off.

Women and the Northern Revolutionaries

¿Qué dices, Chata, nos vamos?
 Yo sí me voy con usted,
 pero me lleva a caballo
 porque no sé andar a pie⁵⁵

General Juan F. Azcárate wrote in his memoirs that the image of *soldaderas* accompanying revolutionary troops was a creation of the film industry. According to the general only the Federal army was capable of indignities such as bringing women to the fray. Villista Colonel José Felipe Hernández Ortiz partly disagreed and contended that, among the rebels, Villa's men did not have *soldaderas* but Carrancistas did.⁵⁶ The record shows that neither Carrancistas nor Villistas were averse to *soldaderas*; quite the opposite, the Division of the North led by Francisco "Pancho" Villa and the Divisions of the Northeast and Northwest fighting under the leadership of Venustiano Carranza all had sizable contingents of female camp followers.

Soldaderas wound up in these northern armies in two ways. The first was through the natural expansion of the soldier base. During the first months of 1913 the northern rebels gathered in rather small bands not unlike those of 1910-12; but as the appeal of revolutionaries extended farther away many men brought their spouses. When John Reed asked one *soldadera* in Villa's camp how she had joined she said: "I remember well when Filadelfo called to me one morning in the little morning before it was light—we lived in Pachuca—and said: Come! we are going out to fight because the good Pancho Madero has been murdered this day! . . . Filadelfo saddled the burro, and we rode out through the streets just as light was coming."⁵⁷ Not all females accompanying Villistas and Carrancistas were willing camp followers, some had been abducted and forced into the rebels' armies.⁵⁸

Soldaderas also found their way into the ranks of the insurgents as scores of Federal soldiers and *soldaderas* defected. American journalist Herman Whitaker described how three hundred *soldaderas* were left behind by the

⁵⁵ *Corrido* "La toma de Torreón," Romero Flores ed., *Corridos de la revolución mexicana*, p. 82.

⁵⁶ Juan F. Azcárate, *Esencia de la revolución mexicana* (Mexico City: Costa-Amic, 1966), p. 80; José Felipe Hernández Ortiz, PHO/1/51, 14. Quoted in Salas, *Soldaderas*, p. 45.

⁵⁷ John Reed, *Insurgent Mexico* (New York: International Publishers, 1969), pp. 188-89.

⁵⁸ See the case of María Villasaña López, in *Those Years of the Revolution, 1910-1920*, p. 208; Oscar J. Martínez, *Fragments of the Mexican Revolution: Personal Accounts From the Border* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983), p. 232; William B. Davis, *Experiences and Observations of an American Consular Officer During the Mexican Revolution* (Chula Vista, CA.: Wayside Press, 1920), pp. 51, 171-72.

Federales after the disastrous battle of Paredón in May 1914: “within twenty-four hours they had all set up new households with Villa’s bachelors.”⁵⁹ The Carrancista forces went even further in recruiting Federal soldiers and camp followers; they literally picked up the remnants of the Federal army as they passed through Mexico City, Puebla, and Veracruz. Chepa Moreno and Dominga Ramírez changed stripe in this fashion. Chepa Moreno had been working for the Federal troops at a *cuartel* in Mexico City for over two years, but as the carrancistas entered the capital in August 1914 she garnered a new crop of boarders.⁶⁰ She then attached herself to a Mayo Indian who served in a battalion of Mayos—the Sixty-seventh—and followed him to Puebla, Pachuca, and various towns in Veracruz.⁶¹ Similarly Dominga Ramírez and her family “joined” the Carrancistas after the Federal troops in Mérida were “liberated” and transformed into the Twenty-second Battalion of Yaqui Indians. The three women followed the brand-new revolutionaries to Mexico City and spent some months rotating from one *cuartel* to another.⁶²

Many observers agree that soldaderas were poor women of rural and urban origin, but little is known about their ethnic origin.⁶³ Many of them were *mestizas* but others belonged to various Indian groups. Battalions were often formed along ethnic lines such as the Sixty-seventh and Twenty-second.⁶⁴ I. Thord Gray, an American private who joined first the Villistas and then the Carrancistas, contends that the rank-and-file of the northern revolutionary armies were peons and Indians of different tribes.⁶⁵ According to Thord Gray there were Apaches, Tarahumaras, and Tepehuanes fighting with Villa; whereas the Carrancistas fought along the Pacific coast aided by thousands of Yaquis and Mayos as well as Pimas, Tarahumaras, and Tepehuanes. The Yaquis and Mayos were formed into battalions, the others were not formed into regiments but “one did notice certain groupings in platoons

⁵⁹ Herman Whitaker, “Villa and his People,” *Sunset: The Monthly of the Pacific* 33:2 (1914), 255. Quoted in Salas, *Soldaderas*, p. 40.

⁶⁰ Kelley, *Yaqui Women*, p. 140. See also Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism*, p. 33.

⁶¹ Kelley, *Yaqui Women*, p. 141.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 164–65.

⁶³ Emilia Enríquez de Rivera, “Misión Sublime de la Mujer,” *El Hogar* 12 (August 1914). Reproduced in *El Álbum de la mujer mexicana*, 4, p. 228; J. H. Plenn, “Forgotten Heroines of Mexico: Tales of the *Soldaderas*, Amazons of War and Revolution,” *Travel* 68 (April 1936), p. 60; Arno Von De Ellen, “Mexican Camp-Followers,” p. 19.

⁶⁴ Chepa Moreno said that most of the women accompanying the soldiers of the Mayo battalion were from northern Mexico. Kelley, *Yaqui Women*, p. 143.

