

Mexico—A Democracy in the Making

By EDWARD CORSI

COUNTRIES that have tasted the bitterness of social and political revolution, and are playing the game of life in open defiance of the accepted rules of the day, are subjects of interest to a world eagerly seeking a way out of its chaos. Mexico, like Russia, Germany, and Italy, is experimenting with a new order in her own affairs: hence the universal interest in her progress.

I have just come back from Mexico, and, very frankly, I cannot share the optimism prevalent in many quarters and among certain students of international affairs who would have us believe that out of that country, as out of Russia or Italy, will come the panacea for all our ills. On the other hand, I am not among those who are of the opinion that Mexico, as a result of ten years of revolution, civil war, and anarchy, has, to put it very bluntly, gone to the dogs.

Mexico at this vital period of her history is working out her own destiny in her own way, employing principles and methods best suited to solve her own peculiar problems. She is grasping the opportunity for self-redemption in the same manner, with the same enthusiasm and the same determination, as Italy and Germany half a century ago grasped their opportunity for freedom and unification. In other words, the Mexican people are building for themselves a political and social structure which, when completed, will not differ materially from democratic structures now existing in other parts of the world.

For centuries the Mexican people have lived under a despotism the equal of which few peoples of the world have experienced. Peonage, exploitation, and slavery were the lot of the Indian and the mestizo, not only under the rule of the viceroys, princes, and foreign potentates, but under that of their own presidents and governors. As recently as 1910, under Don Porfirio Diaz and his Cientificos, the state of affairs in Mexico in so far as the great mass of the people was concerned was hardly better than that suffered by the people of Europe in the Middle Ages. Ignorance, superstition, and fear kept fifteen million souls in the grip of a few white men who exploited the wealth of the land while the country starved.

The Madero Revolution was but one of five hundred in the history of that unfortunate country; but it was the climax of a long train of outrages that lead

THE author of this article, the first of a series of five, has made a first-hand study of Mexican conditions. Mexico is now in the throes of a typical Presidential election campaign, and Edward Corsi's articles will provide the reader with the background necessary for a comprehension of the issues involved.

back to the time of the Conquistadores. Led by idealists, bandits, and soldiers of fortune, this uprising on the part of a half-clad, browbeaten population was the one great determined effort to destroy, once for all, the tyranny of an alien minority. To say, as many do, that by the doing of this or that Diaz might have avoided his downfall is to believe that King Canute might have held back the waves of the sea. The reaction was inevitable.

Thirteen years have passed since Madero launched his appeal to the nation, and, though the fighting has ceased, Mexico is still living in the Revolution. Obregon's task has been that of pacifying the country, and to a considerable extent he has succeeded. The bandits and the bandit armies that overran the Republic when the one-arm leader assumed the reins of power have been silenced. The Villas and the Zapatas are dead. But in the mind of the Mexican people still lurks a belief in the effectiveness, the utility, and the righteousness of force. The politician, the soldier, the labor leader, and the worker still think in terms of revolution. The great problem with Mexico is to restore peace.

To put it very plainly, conditions in that country are in a deplorable mess. There is general and widespread depression, with millions of apathetic Indians and peons literally on the verge of starvation. *Haciendas* and *ranchos* that in former days produced sufficient to meet the nation's needs are to-day practically idle and, in many parts of the country, completely abandoned. Industry and commerce are at a standstill; there are lacking both money and credit. Graft and special privilege, long the curse of Mexico—impede the Government at every turn, rendering necessary reforms

impossible. An enormous bureaucracy feeds on the public treasury while the people are overburdened with taxes. Capital has no confidence in the Government and is daily leaving the country. Labor is restless, arrogant, destructive. Among all classes exists a spirit of discontent. Religion and morality are at a low ebb. The social and economic crisis is disheartening.

What is the matter with Mexico? When I put this question to a prominent business man in Mexico City, he snapped back: "The Anarchist and the gringo," meaning of course the agitator and the foreign capitalist. In a few words he summed up the prevailing opinion among most people in that country who, though never in sympathy with the rule of Diaz, are dissatisfied with the outcome of the Revolution.

The Anarchist and the gringo are both aliens, and are hated by the various elements of the population because of their effective grip on the life of the country. The Anarchist, a stranger from Spain, Russia, or Italy, has succeeded in spreading the gospel of class hatred among the workers to such an extent as to render industrial peace well-nigh impossible. The gringo, who comes to Mexico for the sole purpose of making money and in most cases is successful, is hated by Mexican labor for the same reasons that he is hated elsewhere. Capital in Mexico is a foreign institution—if I may call it an institution—and, though it has contributed substantially to the industrial and commercial progress of the country, is compelled to bear the brunt of the nation's anger mainly because it is not native. So bitter and so widespread is this hatred of the gringo that he is accused of every wrong under the sun. A Mexican newspaper man went so far as to say to me that the Revolution was financed and encouraged by American capitalists in the hope of bringing about the annexation of the country.

