

Not until the last quarter of the century was peace and a modicum of conciliation achieved. Even then, problems lurked beneath the placid veneer of an entrenched "order and progress" regime, and many of these problems would eventually erupt in the epic Mexican revolution of 1910.

The readings included in this section seek to give readers something of the flavor of those times and to explain why peace, order, and progress remained so elusive.

The Siege of Guanajuato

Lucas Alamán

Spanish conservatives seized control of Mexico City shortly after receiving news of the Napoleonic usurpation in 1808. From that time, Mexico was alive with creole conspiracies. The most famous of the creole conspirators was Miguel Hidalgo, the restless, reform-minded parish priest of the small town of Dolores in the intendancy of Guanajuato. When his plotting was discovered, he was forced to launch his revolution months ahead of schedule, and without benefit of proper planning. On September 16, 1810—today celebrated as Mexican Independence Day—he gathered the people of Dolores and environs together and proclaimed the "Grito de Dolores," which called for revolution in the name of Ferdinand VII and the Roman Catholic Church, but which also invited Indians and castas to avenge nearly three centuries of wrongs perpetrated against them by the Spaniards. The masses of Indians and mixed castes responded enthusiastically—so enthusiastically, in fact, that the rebellion quickly fell out of Hidalgo's control, and there followed episodes like that narrated in the following excerpt. At these first clear signs of popular rage, creoles became horrified that what they had long feared had finally come to pass. Most quickly withdrew their support.

Clearly, Father Hidalgo was neither a gifted military man nor a meticulous planner; his armies were rather quickly dispersed, and he was captured and executed in 1811. He did, however, live on as a powerful symbol. For some, he became an icon of liberation; for others, his was a cautionary tale that proved the dangers of rousing the restive masses. Lucas Alamán (1793–1853), who would become a distinguished historian and the most important voice for Conservatism in early republican Mexico, was 17 years old in 1810, scion of a wealthy and influential family of Guanajuato. He witnessed the siege of the wealthy mining city firsthand, and the violent spectacle influenced his later conviction that irresponsible demagoguery would provoke anarchy, which would in turn spell doom for property and civilization (something he tended to equate with religion and the Spanish heritage). While his elitism can surely be questioned, his vivid, often gruesome descriptions make it clear why these nightmarish events haunted him throughout his life.

Don Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla was born in the year 1747 in the town of Penjamo, in the province of Guanajuato. His father, Don Cristóbal Hidalgo, was a native of Tejupic, in the intendancy of Mexico. After establishing himself in Penjamo, he married Doña Ana María Gallagmandarte, with whom he had four children, the second of whom was Miguel. . . .

Miguel distinguished himself in his studies at the . . . College of San Nicolás [in Valladolid, Michoacán, today known as Morelia], where he later gave highly renowned courses in philosophy and theology, and also served as rector. His fellow students called him "the fox" [*el zorro*], a name that perfectly suited his crafty character. He spent the years 1778 to 1779 in Mexico City, where he received the holy orders and the degree of bachelor of theology. It is said that the ecclesiastical council of Valladolid had earlier granted him four thousand pesos to meet the expenses and gratuities of the doctoral degree, and that he went to Mexico to solicit the degree but en route he lost the money in a card game at Maravatio. He served in several parishes, and when his elder brother Joaquín died he was given the parish of Dolores, in the province of Guanajuato where Joaquín had served, and which produced an income of perhaps eight or nine thousand pesos per year.

Miguel was hardly straitlaced in his daily life and was quite unorthodox in his opinions, and he did not concern himself with spiritual ministrations to his parishioners. These duties fell, together with half the parish income, to a cleric named Francisco Iglesias. Miguel spent his time translating French, which was very rare in those days, especially among the clergy. He also took great pains to foment several agricultural and industrial pursuits in the parish. He greatly extended the cultivation of grapes, which today are harvested in considerable abundance in that territory, and he began planting mulberry trees for the raising of silkworms. . . . He also had a factory built for making china and another for bricks; he built vats for tanning hides, and he set up workshops for diverse crafts. He was not merely generous, but a spendthrift in matters of money, which made him highly esteemed by his parishioners, especially the Indians, whose languages he spoke. He was also much appreciated by all those who—like the bishop-elect of Michoacán, Abad y Queipo, and [Juan Antonio de] Riaño, the intendant of Guanajuato—were interested in the true progress of the country. Even so, it would seem that in some of these fields his knowledge was deficient, as was the ordeliness which would have been indispensable to make them achieve real progress. Once Bishop Abad y Queipo asked him what method he had adopted for chopping and distributing the leaves to the silkworms in accordance with their ages, separating out the dry leaves, and keeping the furrows cleaned—matters about which the books on the topic give so many and such scrupulous instructions, Miguel

answered that he followed no order at all, that he threw the leaves out just as they came off the tree and the worms would eat whatever they wanted. The bishop, who told me this anecdote, later told me that Hidalgo's revolution was like his silkworm raising, and it had similar results!