⁶⁵ I. Thord Gray, *Gringo Rebel* (Coral Gables, Fla.: University of Miami Press, 1960), pp. 209–10, 234.

and even companies.’’⁶⁶ It is likely that soldaderas fell into similar ethnic and troop divisions.⁶⁷

By the mid-to-late 1913 the Villistas and Carrancistas had so many camp followers that they relied entirely on them for all foraging, cooking, and camping services. In just a few months the northern armies had made the transition from small bands of men to ambulatory communities of men, women, and children. A *New York Times* correspondent wrote that on several occasions he had counted the passengers on Carrancista military trains and fully half were found to be women and children.⁶⁸ One week later another journalist visiting the Carrancista forces at hacienda Hermanas near Pjdras Negras reported that ‘‘so many soldiers are accompanied on campaigns by their families that Carranza’s headquarters looks more like a great gypsy camp or an immense picnic than a military encampment.’’⁶⁹ Villa’s Division of the North was not different; in early 1914 an observer remarked that ‘‘Villa’s army trains, moving across the deserts, are the most picturesque of sights in this queer Mexican world. While the horses, supplies and munitions of war fill the inside, the seventeen thousand men, four thousand women, and about the same number of children, which compose the army, ride on top.’’⁷⁰

Thus the Constitutionalist revolution was fought by armies fully outfitted with camp followers. This was largely due to the scale of the conflict. Unlike the regional Maderista and Orozquista insurrections, the military campaigns after 1913 raged throughout large portions of the country. Now the goal of the rebels was the unconditional surrender of Victoriano Huerta and the total destruction of the Federal army, which meant waging war throughout the North into the central region and farther away if necessary. Armies had to be mobile and autonomous with fully developed logistical support; in short, they needed soldaderas. The reverse was also true: women needed the armies. Federales, Carrancistas, and Villistas fought far from home during prolonged periods of time, and so women had the grim choice

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

⁶⁷ Villistas boasted Coras and Huicholes some of whom were won over by the Carrancistas. See Joseph E. Grimes and Thomas B. Hinton, ‘‘The Huichol and the Cora,’’ in *Handbook of Middle American Indians*, 12 vols. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964), 8, p. 795. Ralph Beals studying the Mexican Yaqui communities in 1932 found out that the ration of women to men was 3 to 1. This suggests the extent to which Yaqui Indians participated in the Revolution. Ralph L. Beals, *The Contemporary Culture of the Cáhita Indians* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology, 1945), p. 1.

⁶⁸ *New York Times*, November 9, 1913.

⁶⁹ *The Sun*, November 16, 1913, BP.

⁷⁰ Whitaker, ‘‘Villa and his People,’’ 256.

of either coming with the troops or remaining home, often unprotected, in the midst of a country in turmoil. Many women chose to follow their men into the field.

Female soldiers were also protagonists in the armies of the North. *The Sun* pointed out that through the Constitutionalist armies there was ‘‘a sprinkling of women who are fighting for motives of patriotism and to rid their country of Victoriano Huerta.’’⁷¹ Similarly no less than twenty-five women fitted out with horses, rifles, and cartridge belts were seen among Villista troops in Ciudad Juárez in December 1913. According to the description they were the wives, daughters, and sweethearts of the rebels’ officers, and requested Villa’s permission to accompany the troop trains and take part in the battles.⁷²

Within a few months of the outbreak of the second revolutionary wave in 1913 the major warring factions were recruiting soldaderas and female soldiers in order to sustain their military efforts. The versatility and efficiency of these women was invaluable in the battleground.

Soldaderas and Female Soldiers in Action, 1913-1915

Si Adelita se fuera con otro
la seguiría por tierra y por mar
si por mar, en un buque de guerra
si por tierra, en un tren militar⁷³

War with Villa is one long fiesta for both soldados and soldaderas, wrote an American correspondent in 1914.⁷⁴ He was referring to the casual, picnic-like, and often disorganized military camps. Villistas were not alone in this regard; all major fighting forces, except the Zapatistas, had adopted the same army life-style. But beyond first impressions there was much more than amusement to the way armies travelled, camped, fought, and solved the daily problems of life on the trail.

Military trains were one of the most common sights during the Mexican Revolution; passengers rode inside boxcars or, when horses or ammunition

⁷¹ *The Sun*, November 16, 1913, BP.

⁷² *The New York Tribune*, December 1, 1913, BP.

⁷³ *Corrido* ‘‘La Adelita,’’ in Romero Flores ed., *Corridos de la revolución mexicana*, 94. This corrido became a battle hymn of Villistas. Soldaderas were known as ‘‘adelitas’’ among Villa’s troops while the soldaderas of the Federal army were pejoratively called ‘‘guachas.’’ See Kallas and Pérez eds., *Those Years of the Revolution, 1910-1920*, pp. 32-33; and Soto, *Emergence of the Modern Mexican Woman*, p. 44.

⁷⁴ Whitaker, ‘‘Villa and His People,’’ p. 255.

were transported, on top and even underneath on planks tied with ropes.⁷⁵ Here the duties of the soldadera began. She came fully outfitted with camping equipment, cooking utensils, plants, and animals. A railway conductor complained that the Federal troops carried everything: pigs, sheep, chickens, dogs, pet crows, poll parrots and “took more pains to load the chickens and dogs . . . than the guns and ammunition.”⁷⁶ As soon as the train stopped, whether for one minute or for hours, the soldaderas unloaded and started cooking beans and tortillas.⁷⁷ They got the food either from their personal cargo or from the commissary car—almost all military trains had them—or if the train stopped at a village they ran to the local stores.⁷⁸