While it is true that many Americans (for the gringo is in the main an American) have gone further in Mexican affairs than prudence or wisdom would have permitted, and many have openly encouraged intervention, the charge that they are responsible for Mexico's ills is absolutely groundless. Intelligent Mexicans entertain no such notions. They appreciate to what extent the American has contributed to the material progress of the country and how much there is need of him in this period of reconstruc-



International

Federal Troops leaving the City of Mexico during a Revolution

tion. They dismiss as nonsense the prevailing suspicion among all classes that Uncle Sam covets Mexican territory, though they fully appreciate that there is much pro-intervention propaganda in this country. "If it were true," I heard a Mexican say, "that the United States wants to take us over, I would be the first to consent. Certainly we would be no worse off." Many Mexicans, strange to say, speak likewise.

The trouble with Mexico, to my mind, is too much politics and too many politicians, a consequence of the political freedom gained by the Revolution. Political agitation is impeding the work of reconstruction and clogging the wheels of progress. The vicious, destructive work of the agitator, coupled with the activity of the mestizo politician, keeps the country in a state of turmoil and strife, from which there seems to be no present relief.

Mexico's political institutions are patterned after our own—in fact, it is said that the Carranza Constitution was drawn up by an American labor leader. But, while her system may be conducive to democratic rule, her people, temperamentally and educationally unlike the American people, are hardly fitted for democratic government, and may not be for a number of generations. The many so-called elections held during recent months throughout the country are proof of this deficiency. Not only has it been

impossible to conduct voting in an orderly manner, but rarely has the verdict at the polls been respected. In San Luis Potosi the election of a successor to Governor Rafael Nieto led to a condition bordering on civil war. In Queretaro, at this moment, there are three Legislatures in session, each claiming to have been duly elected by the people. In the city of Monterey troops were compelled to intervene in order to hold municipal elections. In Vera Cruz, Puebla, Guadalajara, Campeche, Oaxaca, and other sections the rifle and the machete still prevail. It is impossible to know how many political parties exist throughout the Republic, though parties in Mexico are but groups at the service of one politician or another. At this time, in preparation for the coming Presidential elections in July, they are springing like mushrooms all over the country. In reality, there is one party in Mexico—the Partido Nacional Cooperatista.

General Obregon, in spite of the politician and the agitator, has succeeded in giving the country a splendid administration. A most distinguished general of the Revolution, a born leader and an executive of the highest capacity, he has done as well under trying circumstances as might have been expected of any man. He has restored order, reorganized the various branches of the Government, improved the finances, granted freedom

of speech and of the press, encouraged education, reduced the army, and placed Mexico in friendly relations with other nations. He has been bitterly criticised by all factions and parties, but in characteristic manner has kept steady to his purpose, dealing in deeds rather than words. His aim is to establish a Socialist Republic based on the doctrines and ideals of Jesus Christ, who "surely may be considered the greatest Socialist humanity has ever known."

Whether or not he, and his colleagues of the Revolution, succeed in realizing their aim is not for me, nor for any one else, to say. For the present we can concern ourselves only with conditions as they are, drawing such inferences therefrom as the facts will permit. The establishment of a republic, be it Socialist or *bourgeois*, based on the doctrines of Jesus Christ is an ideal worthy of any statesman or country. But it is to be seriously doubted if such a republic can be established in a country where at this moment the tendency is away from, and even against, all that Christianity implies. With labor leaders preaching a gospel of hatred and envy, with politicians boasting openly their aversion to established religion, and with educators refusing to admit the word of God into the class-room, the chances of establishing a Christian republic in Mexico are few indeed. However, there may be

much under the surface that we are unable to perceive.

Mexico is one of the treasure-houses of the world, rich in the products that make for material progress. Her fifteen million people are inferior to none in their

capacity to contribute in terms of labor. She has leaders who, though lacking in experience, have the mentality, the ability, and the courage to play great parts. All that she needs is time—time in which to learn that the path of prog-

ress is traversed only by means of sacrifice and hard work. Given that, she will take her place among the democratic nations of the earth, contributing, as all nations should contribute, to the greater good of humanity.

The Day's Run

By H. M. TOMLINSON

IT was not pleasant to be on deck that night, and the promenaders and gossipers had abandoned it. Spume was shooting inboard. The deck chairs huddled in the nook amidships were empty. One chair left the pack and began a stealthy move towards the ship's side. The darkness surging past was of immense weight, and at times it seemed to rise above its bounds and to burst. Somewhere forward a loosened wind-screen was giving a startling imitation of gun-fire.