Nevertheless, Hidalgo brought about many improvements, even using the silk of his harvests to make a few pieces of clothing for his use and that of his father's last wife. He also augmented the keeping of bees, moving many swarms to the hacienda of Janpeo after he bought that property. He was very fond of music, and even made the Indians of his parish learn it. He formed an orchestra, and had it perform all over, from the battalion of Guanajuato to the frequent parties he held in his home. The proximity of his place of residence to the capital city allowed him to go there often and to stay for long periods, which afforded me the chance to see him up close. He was of middling stature, stoop shouldered, dark complected and with lively green eyes, his head a bit slumped over his chest, his hair very white and balding, as if he had already passed the age of sixty, but vigorous, although neither active nor quick in his movements: a man of few words in ordinary dealings, but animated when arguing in the collegial style, as when he entered heatedly into some dispute. Rather disheveled in his dress, he did not wear anything but what the small town priests normally wore at that time. (This was a cloak of black wool with a round hat and a large walking stick, and a suit of knee breeches, waistcoat and jacket made from a kind of wool that came from China and was called *Rompecoche*).

IN HIS PLAN of revolution, Hidalgo followed the same ideas as the backers of independence in [Viceroy] Iturrigaray's councils.² He proclaimed allegiance to King Ferdinand VII: he sought to sustain the king's rights and to defend them against the designs of those Spaniards who had negotiated their country's surrender to the French and who were then in control of Spain, men who would have destroyed religion, profaned the churches and extinguished the Catholic cult. Religion, then, played the principal role, and inasmuch as the image of Guadalupe is the cherished object of the cult of the Mexicans, the inscription put on the revolution's banners read: "Long live religion. Long live our most holy mother Guadalupe. Long live Ferdinand VII. Long live America and death to bad government." But the people who rushed to follow this banner simplified the inscription and it became the simple cry, "Long live the Virgin of Guadalupe and death to the *gachupines*!" What a monstrous pairing of religion with murder and robbery! It is a cry of death and desolation, one I heard thousands and thousands of times in the early days of my youth, and after so many years it still resounds in my ears with a frightful echo!

Among a people to whom religion is disgracefully reduced to mere superficial practices; where many ministers, especially in the smaller towns, devote themselves to the most licentious lifestyle; where the dominant vice of most people is an inclination toward theft; it is not surprising that one should find, among such people, partisans for a revolution whose first steps were to free the criminals, to open the properties of the richest citizens to unlimited plunder, to incite the common people against everything that until then they had feared and respected, and to give free rein to all vice; a revolution which, moreover, later gave out military ranks freely, opening an immense field for the workers' ambitions. So it was that in all of the villages, the priest Hidalgo found so favorable a predisposition that he needed only to show himself in order to drag the masses of people along behind him. But the methods he employed to gain such popularity destroyed the foundations of the social edifice and suffocated all principles of morality and justice, and all the evils that the nation now laments flow from that poisoned fountain.

As Hidalgo, on this and later marches, passed through the fields and villages, he was joined by people who formed diverse groups or mobs. They carried sticks to which they had tied banners or multi-colored handkerchiefs displaying the image of Guadalupe, which was the standard of the enterprise and which those who adhered to the party also wore as an emblem on their hats. The cowboys and other mounted men from the haciendas, nearly all of whom were of mixed blood, formed the cavalry. They were armed with the lances that Hidalgo had had made beforehand, and with swords and machetes which they customarily carried in their daily work; very few had pistols or carbines. The infantry was made up of Indians, divided by villages or bands, armed with sticks, arrows, slings and lances. Since many of them took their women and children along, they looked more like the barbarous tribes, who emigrate from place to place, than like an army on the march. The *caporales* and *mayordomos* [overseers] from the haciendas who took part became chiefs of the cavalry. The Indians took their orders from their village governors or from the captains of the hacienda work gangs. Many carried no weapons at all, and were prepared for nothing but plunder. Mounted men each earned a peso per day, while those on foot got four reales; but since no reviews were held and there was no formal enlistment, this led to great theft and mayhem, even though a treasury was established in the charge of Don Mariano Hidalgo, the priest's brother. Mariano Hidalgo did not trouble himself to provide supplies or means of subsistence for the disorderly mob. In the middle of September, when the revolution began, the corn was ripening in the fields, and in that era of wealth and prosperity for agriculture, especially in the opulent province of Guanajuato, the haciendas abounded in livestock and all sorts of foodstuffs.

How unfortunate was the farm of a European which Hidalgo and his army chanced to pass by: with a tremendous cry of "Long live the Virgin of Guadalupe and death to the *gachupines*!" the Indians would scatter amid the cornfields and quickly gather in the harvest; they would open the granaries, and the grains stored there would be gone in moments; the stores, which nearly all of the haciendas had, were looted down to the bare bones. The insurgents would kill all of the oxen they needed, and if there were some Indian village nearby, they would destroy even the buildings in order to cart away the roof beams and doors. The haciendas of the Americans suffered less at the start of the war, but as it progressed all came to be treated in the same way.