When troops left the train and went into the field on foot, soldaderas came along. They could be seen at the rear, singly or in groups, carrying their bundles of clothes, food, and pots on their heads or strapped around their backs with rebozos. Several women carried children too.⁷⁹ Baerlein described how the Federal cavalry moved into other quarters: “first the soldiers jog along, their somber uniforms all dusty, then a multitude of women, some of them with children fastened to their backs, and all of them with pots and pans. They try to keep up with the soldiers, but it is a weary business. At their heels and very wretched are a quantity of mongrels.”⁸⁰

But the most valuable service provided by soldaderas was not cooking in trains nor carrying the gear, it was foraging for the encamped troops. She hesitated at nothing to put together a meal. Zapatista-sympathizer Esperanza Martínez became alarmed when she saw the determination of the women brought by the Federal troops to Morelos. They were the ones who took everything away, mules, chickens, and clothes.⁸¹ A Federal officer said that

⁷⁵ Thord Gray, *Gringo Rebel*, p. 212; Salas, *Soldaderas*, p. 43. An entire army could be housed in trains. Before entering Mexico City, Villista General Felipe Angeles stopped at the Hacienda de los Morales. Many people went in automobiles, taxi-cabs, and coaches to greet the army. They found long lines of boxcars strung out over the tracks on both sides of the hacienda station for a distance of several miles. *The Mexican Herald*, December 3, 1914.

⁷⁶ H. O. Harris, United States Senate Hearings, Subcommittee on Foreign Relations, 62nd Congress, 1913, 663. Casasola confirms the story: soldaderas had plants hanging from the boxcars, dogs with military names such as *Napoleón*, *El Sargento*, and *Trompeta*. Boxcars were like moving homes. Casasola, *Historia gráfica de la revolución mexicana*, 2, p. 664.

⁷⁷ Soldaderas riding on top could even cook while the train was in motion so that it seemed as if each boxcar had a chimney. Casasola, *Historia gráfica de la revolución mexicana*, 2, p. 664. See also Whitaker, “Villa and his People,” p. 362; *The New York Times*, November 9, 1913; Plenn, “Forgotten Heroines of Mexico,” p. 60.

⁷⁸ H. O. Harris, United States Senate Hearings, pp. 663-64.

⁷⁹ Casasola, *Historia gráfica de la revolución mexicana*, 2, p. 664; Thord Gray, *Gringo Rebel*, p. 212; Silliman to Department of State, May 17, 1913, SD 812.00/7726, 423.

⁸⁰ Baerlein, *Mexico*, pp. 122-23.

⁸¹ Lewis, *Pedro Martínez*, p. 92.

on one occasion some of their *soldaderas* intended to buy turkeys from a family in Morelos; since the owners were Zapatistas and did not want to sell, the *soldaderas* forced their way in and took what they needed.⁸²

Soldaderas were impressive foragers after battles. In July 1913 when Villista rebels under Tomás Urbina entered Durango, the troops soon started their work of pillage and destruction. But as the American consul reported: “the women vultures were particularly voracious and could be seen fighting and clawing their way through the entrance of every store, from which they issued a few minutes later literally bowed down by the weight of their booty.”⁸³ *Soldaderas* also plundered the dead scavenging for usable objects.⁸⁴ The pressure to feed the troops was always great so the methods used to procure victuals were often extreme.

Nursing was another major occupation of camp followers. It was all the more important, except for Villa’s hospital train fitted out with operating rooms, drug stores, and sick wards, there were only informal medical services available to the combatant forces.⁸⁵ After the fighting was over *soldaderas* combed the ground looking for wounded soldiers. *Soldaderas* treated the injured on the spot, then transported them in ox carts to the nearest hospital—if there was one—or to the camp.⁸⁶ One camp follower recalled that her specialty was washing wounds of soldiers and she often had to tear pieces of her clothes in order to make bandages.⁸⁷ Dr. Louis C. Duncan, an American physician involved in setting up a makeshift hospital at Presidio—just opposite Ojinaga—asserted that an injured Mexican soldier was “in luck if he had a woman along . . . she looked out for his belongings, took care of him, procured his food and cooked it, washed his clothes, and in fact did everything she could.”⁸⁸

Soldaderas were also adept at smuggling arms and ammunition from the United States. They were more effective than soldiers because they appeared

⁸² King, *Tempest Over Mexico*, pp. 177, 183.

⁸³ American consul in Durango to the State Department, Durango, dated June 4, 1913, SD 812.00/8075, 328.

⁸⁴ Plenn, “Forgotten Heroines,” pp. 25–26. See account of Villista soldier Jesús Hurtado Ramírez, PHO/1/108.

⁸⁵ Louis C. Duncan, “The Wounded at Ojinaga,” *Military Surgeon* 34 (May 1914), 412; Whitaker, “Villa and his People,” p. 363. There were middle-class women serving as nurses. See Macías, *Against All Odds*, p. 39; and Mendieta Alatorre, *La mujer en la revolución mexicana*, p. 83.

⁸⁶ Duncan, “The Wounded at Ojinaga,” pp. 412, 436; Salas, *Soldaderas*, p. 56; and Mendieta Alatorre, *La mujer en la revolución mexicana*, p. 82.

⁸⁷ María Villasaña López, in *Those Years of the Revolution, 1910–1920*, p. 80.

