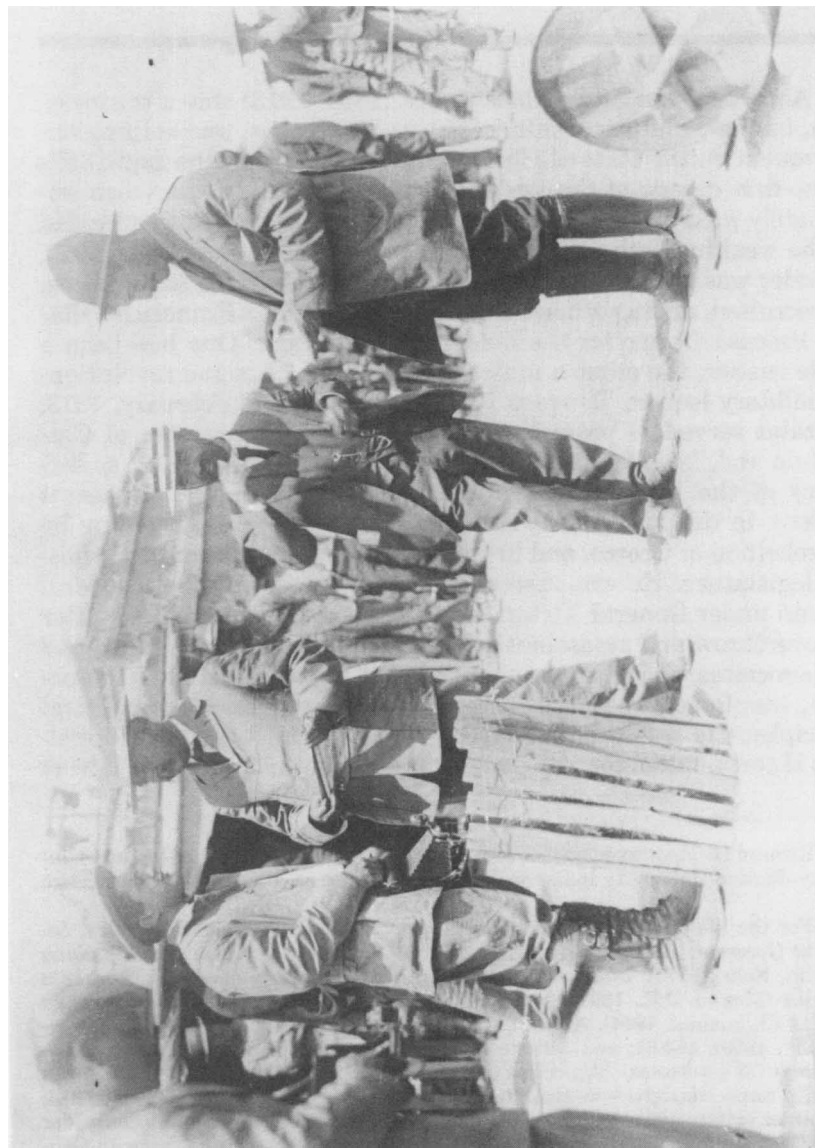

A Mexican Revolutionary from Notre Dame: A Note

Richard H. Thompson*

Abraham González y Casavantes (1864–1913) was a businessman, banker, municipal administrator, journalist, and mining entrepreneur in the state of Chihuahua, Mexico, from the mid-1880s to the first decade of the twentieth century. During the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the revolution that was headed by the wealthy Coahuilan, Francisco I. Madero, in November, 1910, González was the principal revolutionary activist in his native state. He recruited, among others, Doroteo Arango (alias Francisco Villa) and Pascual Orozco for the Maderista movement. One had been a cattle rustler, the other a muleteer before they became revolutionary military leaders. Between November, 1910, and February, 1913, González served as provisional or constitutional governor of Chihuahua and, for a few months in late 1911 and early 1912, as secretary of the interior (*gobernación*) in the cabinet of President Madero. In the spring of 1912 González was driven into hiding by the rebellion of Orozco, and his office was declared vacant by a hostile legislature. He was restored to his place in July by a federal column under General Victoriano Huerta. In February, 1913, after the overthrow and assassination of Madero by General Huerta and his associates, González, having failed to evade his Huertista enemies, was forced to resign his office and to renounce his political principles. He was then, apparently on the direct orders of President Huerta, taken for a train ride that he did not survive.¹ Few of

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¹ For the life of Abraham González y Casavantes see William H. Beezley, *Insurgent Governor: Abraham González and the Mexican Revolution in Chihuahua* (Lincoln, Nebr., 1973); Francisco R. Almada, *Vida, proceso y muerte de Abraham González* (Mexico, D.F., 1967); Almada, *La Revolución en el Estado de Chihuahua* (2 vols., Chihuahua, 1964); Almada, *Gobernadores del estado de Chihuahua* (Mexico, D.F., 1950), 454-61; and Alberto Morales Jiménez, *Hombres de la Revolución Mexicana: 50 semblanzas biográficas* (Mexico, D.F., 1960), 113-16. When González's mangled corpse was given its final burial at Ciudad Chihuahua in February, 1914, the former cattle rustler and bandit, Francisco Villa, then a divisional commander of the Constitutionalist Army, was the chief mourner and carried the urn with González's remains in his arms.