THE CITY OF Guanajuato is situated at the base of a deep, narrow valley which is dominated on all sides by high rugged mountains. . . . The town had perhaps seventy thousand inhabitants including those of the mining camps. Of these, the Valenciana mines, which had been for many years enjoying uninterrupted prosperity, had something like twenty thousand people. The region enjoyed great abundance: the huge sums that were distributed each week among the people as wages for their work in the mines and related haciendas sparked commercial activity; the great consumption of foodstuffs by the people, and the pasturing of the many horses and mules used in the mining operations, had caused agriculture to flourish for many leagues around. In the city there were many rich homes, and many more which enjoyed a comfortable middle-class existence: commerce was almost exclusively in the hands of the Europeans, but many creole families supported themselves easily from mining-related activities, and they were all respectable in the orderliness of their dress and in the decorum they observed. The people, occupied in the hard and risky labor of the mines, were lively, happy, prodigal, and brave.

So populous a city, situated amid the craggy hills which have been aptly compared to a sheet of crumpled paper, could not defend itself unless the mass of its inhabitants were united; so it was essential that its defense have the support of the common people. This was made fully clear when the intendant sounded the general alarm on September 18: a large number of people came armed with rocks, and they occupied the hills, streets, plazas, and rooftops in the early morning of the 20th, when the advance guard at Marfil believed Hidalgo was drawing near, which is why the alarm was sounded, and the intendant with his troops and armed peasants rode down the glen to meet him. The intendant, however, believed from that moment that the people were changing their minds, and he feared that the lower classes of the city would join Hidalgo when he arrived; thus, he changed his plan, deciding instead to take cover at a strong, defensible point while awaiting aid from the Viceroy

or from the troops which [General Félix] Calleja [commander-in-chief of the royalist forces] was supposed to recruit from San Luis Potosí.

In order to ensure the provision of corn, a food of primary necessity for the people and for many of the beasts employed in the mines, the intendant had built a spacious public granary, or *alhóndiga*, in which a quantity sufficient for a year's consumption could be stored, thus avoiding the inconvenience of frequent fluctuations in the price of this grain, which was caused especially by the difficulty of traveling the roads during the rainy season. He came up with this plan in 1783, which came to be known as "the year of hunger" due to the terrible shortages. He chose to construct this building on a site at the entrance to the city, on the slope where El Cuarto Hill ends to the west, which is the point where the river that passes through the town meets the one that flows down from the mines. . . . In building this structure, intendant Riaño hoped to show not only that he cared greatly about supplying the needs of the capital and of the province that it governed, but also that he had good taste in architecture. . . .

The Alhóndiga de Granaditas, which acquired so much and such lamentable celebrity on this occasion, was very sturdily built and it dominated the principal entrance to the city, but it was itself dominated by El Cuarto Hill . . . and by San Miguel Hill, which was a greater distance off to the south. This was the point where the intendant resolved to make a stand, and on the night of the 24th, without anyone realizing it, he moved his troops and armed peasants, as well as the entire royal treasury, the treasures of the municipalities, and all of the archives of the government and city council [to the Alhóndiga]. . . .

At dawn on the 25th, the town was surprised to see the moats closed off and the trenches demolished, and [immediately] they knew everything that had happened the preceding night. There was general consternation at seeing the city abandoned, for nearly all of the Europeans with their treasures, as well as many creoles, had gone to the Alhóndiga and shut themselves in. As near as can be determined, the sum gathered there in silver ingots, cash, mercury from the royal treasury, and valuable objects was worth no less than three million pesos. So great was the wealth of the country back then that such a large sum was gathered in a few moments in one provincial city!

The city council of Guanajuato, in the explanation they sent to the Viceroy to vindicate their own conduct and that of the city's inhabitants, attributed the loss of the city and all the misfortunes that followed to the intendant's decision. They claimed that the lower classes would have remained faithful and resolute and that their spirit would not have strayed had they not noticed that

they were being mistrusted, whereupon they began to say that the *gachupines* and high-toned gentlemen wanted to defend only themselves, abandoning the common people to the enemy, and therefore they began to disperse among the neighborhoods and hills in groups. . . .

The defenders took all measures necessary to make the Alhóndiga ready to withstand a siege. The siege would not be a long one, since [General] Calleja, in reply to the note of alarm that Riaño had sent him on the 23rd, said he would send assistance by Monday the 24th, and he and his troops would be in Guanajuato all the following week, he also said that he would advise [Riaño] as his troops drew near. In addition to 5,000 fanegas of corn that were stored in the Alhóndiga, the intendant had a large quantity of flour and provisions of all sorts brought, as well as twenty-four women to make tortillas. That was more than enough to sustain five to six hundred men gathered there for several months. Nor did they lack water, for the building had a capacious cistern on its patio, which was full at the time since the rainy season had just passed. More than thirty very large rooms . . . were full of food, gold, silver ingots and coins, mercury, and other things of value. They built three trenches to close off the principal avenues leading to the Alhóndiga. . . . All of these dispositions were directed by Don Gilberto de Riaño, the elder son of the intendant, who held the rank of lieutenant and served in the regular line regiment of Mexico City and who was on leave in his father's house. His father greatly respected his son's knowledge in such matters, for this gallant young man had diligently studied the works of the marquis of Santa Cruz and other military authors. Understanding the resolution to abandon the city and concentrate the defense exclusively in the Alhóndiga, Gilberto came up with the idea of making flasks of mercury into hand grenades. These are iron cylinders, about a foot tall and six inches in diameter, with narrow mouths closed with a screw; they are filled with powder and grapeshot, and a small hole is made for a wick, which is ignited at the proper time. Having assembled all of the arms and munitions in the city at the Alhóndiga, the east door was sealed off with an adobe wall; thus there was no way of getting in except by the principal door, which opened onto the small plaza to the north.