⁸⁸ Duncan, “The Wounded at Ojinaga,” p. 435. Quoted in Salas, *Soldaderas*, p. 58.

as harmless women in—supposedly—a war of men. Since the outbreak of the anti-Huertista revolution until February 1914 the United States imposed an arms embargo on the Mexican rebels and eventually on the Huertista government too.⁸⁹ The embargo never stopped completely the flow of arms but reduced it considerably providing a strong incentive to develop smuggling capabilities. Women and children took active roles in transporting ammunition and equipment across the border.⁹⁰ According to a report women wore small belts under the skirt that dropped near the knees where they carried hundreds of rounds of ammunition. Countless rifles and machine guns were also smuggled into Mexico, many by *soldaderas*.⁹¹

We know little about the private world of camp followers. The majority had stable relationships with soldiers; an American officer explained that many *soldaderas* seemed to have lived happily and faithfully for years with their “so-called” husbands.⁹² In this case the *soldadera* was like a housewife on the battlefield. She would take care of her spouse, although occasionally she tended her husband’s friends, or even worked for other soldiers to supplement the family income.⁹³ Unattached camp followers comprised a second and more varied group. For instance bachelor soldiers often hired the services of a special type of *soldadera* called “mother” who procured and prepared food for them.⁹⁴ Prostitutes also travelled with the armies catering to the needs of unattached soldiers. Dr. Duncan estimated that as many as half of all Federal soldiers at Ojinaga had venereal diseases: “syphilis was very common, chancroid and gonorrhoea a little less so. Men with one or two huge neglected buboes frequently came in.”⁹⁵

⁸⁹ Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 2, p. 30-31.

⁹⁰ Manuel L. Luján, representative of Pascual Orozco in the United States, declared that during the Orozco uprising men, women, and children smuggled arms and ammunition. Manuel L. Luján, United States Senate Hearings, p. 295.

⁹¹ *El Paso Morning Times*, January 24 and May 6, 1914. Quoted in Salas, *Soldaderas*, p. 56.

⁹² Captain George H. Estes, “The Internment of Mexican Troops in 1914,” *Infantry Journal* 11 (May-June, July-August, September-October 1915), pp. 54-55. Cited in Salas, *Soldaderas*, p. 64. Rivalries among *soldaderas* could have serious consequences since they had easy access to weapons. Whitaker describes how one *soldadera* blew off the head of a rival with a bomb that she had picked up on the battlefield. Whitaker, “Villa and his People,” p. 254.

⁹³ First Captain Jesús Herrera Calderón, PHO/1/66, 13. Cited in Salas, *Soldaderas*, p. 44; Oscar Lewis, *A Death in the Sánchez Family* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), p. xvii.

⁹⁴ Dr. Francisco Ruiz Moreno, PHO/1/155, p. 22. Quoted in Salas, *Soldaderas*, p. 44. See also the account of Jacobo Estrada, PHO/1/121, p. 31.

⁹⁵ Duncan, “The Wounded at Ojinaga,” p. 435. For prostitution among *soldaderas* see also Ricardo Pozas, *Juan Pérez Jolote: biografía de un Tzotzil* (Mexico City: Editorial Jus, 1948), p. 302. We can get some glimpses of this world in the reports of United States officials concerned with the internment of the Federal army commanded by General Salvador Mercado at Fort Bliss, Texas and Fort Wingate, New

Camp followers were vital to all armies but there was a price to be paid: in terms of strategy soldaderas were burdensome. They were most useful in the large infantry columns along the railway lines but could not keep up with the swift cavalry units that pushed onward and away from the home base. Indeed the requirements of cavalry units often conflicted with the presence of soldaderas. When traveling by train, horses took all the space inside the freight cars pushing soldiers into the roof tops and putting pressure on officers to leave the camp followers and their bulky cargoes behind.⁹⁶ On the ground soldaderas had no hope of keeping pace with the mounted troops. Many cavalry units had no women; Villa's elite troops, the Dorados, and Obregón's First and Second cavalry brigades were not allowed to go to battle accompanied by soldaderas.⁹⁷ In fact, from time to time troop commanders toyed with the idea of eliminating soldaderas altogether. Villa came closer than anyone else to attaining this goal. Since cavalry constituted the backbone of the Villista forces, Villa became the most ardent opponent of camp followers. He complained bitterly about the burdensome soldaderas and sought to supplant their functions as commissary and medical corps with professional services such as the hospital train. But however hard Villa tried, he met the unified opposition of soldiers and soldaderas. As one Villista Major put it: "we had to have soldaderas if we wanted to have soldiers."⁹⁸

While the cavalry constituted terra inhospita for soldaderas it was the natural habitat of female fighters. Female soldiers also thrived in the revolutionary campaigns of 1913-15 although in sheer numbers there were only a handful of them. According to one late-1913 estimate there were around 200 female soldiers scattered in all warring factions.⁹⁹ They came into the army through varied and often accidental routes. Many were relatives of soldiers and officers: "La Coronela" Rosa Bobadilla was the wife of Pedro Casas, she simply took over his command after he got killed; Angela "Angel" Jiménez was the daughter of a Zapatista and then Villista officer; "La Gera" Carrasco was the wife and mentor of Sinaloan General Juan

Mexico in 1914. There is evidence that some soldaderas were prostitutes. American officers at Fort Wingate decided to set up a detention area for camp followers who "engaged in repeated acts of infidelity or who appeared incorrigible," and were at the brink of expelling Guadalupe Ramírez from the camp. Salas, *Soldaderas*, p. 64.

⁹⁶ Thord Gray, *Gringo Rebel*, p. 211; Reed, *Insurgent Mexico*, pp. 141, 189; and Plenn, "Forgotten Heroines," p. 60.

⁹⁷ Salas, *Soldaderas*, p. 46; Thord Gray, *Gringo Rebel*, p. 212.

⁹⁸ Major Constantino Caldero Vázquez, PHO/1/110, 29. See also Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 2, p. 143, 162; Salas, *Soldaderas*, pp. 43, 45-46; and Thord Gray, *Gringo Rebel*, pp. 36, 208-209, 216.

⁹⁹ *The Sun*, September 21, 1913, BP.