He went to look overside, but it was like staring at fate. Nothing could be seen. His hands had touched the clammy canvas of a life-belt in its rack, and as he wiped them with his handkerchief he glanced at the belt. An amusing little object! A fat lot of magic in that hopeful circle of life! He descended to his cabin, and then the noisy world stood still again, muffled and quiet, under the glow-lamps. Yet he did not find it easy to read. At times a mass of water exploded on the foreward deck, and then his safe and muffled world trembled. His mind left his book. Amiel's intimate Journal became foreign and dropped to the blanket. He listened to sounds that were like the echoes of distant battle, to forlorn and nameless alarms and warnings, to sudden fierce shouting far away in another world, to despairing and dying cries. Well, all of it was in another world, anyhow. Outer night and its sounds had nothing to do with him. Men who knew what to do were doing it. The movements of the ship were like those of a great living creature. In its long, leisurely breathing its body rose and fell. The faint tremor of the turbines was of the will which repressed an astonishing vitality and strength. He began reading again. . . .

A lurch of the ship woke him. It was four o'clock. For a moment he wondered whether something had happened in the world beyond him, or whether he had been dreaming. But the big creature was still breathing in a deep and leisurely way. Now and then, though, it growled and shook itself, for the wind seemed

worse and the noises more challenging. He turned out the lights; and when next he woke it was because the sun had risen high enough to shine through his port window, and the steward had rattled the teacup when placing the morning tray where he could reach it without leaving his bunk. "Fine morning, sir," said the steward.

"A bad night, wasn't it, steward?"

"Oh, nothing out of the way, sir."

The jolly passenger, who knew the sea, and so was always loud and hearty with the quartermasters, and saw to it that everybody had an interest in the sweepstake for the day's run, and pulled the ladies' chairs briskly about for them, and fed the gramophone, met him in the corridor as he was going to the bath-room. The jolly man danced a little greeting in his dressing-gown. "Dirty work last night," said the dancer, beaming. "Thought that even I might be a bit sick early this morning. Does one good, though, to feel the sea. The old thing actually rolled! Didn't know she could."

The breakfast bugle brought the passengers assembling about the head of the saloon companion. There were some jokes about breakfast. The ladies were greeted with mock surprise. They were asked whether they were quite sure they wanted any. It was better to go easy after a wild night. That was the jolly man's voice, followed by his own laughter, the first to follow his own jokes.

The lady from Hongkong complained at breakfast that her steward had forgotten to close her port window last night. "I had to get up and shut it myself. Quite suddenly the wind was terrible, and, do you know, my window was open. I might have got an awful chill. So careless! Now, on the P. & O.—" She had traveled widely, the lady from Hongkong, by *all* the principal lines, and she would never travel by *this* one any more, you know. Didn't the bacon taste the least bit queer? Did he think there was any advantage to be got out of the French exchange? If so, she would leave the ship at Marseilles and stay in the Riviera. "Steward, some more bacon,

well done! Somebody told me," she went on, "that the ship lurched frightfully once last night. I always said it would if ever it met really bad weather."

He trusted she would take no harm from the accident of the open window, and found himself speculating, while listening politely but without attention to her complaining voice, whether there was not a more profound difference between some human creatures, say between a man like Amiel and the lady from Hongkong, than there was between her and one of the lower animals. The passengers at the captain's table laughed aloud at a joke secret to themselves. The captain was not with them that morning. One of the men there turned and called over to the next table: "I say, Mrs. Taft here says she was just climbing out to shut her window when the ship suddenly rolled last night, and her husband says—"

"Hadn't you better let him say it?" asked the young botanist from Java.

"There!" exclaimed the lady beside him. "Now we sha'n't hear it. It's too bad of you."

The sun was warm on the promenade deck. Two children, while a sad ayah watched them, were boisterous with cigarette tins in which rattled a few coins.

The convalescent naval surgeon regarded the noisy children with malignity and exclaimed: "Not because I hate them, but because I'm sure their Scotch father has put spurious coins in those boxes, I'd like to chuck 'em both overboard. It doesn't sound like good money."

"Surely, doctor, you can't mean you'd cast children into the sea for being playful," said a lady, leaning from her chair towards him with a smile inviting him to say more. But the doctor merely mumbled, and went on reading the memoirs of Benvenuto Cellini.

At the after end of the deck the captain, waving his hands backwards in good-natured deprecation towards a group of passengers, was making as brief as possible his usual morning round. But he stopped when he met the direct look