In order to win the people's hearts, the intendant, with great solemnity, published a proclamation on the morning of the 26th, abolishing the payment of tribute. This favor, which had been conceded by the regency back on the 26th of May, had not been put into effect on the pretext that a study had to be made first. Now, given the circumstances under which it was published, it was not only viewed coldly, but the lower classes of Guanajuato took it as a concession made from fear: it was met with mockery and jokes, and it ended

up swaying the minds of the crowd against the government. In the moments of a revolution, the most beneficent actions done out of convenience, produce a result entirely contrary to the one desired. . . .

Hidalgo . . . returned from Celaya toward Guanajuato, at every step augmenting the crowd that followed him. Riaño knew well the difficulty of his position. "The people," he told Calleja on the 26th, "voluntarily surrender themselves to the insurgents. They already did so in Dolores, San Miguel, Celaya, Salamanca, Irapuato; the same shall soon happen at Silao. The seduction spreads here, there was no security or confidence. I have fortified myself in the most suitable place in the city, and I will fight to the death, if the five hundred men I have at my side do not forsake me. I have very little gunpowder, because there absolutely is none, and the cavalry is poorly mounted and armed, with no weapons but their glass swords,² and the infantry their mended rifles, and it is not impossible that these troops might be seduced [by the rebels]. The insurgents are bearing down on me, supplies are impeded, mail is intercepted. Sr. Abarca is working actively, and Your Excellency and he together must come to my assistance, because I fear being attacked at any moment. I must not continue, because since the 17th I have not been able to rest or get undressed, and it is three days since I slept for a whole hour." Such was the anguish of spirit and bodily fatigue that [Riaño] suffered in these grievous circumstances. The Europeans had grown dispirited, many of them abandoning the city and heading for Guadalaajara, and the ones at the frontier of the sierra, at Santa Rosa and Villalpando, did the same, as they were unprotected.

[Translator's summary: At this point, Hidalgo sends two agents to demand that the city be surrendered and that all Spaniards be turned over to the insurgents. Intendant Riaño puts the proposal to a vote, and the defenders of the Alhóndiga declare that they will resist to the death. They make ready for a siege.]

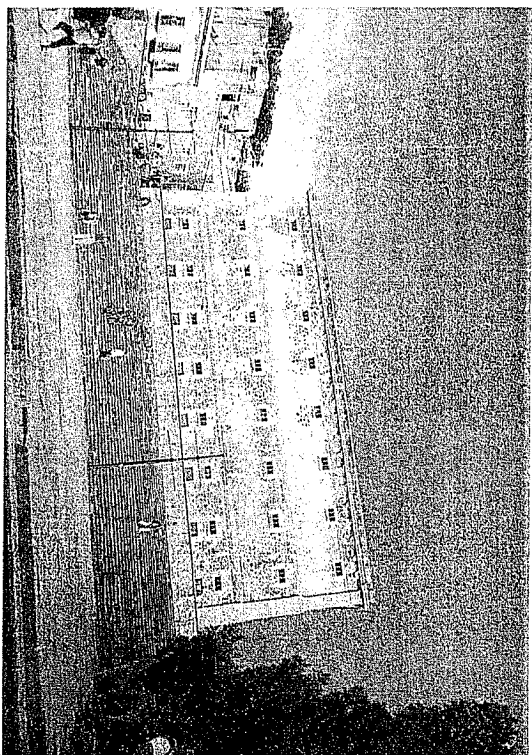
The people of Guanajuato watched from the surrounding heights, some now deciding to join Hidalgo, others, no fewer in number, only watching so they would be ready when it came time to pillage. The people from the mines occupied the hill next to El Cuatro; these were mostly workers from the Valenciana mine who were roused by their administrator, Dasimiro Chovell, who was believed to have reached a prior agreement with Hidalgo.

A little before twelve o'clock, in the avenue of Our Lady of Guanajuato, which is the entrance to the city from the plains of Marfil, there appeared a huge crowd of Indians with few rifles; most were carrying lances, sticks, slings, and arrows. The first of this group passed the bridge . . . and arrived in front of the adjoining trench, at the foot of Mendizábal Hill. Gilberto de

Riaño—to whom his father had entrusted the command of that point, which he deemed the most hazardous—ordered them to stop in the name of the king, and since the crowd continued to advance, he gave the order to open fire, whereupon some Indians fell dead and the rest retreated hurriedly. In the avenue, a man from Guanajuato said they should go to El Cuatro Hill, and he showed them the way. The remaining groups of Hidalgo's footsoldiers, perhaps 20,000 Indians, joined by the people from the mines and the lower classes of Guanajuato, were occupying the heights and all of the houses around [the Alhóndiga de] Granaditas, in which they placed soldiers from Celaya armed with rifles; meanwhile a corps of around two thousand cavalrymen, composed of country people with lances, mixed in among the ranks of the dragons of the Queen's regiment led by Hidalgo, climbed along the road called Yerbabuena and arrived at [the top of San Miguel Hill], and from there went down to the city. Hidalgo went to the headquarters of the Prince's cavalry regiment, where he remained throughout the action. The column continued crossing through the town in order to station itself at Belén Street, and as they passed by they sacked a store that sold sweets, and they freed all the prisoners of both sexes who were locked up in the jail—no fewer than three or four hundred persons, among them serious criminals. They made the male prisoners march on the Alhóndiga.