Carrasco; Encarnación Mares was the wife of Isidro Cárdenas, both Carrancista soldiers.¹⁰⁰

Other female fighters were outlaws. “La Coronela” María de la Luz Espinoza Barrera had spent five years in prison for killing her husband’s lover before joining the revolution. Margarita Neri had killed her own husband and was a fugitive by the time she enlisted with the Zapatistas. Women leaders of bandit gangs often joined the revolution; John Womack mentions a band of women dressed in rags and plundered finery and silk stockings led by “La China.” They fought with the Zapatistas ostensibly to avenge their dead men but also conducted raids in the district of Tetecala. Thord Gray asserts that similar bandit gangs led by women joined Villa and Carranza.¹⁰¹

It is hard to make generalizations about female soldiers given their small number and heterogeneity, but marked differences set them apart from soldaderas.¹⁰² In the first place female soldiers generally belonged to a higher social class. A female soldier had to own her own horse since it was unlikely that an officer would deprive a male soldier of his animal to give it to a woman. Indeed in some instances female fighters were outright affluent. “La Güera” Carrasco was so wealthy that she may have contributed in financing Juan Carrasco’s army; Carmen Vélez fought in Tlaxcala leading a company composed of her own hacienda peons; “Chiquita,” a female soldier of the Federal army, had been educated in France and the United States.¹⁰³

Admittedly this class distinction is hard to prove beyond circumstantial evidence; but the difference in status accorded to each group of women is

¹⁰⁰ Interview with doctor Juan Olivera, PHO/Z/1/11. Reproduced in *El Álbum de la mujer*, 4, p. 83-85. See story of Angela Jiménez, in *Those Years of the Revolution, 1910-1920*, p. 35-64; *La Opinión*, August 15, 1937; Mendieta Alatorre, *La mujer en la revolución mexicana*, pp. 89-90.

¹⁰¹ Macías, *Against All Odds*, pp. 42-43. There are contradictory reports about Margarita Neri. See *El Nacional* (Mexico City), November 29, 1959; and Soto, *Emergence of the Modern Mexican Woman*, p. 45. Womack, *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution*, p. 170; Thord Gray, *Gringo Rebel*, p. 212. For criminal acts of women soldiers see *El Imparcial*, August 19, 1914.

¹⁰² Macías draws the distinction very clearly: Macías, *Against All Odds*, p. 41. Salas, on the contrary, contends that the difference is less than clear-cut and argues that because of the changing configurations of battle lines, many times camp followers by necessity had to perform as soldiers. Salas, *Soldaderas*, pp. 73, 77.

¹⁰³ For “La Güera” Carrasco see Soto, *Emergence of the Modern Mexican Woman*, p. 52-53. Other persons who met her confirm the impression that she was a sophisticated lady. See Adolfo M. Wilhelmy, *La Opinión*, August 15, 1937; and Plenn, “Forgotten Heroines,” p. 60. For Carmen Vélez see *El Nacional*, January 3, 1947. For the story of “Chiquita” see *The Sun*, September 21, 1913, BP.

evident. Soldaderas were never officially recognized and had no hope of advancement. In contrast female fighters usually registered in the army rosters, *se dieron de alta*, and could climb up in the rank ladder if they proved themselves in battle.¹⁰⁴ Using the rank system of the Federal army, many female soldiers rose to be captains and a handful of them attained the rank of colonel.¹⁰⁵ This status distinction is summarized by a contemporary witness: there were “commanders [such as] Petra Herrera, María Cadena, they were feisty and spirited, and had their own followers. Other women were only good for stealing boots from the dead.”¹⁰⁶

Female soldiers and soldaderas served different purposes within the army; this was perhaps the most important distinction. Soldaderas did not bear arms except in unusual circumstances and very seldom engaged in combat.¹⁰⁷ Female soldiers, on the other hand, set out to fight. Although fighting was their main occupation, female fighters also performed other services for the troops such as spying. One ploy was to have female soldiers intermingle with the enemy’s camp followers which constituted precious networks of information. “Angel” Jiménez recounts that she would “dress up like a woman and infiltrate the soldaderas of the Federal troops obtaining all kinds of information.”¹⁰⁸ This maneuver was standard procedure throughout the revolution. One Zapatista woman said that on one occasion a group of suspicious-looking women came to the camp selling soap and chili peppers. The next day Carrancista troops fell upon the Zapatistas at 4 o’clock in the morning!¹⁰⁹ General Francisco L. Urquiza said that in the Northeast the best spy was María Martínez, “la niña de los velos.” She used to work in Monclova, Saltillo, and Monterrey when these cities were occupied by Federales.¹¹⁰ Federal troops also made use of women spies. A young woman from the South called “Chiquita” was the protagonist of one of the most dramatic spying operations of the Revolution. She rode into Jiménez, Chihuahua at the time of the Orozco rebellion, announcing that she was a trained nurse. She worked for some time ministering to the wounded but one

¹⁰⁴ See declarations of General Ramón F. Iturbe in Mendieta Alatorre, *La mujer en la revolución mexicana*, pp. 108-09; Casasola, *Historia gráfica de la revolución mexicana*, 2, p. 720; *El Nacional*, November 8, 1959; Thord Gray, *Gringo Rebel*, p. 212; King, *Tempest Over Mexico*, p. 69.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with doctor Juan Olivera López, PHO/Z/111. Reproduced in *El Álbum de la mujer*, p. 85.

¹⁰⁶ Recollections of Esperanza, in Lucía Fox Lockert ed., *Chicanas: Their Voices, Their Lives* (Lansing, Mich.: State Board of Education, 1988), p. 1.

¹⁰⁷ Kelley, *Yaqui Women*, p. 142; Macías, *Against All Odds*, p. 41.

¹⁰⁸ Angela Jiménez, in *Those Years of the Revolution, 1910-1920*, p. 41.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Irene Copado viuda de Reyes. Reproduced in *El Álbum de la mujer*, 4, p. 83.