LEFT TO RIGHT:
UNIDENTIFIED
ABRAHAM GONZÁLEZ Y CASAVANTES
FRANCISCO I. MADERO
PASCUAL OROZCO, JR.

Courtesy Southwest Collection, El Paso Public Library, El Paso, Texas.

the Mexican revolutionary leaders of González's generation had much formal education. It was a tragedy that the relatively well educated and able González was cut off in his prime by an act of political terrorism.²

During the early 1880s González, as a scion of a well-to-do and influential family from the Guerrero district of Chihuahua, was able to spend a year or two at Notre Dame University at South Bend, Indiana. There he was a student of commercial subjects and philosophy. For a time in the autumn of 1883, a brother, José Guadalupe, was also at Notre Dame, but he was soon obliged by illness to return to Mexico.³ Abraham had to terminate his studies and return home when his father died unexpectedly in 1885. So far as anyone knows, the young Mexican never returned to Indiana.⁴

González would appear to have put his time in Indiana to good use as he was in demand as a translator in the years between his South Bend days and the outbreak of the revolution. His collegiate experience, his knowledge of English, and his subsequent business contacts made him an acknowledged expert on North Americans.⁵

The Mexican historian Francisco R. Almada, himself an interim and provisional governor of Chihuahua in 1929 and 1930, confuses matters by recording in his otherwise well informed works about González and the Revolution of 1910–1920 that the Maderista organizer and governor attended *la universidad de Indiana*.⁶ This statement is erroneous. Neither the archives of Indiana University nor those of Purdue University reveal any traces of young Abraham González in the 1880s; therefore, the Indiana connection of this important *norteño* political leader and martyr of the early phases of the Mexican Revolution is solely through the institution at South Bend.⁷ Several places and institutions in the state of Chi-

² For the murder see Almada, *Vida, proceso y muerte de González*, 143–53.

³ The name of Guadalupe (as Notre Dame lists him) presents a problem. Almada, *Vida, proceso y muerte de González*, 16, enumerates two brothers (including José) and five sisters of Abraham, but no Guadalupe. When Abraham was provisional governor of Chihuahua in May, 1911, however, he appointed José Guadalupe González to be temporary administrator of Juárez. It seems reasonable to assume that José Guadalupe was the brother who fell ill at South Bend in the autumn of 1883.

⁴ There is also a chronological problem connected with González's stay at Notre Dame. The Notre Dame archives credit Abraham with one year at that institution. Beezley, *Insurgent Governor*, 15–16, says that the future governor of Chihuahua was at Notre Dame for two years. Almada, *Vida, proceso y muerte de González*, 16, states that González, having perfected his command of English, did not return to Mexico until 1887. Perhaps González worked in the United States for a time at some job of which no record survives.

⁵ Beezley, *Insurgent Governor*, 16–17.

⁶ Almada, *Gobernadores*, 454; Almada, *Vida, proceso y muerte de González*, 16.

⁷ Information on Abraham González at Notre Dame is from a letter of June 3, 1988, from Assistant Archivist Peter J. Lysy to Richard H. Thompson. The negative information from Purdue University is from a letter of July 7, 1988, from June E. Williamson, assistant to the registrar, to Thompson. Archivist Emeritus Dolores

huahua perpetuate the name of the revolutionary leader who attended Notre Dame. These include schools, a park, a railroad station, a mine, a quarter of a *ranchería* or settlement, agrarian colonies and ejidos, streets, a dam, and a judicial district.⁸

In March, 1913, González faced a cruel death at the hands of federal cavalymen in the Chihuahuan desert near Horcasitas station. During his lifetime he had been a progressive revolutionary of somewhat puritanical tendency, an educated man who played a major role in his nation's history. The extant sources are silent, but it is interesting to contemplate the possible effects of his student days in northern Indiana on his career as a Mexican revolutionary.

Lahrman of Indiana University and unnamed persons in the offices of the Registrar and Alumni Secretary contributed negative evidence at Bloomington in response to telephone inquiries during July, 1988. Lahrman in her conversation with the author noted that Indiana University did not have a commercial course during the early 1880s.

⁸ Almada, *Vida, proceso y muerte de González*, 163-69.