The intendant, noting that the largest number of the enemy rushed to the side of the trench at the mouth of Los Pozitos Street . . . thought it necessary to reinforce that point. He took twenty infantrymen from the company of the peasants to join the battalion, and with more boldness than prudence he went with them to station them where he wanted them to be, accompanied by his assistant, José María Bustamante. Upon returning, as he was climbing the stairs to the door of the Alhóndiga, he was wounded above the left eye by a rifle bullet and he immediately fell dead. The shot came from the window of one of the houses of the little plaza to the east of the Alhóndiga, and is said to have been fired by a corporal of the infantry regiment from Celaya. Thus, a glorious death ended the spotless life of the retired frigate captain Don Juan Antonio de Riaño, knight of the Order of Caltrava, intendant, *corregidor*, and commandant of the armies of Guanajuato. . . .

The intendant's death introduced division and discord among the defenders of the Alhóndiga at the moment when it was most necessary that they act in unison and with firm resolution. The counselor of the intendency, Manuel Pérez Valdés, citing the fact that in the ordinance of the intendency leadership falls to the counselor when the [intendant] is accidentally removed, claimed that since he was now the superior authority of the provinces, nothing should be done except by his command. He was inclined to surrender. Major Ber-



The Alhóndiga de Granaditas, Guanajuato. (Photo by Tim Henderson. Reprinted by permission of Tim Henderson.)

zabal argued that, since this was a purely military situation, according to the ordinance he should take charge, since he was the veteran officer of the highest rank. He was resolved to keep up the defense. While this dispute could not be resolved, the confusion of the attack meant that everyone was giving commands and no one was obeying them, except for the soldiers who always recognized their old leaders. The crowd on El Cuarto Hill began a barrage of stones, hurling them by hand and shooting them with slings, a barrage that was so continuous it exceeded the thickest hail storm. In order to keep the combatants supplied with stones, swarms of Indians and the people of Guanajuato unceasingly picked up the round stones that covered the bottom of the Cata River. So great was the number of stones launched in the short time that the attack lasted, that the floor of the Alhóndiga's balcony was raised about a quarter above its ordinary level. It was impossible to defend the trenches, and the troops that garrisoned them were ordered to withdraw; Captain Escalera of the guard ordered that the door of the Alhóndiga be closed. With that, the Europeans who occupied the Hacienda of Dolores were left isolated and with no recourse but to sell their lives dearly, and the cavalry on the slope of the Cata River was in the same situation or worse. Nor could the people on the roof defend themselves for long, since it was dominated by the hills El Cuarto and San Miguel, although since the latter was farther away, less damage was

done from there. And despite the havoc caused by the continuous fire of the troops of the garrison, the number of assailants was so great that those who fell were very promptly replaced by others, and they were not missed.

Once the trenches were abandoned and the troops who defended the roof withdrawn, that wild mob rushed to the base of the building: those in front were pushed by those who followed, unable to turn around, as in an ocean storm when some waves are impelled by others till they dash against the rocks. The brave man could not show his mettle, nor could the coward find a way to flee. The cavalry was completely routed, unable to use its weapons and horses. Captain Castilla died, some soldiers perished; the rest joined the conquerors. The valiant José Francisco Valenzuela, turning his horse about, rode up the hill three times, opening a path with his sword; he was dragged from his saddle and suspended on the points of the lances of those who surrounded him in large numbers; even so, he killed some of those closest to him before receiving his death blow, shouting "Long live Spain!" until he gave up his final breath. He was a native of Irapuato and a lieutenant of the company of that village.

There was a store at the corner of Los Pozitos Street and Mount Los Mandamientos where they sold *ocote* [pine] chips, which the men who worked the mines by night used to illuminate the road. The crowd broke down the doors [of the store] and, loading up that fuel, they brought it to the door of the Alhóndiga and set it ablaze. Others, who were experienced at subterranean labors, approached the back of the building, which was surrounded by earthen walls, . . . [and they] began to drill holes to undermine the foundation. Those inside the building hurried iron flasks, of which we have spoken, through the windows down into the crowd. These would explode and bring down many people, but immediately the mob would close in tight and snuff out the flasks that had fallen under their feet, which is why there were so few wounded among the assailants, even though a large number were killed. The discord among those under siege was such that, at the very moment when Gilberto Riaño (who was thirsty for vengeance in his father's death), Miguel Bustamante, and others were hurling flasks at the assailants, the counselor held up a white handkerchief as a sign of peace. The people, attributing to perfidy what was nothing more than the effect of the confusion that prevailed inside the Alhóndiga, redoubled their furor and began to fight with greater cruelty. The counselor then ordered a soldier to climb down from a window to parley; the unfortunate man fell to the ground, broken to bits. Then Martín Septien tried to leave, confident in his priestly vocation and in the Holy Christ he carried in his hands; the image of the Savior flew into splinters as stones struck it, and the priest, using the crucifix in his hand as an offensive weapon,

managed to escape through the crowd, though badly wounded. The Spaniards, meanwhile, hearing only the voice of terror, tossed money from the windows in hopes of sparking the people's greed and thus placating the mob; others shouted their capitulation, and many, persuaded that their final hour had arrived, threw themselves at the feet of priests to receive absolution.