¹¹⁰ *El Nacional*, March 5, 1954.

day she “made a dash out of Jiménez on horseback taking important papers, maps, and documents of Pascual Orozco.”¹¹¹

Female soldiers also furnished valuable assistance as messengers and go-betweens. In his memoirs General Urquizo wrote extensively about a woman named Belem whom served as courier between General Pablo González and Venustiano Carranza.¹¹² Mrs. Castillo, wife of Máximo Castillo, a Federal officer detained in the United States, declared in an interview that she was a messenger between her husband and General Victoriano Huerta.¹¹³

In short female fighters differed from *soldaderas* in their social background, status in the armed forces, and functions. In everyday life the contrast was striking. A Mexican journalist and photographer put it succinctly: “la auténtica soldadera es la que va en las columnas pesadas, sin perder su carácter de mujer, de esposa, de madre y hasta de víctima . . . en las columnas volantes, la soldadera necesita masculinizarse completamente, en lo exterior y en lo interior: vestir como hombre y conducirse como hombre; ir a caballo, como todos, resistir las caminatas y a la hora de la acción demostrar con el arma en la mano que no es una soldadera sino un soldado.”¹¹⁴

How did women become female soldiers? We know very little. Self-defence and a yearning to fit in with the rest of the troops may have led these women into such a stunning transmutation.¹¹⁵ While some female fighters preserved their feminine appearance, most of them fancied khaki suits with broad-brimmed Stetsons, cartridge belts across the chest or around the waist, and pistols or a Mauser rifle slung on one shoulder. Some even lowered their voices or swaddled their chests to hide their breasts.¹¹⁶ After women such as Captain Enriqueta Martínez established themselves as pow-

¹¹¹ *The Sun*, September 21, 1913, BP. From an independent source, Soto tells almost the same story so the character, probably called Josefina Ranzeta, may have been real. Soto, *Emergence of the Modern Mexican Woman*, 38.

¹¹² Francisco L. Urquizo, *Memorias de campaña: de subteniente a general* (Mexico City: Costa-Amic, 1971), p. 135.

¹¹³ *El Paso Morning Times*, February 19, 1914. Cited in Salas, *Soldaderas*, p. 61.

¹¹⁴ Casasola, *Historia gráfica de la revolución mexicana*, 2, p. 664. Part of this quote can be found in Macías, *Against All Odds*, p. 42.

¹¹⁵ See the story of Angela Jiménez, in *Those Years of the Revolution, 1910-1920*, pp. 35-64.

¹¹⁶ There are several photographs of female soldiers in Casasola, *Historia gráfica de la revolución mexicana*, 1, p. 241-42. For details about their attire see *The Sun*, September 21, 1913; and Urquizo, *Memorias de campaña*, pp. 133-34. Cross-dressing has been a common feature of female soldiers in all wars and revolutions. See Jean Bethke Elstain, *Women and War* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), pp. 173-74.

erful troop leaders, the transformation became easier for the ones who followed. Captain Martínez rose under the Figueroa brothers in Guerrero and had twenty women under her command. María Cadena, one of her followers, commented that whenever the troops entered a town Enriqueta Martínez would go from home to home in her striking attire inviting other women to join in. María Cadena indicated that the women who did enlist were seen wearing men's garb in a short time.¹¹⁷ María Cadena herself confessed that she felt shy when she first wore male's clothes, but once she took part in a battle near Acapulco she felt better. After proving herself in combat she could claim full membership in this exclusive sorority.¹¹⁸

Wives of officers sometimes armed themselves when their husbands were killed; this is the case of Rosa Bobadilla viuda de Casas and Carmen Parra viuda de Alaniz.¹¹⁹ But the same transformation was far more difficult for soldaderas. Thord Gray indicates that camp followers sometimes picked up the guns of their dead men and fought for a while, but he also points out that as a rule they later reattached themselves to other men.¹²⁰ Indeed a few women did manage to move from the world of soldaderas to that of female soldiers and vice versa, but by and large the two female domains remained distinct.

After two years of continuous revolution the battleground women had become entrenched in the military system. However, their presence in the field was dependent upon circumstances that started to change in 1915.

Decline and Fall of the Battleground Women

Pobre de la Cucaracha,
 en que triste situación
 se encuentra esa muchacha
 pues su Juan se fue al panteón¹²¹

The decline of women from revolutionary armies occurred as rapidly as their rise. By mid-1915 very few female soldiers were seen in the field and

¹¹⁷ *La Opinión*, October 19, 1930 and January 31, 1932. See also *Excelsior*, November 23, 1930. Enriqueta Martínez was not the only female leader encouraging women to join; Petra Ruiz also commanded a brigade of female soldiers. *El Nacional*, November 8, 1959. Cited in Salas, *Soldaderas*, p. 47.

¹¹⁸ *La Opinión*, January 31, 1932.

¹¹⁹ Anita Brenner, *The Wind that Swept Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), p. 46; and Mendieta Alatorre, *La mujer en la revolución mexicana*, p. 77-78.

¹²⁰ Thord Gray, *Gringo Rebel*, p. 212.

¹²¹ *Corrido* "La cucaracha," in Romero Flores ed., *Corridos de la revolución mexicana*, p. 146.

all factions were abandoning soldaderas by the hundreds.¹²² Lack of food, Villa's decision to revert to guerrilla warfare, and Obregón's efforts to professionalize the Constitutionalist army forced women out of the battlefield in a matter of months.

Food was easily obtained in the early stages of the revolution. Rebel armies in the North and in Morelos were supported by enormous surpluses of edibles that hacendados had stored throughout the gainful years of the Porfiriato. Bands of rebels simply raided haciendas to eat and obtain provisions.¹²³ Moreover, as revolutionaries came to control large regions, particularly in the North, they confiscated—or in the Carrancista terminology “intervened”—some of the largest and richest haciendas in Mexico. These resources were converted into arms and food for the insurrection.¹²⁴

But after two years of continuous warfare granaries throughout Mexico were brought to near exhaustion. Food shortages occurred in Morelos as early as mid-1914, hitting both rebels and government troops. When Pedro Martínez returned from the Mexico City campaign, he found his wife at the brink of starvation. People in Morelos were scraping a living out of *quelites*, *tejocotes*, raw mangos, guavas, and sugar cane.¹²⁵ The situation was not better for the Federal troops. Even the resourceful soldaderas could not find food and thus Federal soldiers began to starve to death.¹²⁶ At this juncture soldaderas, far from being helpful, became yet more mouths to feed.

In the North there were famines in Torreón, Saltillo, Monterrey, and Piedras Negras in 1915-16 and food riots in Guaymas in 1914.¹²⁷ There is some evidence that the scarcity of provisions led to the abandonment of camp followers. In June 1916 thirty-eight Yaqui Indians were released from the Islas Marías prison and immediately drafted. As they passed through Guadalajara on their way to the battlefield a group of soldaderas offered their services. The men refused to take them.¹²⁸

¹²² *La Opinión*, October 19, 1930.

¹²³ See declarations of Charles Smith, United States Senate Hearings, 674-75.

¹²⁴ Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico*, p. 145-147; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 2, p. 119.

¹²⁵ King, *Tempest Over Mexico*, p. 184; Pedro recounts that the Carrancistas were so hungry that they ate raw mangos and fell sick. Zapatista General Marino fell upon the Carrancistas at this point and “zas, zas he finished them up. That’s why they named Marino General Mango.” Lewis, *Pedro Martínez*, pp. 93-93, 101-02. For accounts of starvation in Hueyapán see Judith Riedlander, *Being Indian in Hueyapán: A Study of Forced Identity in Contemporary Mexico* (New York: Saint Martin’s Press, 1975), p. 58.

¹²⁶ King, *Tempest Over Mexico*, p. 184.

¹²⁷ Oscar J. Martínez, *Border Boom Town: Ciudad Juárez Since 1848* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975), p. 41.

¹²⁸ Kelley, *Yaqui Women*, pp. 105-06.

Apart from starvation, the military situation itself became inauspicious for camp followers. After the battles of Celaya and León—which resulted in crushing defeats for Villa—several Villista leaders decided to abandon the fold.¹²⁹ Greatly diminished the Division of the North reverted to guerrilla warfare. The mighty Division dispersed in small bands, and warfare tactics now hinged upon hit-and-run operations. Soldaderas could not fit into this new tactical scheme based on mobility and swiftness and were simply abandoned in the field.¹³⁰ Simultaneously Carrancistas were expelling soldaderas too. Carranza's troops were plagued by the opposite problem: they had a bloated army, much too large to maintain. In March 1916 Venustiano Carranza through his war minister proceeded to reorganize the armed forces that had swelled to more than 200,000 troops. Soldaderas—who all along had been considered to be a burden—were the first to go.¹³¹ Thus in defeat or victory women suddenly became unwelcome in the barracks. They looked ahead to a bleak future. One of the outcomes of the revolution was to reduce drastically the number of jobs available to women. As hostilities drew to a close and pressure to accommodate returning soldiers mounted, jobs for women dried up.¹³²

The lack of jobs had a tremendous impact on the fate of the battleground women in the aftermath of the revolution. Although it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish soldaderas and female fighters from other destitute women, it seems that their lives forked into three paths. Some soldaderas returned to their old homes. Chepa Moreno and Dominga Ramírez, after more than fifteen years of adventure at the henequen haciendas of Yucatán and in the revolution, returned to the Yaqui valley of Sonora.¹³³ Their lives there were full of hardship and toil as were those of many other Yaqui ex-soldaderas.¹³⁴ Female fighters may have fared somewhat better. ‘‘La Coronela’’ María de la Luz Espinoza Barrera returned to her hometown in Morelos and became an itinerant vendor of clothing. A handful of the most

¹²⁹ Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico*, pp. 260-73; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 2, pp. 263-328; Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism*, p. 34.

¹³⁰ Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 2, pp. 333, 338; Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism*, pp. 34-35. See description of the American consul at Piedras Negras, January 24, 1916, SD 812.00/7893. Villa and Villismo decayed to the point where reckless acts of violence were directed against soldaderas. In one instance in 1916 Villa had eighty or ninety soldaderas shot. See Salas, *Soldaderas*, pp. 46-47.

¹³¹ Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism*, p. 45; Mendieta Alatorre, *La mujer en la revolución mexicana*, p. 90; Kelley, *Yaqui Women*, pp. 143, 172.

¹³² See *Estadísticas Históricas de México*, 2 vols. (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía, e Informática, 1985), 1, pp. 254-57.

¹³³ See Salas, *Soldaderas*, pp. 79-81.