Berzabal, seeing the door ablaze, gathered what soldiers he could of the battalion and stationed them at the entrance: as the door was consumed by flames, he ordered his soldiers to fire at close range, and many of the assailants perished. Still, those in back of the crowd pushed forward, and the ones in front trampled over the dead, sweeping everything before them with an irresistible force. The patio, stairs, and corridors of the Alhóndiga were very soon filled with Indians and common people. Berzabal, retreating with a handful of men who remained with him to a corner of the patio, defended his battalion's banners along with the standard-bearers Marmolejo and González. When these men fell dead at his side, he gathered up the banners and held them tightly with his left arm, and he held out with a sword—even though it had been destroyed by a pistol shot—against the multitude that surrounded him, until he fell pierced by many lances, still without abandoning the banners he had sworn to defend. What a worthy example for Mexican soldiers, and a well-earned title of glory for the descendants of that valiant warrior!

[With Berzabal's death] all resistance ceased, and no more than a few isolated shots were heard from some who still held out, such as the Spaniard Raymayer, who did not let the Indians come near till all of his cartridges were spent. The Europeans at the Hacienda of Dolores tried to save themselves through a back door that opened upon the log bridge over the Cata River, but they found that the assailants had already taken that bridge. They then retired to the well, where—since it was a high, strong spot—they defended themselves until the last of their ammunition ran out, causing much carnage among the insurgents. . . . The few Europeans who remained alive at the end fell or were thrown into the well, and they drowned.

The taking of the Alhóndiga de Granaditas was entirely the work of the common people of Guanajuato, together with numerous bands of Indians led by Hidalgo. As for Hidalgo and his fellow leaders, there was not, nor could there have been, any disposition other than to lead the people to the hills and begin the attack. But once it had begun, it was impossible to maintain any order at all: there was no one to receive or follow orders, for there was no organization at all in that riotous crowd, nor were there lesser chiefs to lead the people. They rushed with extraordinary valor to take part in the first action of the war and, once committed to combat, the Indians and people of the villages could not turn back, for the crowd surged forward upon those who went

first, obliging them to win land and to instantaneously occupy any space left by those who died. The resistance of the besieged defenders, though intrepid, was without order or plan, since the intendant died before anyone else, and it is to this we may attribute the quick termination of the action, for by five in the afternoon it was all over.

The insurgents, after taking over the Alhóndiga, gave free reign to their vengefulness. Those who had surrendered begged their conquerors in vain for clemency; on their knees, they prayed that their lives be spared. Many of the soldiers of the battalion were dead; others escaped by taking off their uniforms and mixing with the crowd. Of the officers, many young men of the city's most distinguished families perished, and others were gravely wounded, among them Gilberto Riaño who died a few days later, and José María and Benigno Bustamante. Of the Spaniards, many of the richest and most important citizens died. . . . Some managed to hide in granary number 21, where the corpses of the intendant and several others lay, but they were discovered and killed without mercy. All were despoiled of their clothes. When the rebels stripped the corpse of José Miguel Carrica, they found he was covered with haircloth, which gave rise to the rumor that a *gachupin* saint had been found. Those who remained alive—naked, covered with wounds, tied up with rope—were taken to the public jail, which had been empty since the prisoners were freed. To get there, they had to cross the long expanse from the Alhóndiga while the untutted crowd threatened them with death at each step. It is said that, in order to avoid this menace, Captain José Joaquín Peláez managed to persuade his captors that Hidalgo had offered a cash reward if he were brought in alive, and thus he was guarded with greater care in that treacherous transit.

There are various calculations of the number of dead on both sides. The insurgents took pains to hide their dead, burying them that night in ditches they dug in the Cata River bottom. The city council, in its statement, estimated the dead at three thousand; Abásolo, at his trial, said that there were very few. The latter claim does not strike me as plausible, and the former I think is rather exaggerated. Some two hundred soldiers died, as well as one hundred and fifty Spaniards. Their naked corpses were seized by the feet and hands and carried or dragged to the nearby cemetery of Belén, where they were buried. The intendant's body spent two days exposed to the mockery of the mob: the people wished to investigate for themselves an absurd fable that had been circulating, which said that the intendant had a tail because he was a Jew. (This same ridiculous fable ran through the mob with respect to all of the Spaniards, even among those who had seen their naked corpses. Such is the ignorance of the common people!) . . . The [intendant's] body was then buried in a mean shroud that had been placed there by the monks of that convent,

receiving none of the honor that should have been due the mortal remains of a noble conqueror. No sign of compassion was permitted: one woman in the crowd, who expressed sympathy when the corpse of a European was carried by, was wounded in the face by the men who carried it.