¹³⁴ Kelley, *Yaqui Women*, pp. 75, 144-45, 171-72. In Morelos the situation after the revolution was equally grim. See Lewis, *Pedro Martínez*, p. 116; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 2, p. 524.

famous female soldiers also managed to secure pensions from the government. But most of them faced harsh economic conditions and in fact many died in poverty.¹³⁵

A second destination of the battleground women was the urban areas. Mexico City became a powerful magnet for refugees after the revolution. Oscar Lewis found former *soldaderas* in his urban studies of the Federal District.¹³⁶ The frontier towns of the North also attracted uprooted populations and veterans of the revolution. Border towns boasted new jobs, some related to prostitution because after Prohibition began in the United States in 1920 much of the entertainment industry moved south of the border.¹³⁷

The third path taken by *soldaderas* and female fighters was emigration to the United States. With their reputation tarnished, their families missing, and few jobs available in Mexico, many women sought a fresh start across the Rio Grande.¹³⁸ Some *soldaderas* found their way to Tucson or went to work to El Paso as house maids and laundresses.¹³⁹ Enough veterans arrived to California to establish a league of former combatants. The story of the battleground women can be pieced together in part thanks to the testimonies of members of this league.¹⁴⁰

Conclusion

For nearly ten years Mexico was converted into a gigantic battleground peopled by countless bands and armies. But as the story of the battleground women shows, there were nuances: different armies were organized in different fashions and made use of women's labor in diverse ways; moreover,

¹³⁵ Macías, *Against All Odds*, p. 43. The entire roster of women recognized as veterans of the revolution by the Mexican War Ministry is reproduced in Mendieta Alatorre, *La mujer en la revolución mexicana*, pp. 112-122. For biographies of female fighters see *El Popular* (Mexico City), April 29, May 1, 4, and 7, 1939.

¹³⁶ Lewis, *Pedro Martínez*, pp. 162-77; and *A Death in the Sánchez Family*, pp. ix-x. See also Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 2, p. 523; and Salas, *Soldaderas*, p. 80.

¹³⁷ Martínez, *Border Boom Town*, pp. 41-43, 57; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 2, p. 523.

¹³⁸ The story of María Villasaña López sheds light on the bad reputation of *soldaderas* after the revolution: "Ya no podíamos regresar a nuestro hogar pues habíamos quedado descreditadas [sic], yo entonces decidí venirme a este país." María Villasaña López in *Those Years of the Revolution, 1910-1920*, p. 80. See also Salas, *Soldaderas*, pp. 80-81.

¹³⁹ Kelley, *Yaqui Women*, p. 208; Mario T. García, *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), pp. 60, 74-79.

¹⁴⁰ See testimonies of María Villasaña López and Angela "Angel" Jiménez in *Those Years of the Revolution, 1910-1920*, passim.

armies themselves changed in the course of the fight. These nuances go a long way towards explaining the nature of the struggle and its outcome.

Only a handful of women participated in the insurrections of 1910-12, and when they did so it was almost exclusively as female soldiers. Soldaderas were hard to find among the rebels in these early years due primarily to the military strategy adopted by the Maderista and Orozquista insurgents. They were organized as small and mobile bands best suited for sneak attacks and swift retreats. Ad hoc support services were preferable to having slow-moving contingents of soldaderas. The absence of camp followers also reveals the local and regional character of this first string of insurrections. Maderism o attained victory too quickly and Orozquismo was defeated very rapidly, thus their military campaigns remained regional in scope. This allowed soldiers and officers to maintain their home ties and therefore had no need to bring their families along.

A second round of fighting broke out in 1913 but on this occasion warfare raged in large areas of the country. Protracted military campaigns took armies far away from their home bases so they rapidly evolved as self-supporting, roaming communities of men, women, and children. Armies had to be able to forage in unknown terrain or nurse the wounded on the trail without diverting too many men into non-fighting tasks. The soldadera thus emerged as the backbone of this type of military organization. The three large armies of the revolution, the ones capable of attaining national hegemony—Federales, Carrancistas, and Villistas—all had large numbers of soldaderas.

The Zapatistas adopted a different system, they grew in symbiosis with the villages and towns of Morelos. The southern fighters had neither formal support units nor soldaderas. Instead they were dependent on neighboring communities committed to support the rebellion. Women in the villages provided food and were targets of the sexual needs of Zapatista soldiers but did not accompany the troops. This symbiosis made the movement very resilient within Morelos but hindered its ability to fight outside the state. Furthermore, the ties between the village and the military camp explain the ruthlessness of the anti-Zapatista campaigns conducted in Morelos by the Federal and Carrancista troops which often entailed raiding and even burning entire villages.

Beyond the functioning of the armies the story of female fighters and soldaderas raises the complex issue of what influence the revolution had on

women.¹⁴¹ The experiences of the battleground women is a case in point. Their job opportunities were severely curtailed as hostilities drew to a close and there was a need accommodate returning, male soldiers. The revolution also uprooted thousands of rural women, soldaderas and female soldiers among them, who ended up in slums in Mexico City or in border towns. As a result, many women had few other options but to take menial jobs and some even had to resort to prostitution. Other women trying to escape from the hardships of a devastated country decided to emigrate to the United States.¹⁴² As they spent their elderly years in penury, the heroic battleground women became a living testimony of one injustice of the revolution.

APPENDIX I

PROPORTION OF FEMALE LABOR FORCE, 1900-1940

State	Women's Jobs/Total Jobs (%)				
	1900	1910	1921	1930	1940
Coahuila	25.3	14.5	2.7	4.2	5.2
Chihuahua	15.6	18.7	2.2	3.3	5.0
Morelos	7.5	10.1	3.4	3.2	4.4
San Luis Potosí	25.3	12.2	4.3	3.2	4.4
Sonora	11.9	11.3	6.6	4.2	5.9
Country	16.3	13.9	6.7	4.6	7.4

Source: *Estadísticas Históricas de México*, 2 vols. (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía, e Informática, 1985), 1: 245-57).

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¹⁴¹ This is question that has been frequently raised and seldom been answered. See Carmen Ramos Escandón provides a brief historiographical review on the subject: Ramos Escandón, "¿Qué veinte años no es nada?," pp. 592-93.

¹⁴² The impact of the Mexican Revolution on women has many parallels in other wars and revolutions. See Carol R. Berkin and Clara M. Lovett eds., *Women, War and Revolution* (New York: Holmes and Meier Press, 1980); and Margaret R. Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel and Margaret C. Wetz eds., *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).