The people devoted themselves to pillaging everything that had been gathered at the Alhóndiga, and it all disappeared within a few moments. Hidalgo wanted to reserve the ingots of silver and money for himself, but he could not prevent the people from taking them. Later some of the ingots were found and taken back, for they belonged to the army's treasury and so could not be included in the general looting. The Alhóndiga presented the most dreadful spectacle: the food that had been stored there was scattered all around; naked corpses were found half-buried in corn and money, all of it stained with blood. The looters killed one another fighting among themselves for booty. A rumor spread that the granaries holding the stores of gunpowder had been burned, and that the castle—which is what the people called the Alhóndiga—was about to blow up; the Indians fled, and the people on horseback sped through the streets to escape. With that, the common people of Guanajuato, who may have been the ones who spread this rumor, remained sole owner of the prize—at least until the rest, their fear having evaporated, came back to take their share.

The people who had stayed on the hilltops awaiting the results now came down to take part in the despoliation, even though they had not been involved in the combat. Together with the rest of the townspeople and the Indians who had come with Hidalgo, they began the general looting of the stores and homes of the Europeans of the city, which began that same afternoon and continued all through the night and all the next day. They ransacked more pitifully than any foreign army could have done. The sad scene on that mournful night was lit by many torches of candlewood and *ocote*, and nothing was heard but the blows of doors being battered down, and the ferocious howls of the rabble who applauded upon seeing them fall and then charged as if in triumph to steal the merchandise, furniture, clothing, and all kinds of things. Women fled in terror to their neighbors' homes, crawling across the roofs, and, still not knowing if they had lost a father or a husband in the Alhóndiga that afternoon, they watched as the treasures their men had collected during many years of work, industry, and economy were snatched away in an instant. Whole families who had awakened that day under the protection of a father or husband, some enjoying opulence, others taking pleasure in an honorable yet moderate lifestyle, lay down that night in a deplorable orphanhood and misery. It was not as if many people ceased being rich while just as

many emerged from poverty: no, all those treasures that in active and industrious hands fomented commerce and mining, now went up in smoke without leaving any trace but a memory of ancient prosperity. It has taken many years to recover that prosperity, plus the great boost that Guanajuato later received from foreign mining companies and the fortuitous bonanzas some of these have enjoyed.

The looters grabbed the most valuable things from one another. The astute and clever people of Guanajuato took advantage of the ignorance of the Indians to take their loot away from them, or to buy it at a low price. They persuaded the Indians that ounces of gold were not coins, but copper medallions, and they bought them for two or three reales; they did the same with the jewelry, the value of which they themselves did not know. On the 29th, Hidalgo's birthday, Guanajuato presented the most lamentable aspect of disorder, ruin, and desolation. The plaza and the streets were full of fragments of furniture, the remains of the goods looted from the stores, and liquor that had been spilled once the people had drunk their fill. The people abandoned themselves to all manner of excess. Hidalgo's Indians made the strangest figures of all, for on top of their own clothing they wore the clothes they had taken from the homes of the Europeans, including the uniforms of magistrates, so that the Indians adorned themselves with embroidered dresscoats and gilded hats while barefoot and in the most complete state of inebriation.

The pillage was not limited to the homes and stores of the Europeans of the city; the same thing was done in the mines, and the looting became extensive at the metal-refining haciendas. The commoners of Guanajuato, having already killed in the Alhóndiga the industrious men of these establishments—the men who had enabled them to earn their keep by paying them considerable wages—now ruined the establishments themselves, dealing the death blow to that branch of mining that had been the source of the wealth not just of the city of Guanajuato, but of the whole province. Mexicans, too, were affected by all this devastation by virtue of the business relations they had with the Spaniards, especially in the field of metal refining. Some banking houses owned by Mexicans would advance the Spaniards funds at a discount on the value of the silver that they received in payment, according to the rules established in the mining ordinance for advances on the price of silver.

Hidalgo wanted to put a stop to this disorder, so he published a proclamation on Sunday, September 30. Not only was this proclamation not obeyed, but inasmuch as there was nothing left to loot in the houses and stores, the commoners began to drag the iron trellises down from the balconies, and they broke into the homes of Mexicans whom they suspected of hiding goods be-

longing to Spaniards. Among the homes so threatened was that of my own family, which was located atop a store that had belonged to a Spaniard who had died in the well at Dolores; a man named José Posadas. Although the home had already been sacked, one of Posadas's trusted porters let it be known that in an interior patio there was a storeroom that he himself had stocked with money and goods. It was very difficult to hold the people back: they entered through the mezzanine and made their way to the foot of the stairway. I was in no little danger myself, having been raised European. Amid this conflict, my mother resolved to go and see the priest Hidalgo, with whom she had longtime friendly relations, and I went with her. It was quite risky for a decently dressed person to walk the streets among that mob, drunk with rage and liquor. We nonetheless arrived without incident at the headquarters of the Prince's regiment, where Hidalgo was staying. We found Hidalgo in a room filled with people of all classes. In one corner there was a considerable stack of silver ingots that had been recovered from the Alhóndiga, and which were still stained with blood; in another corner was a stack of lances, and haphazardly suspended from one of the walls was the painting of the image of Guadalupe, which served as the symbol of this enterprise. The priest was seated on his field cot with a small table in front of him, wearing his ordinary costume, but with a purple shoulder-belt on top of the jacket, which appeared to be some portion of a priest's stole. He received us gladly, assuming my mother of their longtime friendship. Once made aware of our fears for the house, he gave us an escort commanded by a multerer from the Cacalote Ranch near Salvatierra. Ignacio Centeno, whom Hidalgo had made a captain and whom he ordered to defend my house and to guard the belongings of Posadas. Hidalgo told the escort to bring those things to his lodgings as soon as possible, for he needed them to meet the expenses of his army. Centeno thought it would be impossible to hold back the growing tumult, for at each instant more and more people gathered determined to join in the looting. He sent one of his soldiers to Hidalgo, thinking the priest's presence would contain the disorder which the public proclamation had not been sufficient to do.

Hidalgo came on horseback to the plaza where my house was located, accompanied by his generals. At the head of the group was the painting of the image of Guadalupe, and an Indian on foot banging a drum. Some country people followed on horseback, along with some of the Queen's dragoons in two ranks. The priest and his generals presided over this procession-of-sorts, dressed in jackets like those worn by small town militia officers; in place of the insignia of the Queen's regiment, they had hung silver cords and tassels from their epaulettes, which no doubt they had seen in some picture of

the French generals' aides-de-camp; they all wore the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe on their hats. When Hidalgo's retinue arrived in front of the Posadas store where the largest mob was gathered, they ordered the mob to withdraw. When the people did not obey, [one of the officers] tried to keep them away from the doors of the store by forcing his way into the midst of the crowd. Nearly, the flagstones formed a sharp slope, and at the moment they were covered with all sorts of filth and were very slippery. [The officer] fell off his horse, and while trying to get up, he angrily drew his sword and began to wield it at the crowd; people fled in terror, leaving one man gravely wounded. Hidalgo continued circling the plaza, ordering that the men who were dragging the balconies off the houses be fired upon. With that the crowd began to disperse, though for some time large groups remained selling the objects they had ransacked for outrageous prices.

Hidalgo did his best to keep some things hidden from the people. Captain Centeno and the guards stayed for several days in my house at my family's expense, and they spent those days removing the money and other belongings from Posadas's interior storeroom and bringing them to the cavalry headquarters. It was determined that they were worth around 40,000 pesos. As Centeno became a familiar presence in my house, he was once asked for his views of the revolution in which he had taken part. He replied, with the sincerity of a humble man of the country, that his wishes could easily be summed up as follows: to go to Mexico City and place the priest on the throne, and then, with the rewards that Hidalgo would pay him for his services, he would return to working in the fields. What happened in my house with the belongings of Posadas was repeated in many other houses, since although there were faithful servants who helped to salvage what remained of their masters' treasures, others betrayed their masters and denounced the places where they had hidden their money and jewelry. . . .

When the tumult of the siege and sacking of the city had calmed somewhat, Hidalgo lodged his cavalrymen in the ransacked haciendas. The Indians remained scattered throughout the streets, and many of them, content with the loot they had taken, returned to their villages and *rancherías*. Desertion did not bother the priest at all, however, because he was sure he would find plenty of new recruits in all of the villages he passed through. . . .

Notes

1. Intendant: One of the reforms carried out by the Spanish Bourbons was the implementation of the intendency system, wherein government-appointed, professional, salaried administrators oversaw the affairs of their districts. *Ed.*

2. Viceroy José de Iturrigaray (r. 1803-1808), after receiving news of the Napoleonic usurpation, allowed Mexican creoles to form a pro-creole junta, or caretaker government, in the name of Ferdinand VII. This junta, along with the viceroy himself, was overthrown by conservative *peninsulares* on September 15, 1808. *Ed.*
3. The armaments of the regiment were bad, and the swords broke easily, which is what the intendant referred to.

Sentiments of the Nation, or Points Outlined by Morelos for the Constitution

José María Morelos

After Hidalgo's death, another parish priest, José María Morelos, emerged as the most prominent military leader of the revolutionary forces. Morelos was a mestizo (some have described him as a mulatto) from Michoacán, who had studied briefly with Hidalgo and who joined the rebellion in its early stages. He was a far more competent disciplinarian and military strategist than Hidalgo had been, but his forces, too, were eventually scattered, and he was captured and executed in 185. In 1813 he declared independence and convened a Constitutional Congress at Chilpancingo, Guerrero, where he presented a summary of his political and social ideas. They make for curious reading today, since they feature many concepts that would soon be clearly identified with "liberalism"—for example, the equality of individuals before the law, popular sovereignty, fair taxation, and an end to slavery and servitude—while at the same time upholding strict religious intolerance and established hierarchies.

1. That America is free and independent of Spain and of all other Nations, Governments, or Monarchies, and it should be so sanctioned, and the reasons explained to the world.
2. That the Catholic Religion is the only one, without tolerance of any other.
3. That all ministers of the Church shall support themselves exclusively and entirely from tithes and first-fruits (*primicias*), and the people need make no offering other than their own devotions and oblations.
4. That Catholic dogma shall be sustained by the Church hierarchy, which consists of the Pope, the Bishops and the Priests, for we must destroy every plant not planted by God: *inimis plantatis quam non plantabit Pater meus Caelstis Cradicabitur*. Mar. Chapt. XV.
5. That sovereignty springs directly from the People, who wish only to deposit it in their representatives, whose powers shall be divided into Legislative, Executive, and Judiciary branches, with each Province electing its representa-