

Defense of the Mexican People

By LINN A. E. GALE

NO RACE ever lived with kinder hearts, truer affections or more genuine graciousness than the Mexicans.

No race is more sincerely democratic or more spontaneously generous.

No race has in its soul more of the love of life, liberty and beauty, and yet no race has lived more miserably or seen more of slavery, squalor and suffering.

Endowed with a native charm and courtesy possessed by no other people, and blessed with a fruitful land unrivalled in splendor of scenery and richness of resources, the lot of the average Mexican has been that of a beast of burden or a docile drudge. From the day when, 300 years ago, the savage Spaniards, fresh from fierce religious wars with the fanatical hordes of Islam, landed on Mexican shores and began to subjugate the gentle, artistic, intellectual Aztecs, Toltecs and Mayas—a people so given to the pursuits of peace that they were unable to effectively fight the invaders—Mexican history has been a continuous account of tyrannies, peonage and wretchedness. .

Yet during these three centuries of bondage, the mental, moral and economic darkness has been frequently illumined by flashes of light when the still unconquered peons, led by some dauntless champion of freedom, have dared to kindle the fires of resistance and rebellion. Obedient as they have too often been, these simple children of mountain and desert have constantly chafed in the leash of alien control, occasionally breaking loose, usually being subdued later, but always hoping and struggling for that liberty which they know is their heritage. Finally, in the aftermath of the Madero revolution which proved such a disappointment when its leader, after being seated in the presidential chair, instituted a regime of nepotism and favoritism that differed little in principle from the corrupt reign of Porfirio Diaz, the Mexican masses initiated their last revolution when Venustiano Carranza led them to victory and defeated the imperialists and the reactionaries. The fruits of this latest bloody uprising of the Mexican people against their exploiters, have never been fully reaped and never can be while the Damocles' sword of intervention hangs

menacingly over their heads. Yet the fact remains that the revolution was a popular one, springing from the democratic, even crudely Socialistic yearnings of a long-oppressed people.

It is singular and significant that amid all the vicissitudes of their countless wars and revolutions and despite the body-exhausting, soul-deadening work that has eternally been their lot, the Mexicans have never lost their fondness for things beautiful and their regard for courtesy and hospitality. It is an eloquent tribute to the inherent qualities of these people that they have been able to retain, sometimes in pristine purity, sometimes in modified form, but always to a surprising extent, the lovable and commendable characteristics that are peculiarly their own. Observing such a psychological phenomenon, we are inspired to renewed hope in humanity, for if even the poor peons, so long bruised and beaten under the heels of capitalist slave-drivers, can keep alive their racial virtues, surely their more fortunate brothers in other countries, laboring under lesser difficulties, can throw off the chains of imperialism.

The real Mexican obviously is less frequently found in the centers of population. You should go to the remote ranches or the quaint Indian villages that still dot the country at irregular intervals. There you find him, unlettered, uncivilized, uninitiated into the tyrannies and tricks of his more educated northern neighbor. There you find the "Indian" of Mexico—as different from the North American Indian as the tropics from the arctic—the man with swarthy skin and dreamy dark eyes that seem to melt as memories of better days surge thru his soul, but that can flash with hot rage at injustice, the man who unhesitatingly offers you the best his humble hut affords and frequently will accept no price for his hospitality. And there you are able to judge somewhat as to the kind of a race that might be developed out of these freehearted, open-handed, cheerful, improvident people who have been ground down by the greed of their conquerors and exploiters—a race that might now be living in prosperity and plenty in sunny Mexico if foreign diplomacy had been used for higher purposes than thievery and chicanery.

Fernando Gonzalez Roa in "The Mexican People and Their Detractors," well said: "Armed intervention would present to the United States, a Mexican people decided to die for the defense of their liberty and after the patriots would have been crushed, a very serious problem of reorganization and assimilation. New problems of great gravity and complexity would arise, and neither the organization nor the purpose of the United

States would be found adequate to cope with them."

De Lara and Pinchon in their excellent book, "The Mexican People, Their Struggle For Liberty," said of Mexico: "The most backward and least favored of the nations, her brilliant Aztec intellect tinged with Iberian fire, has not suffered her to rest content in degradation and stultification; but has compelled her to make almost superhuman efforts to reach the rank of the most advanced nations of the world."

Mexico's misfortunes, like those of all other "backward" nations, are the result, not of the inferiority of the people, but of their exploitation and enthrallment. Mexico has never really had a chance. Altho the country secured its independence in 1821, it was not until 1857 that it was freed from the clericals' yoke by the Laws of Reform and this freedom was short lived, for when Diaz came into power in 1876, he suppressed liberty of conscience in short order. Only since Carranza has been president, has there been any honest effort to give the people genuine political democracy and this effort has been constantly hampered and hindered by outside interference. Yet during the last few years great strides have been made in restoring order, suppressing banditry, building public roads, dredging canals, draining land and improving the country generally. The new constitution of Mexico is probably the most liberal in any political republic in the world. Article 123—the famous labor article—ranks among the most important pieces of legislation of the century in any country.

Mexico is capable of solving her own problems and achieving her own full liberty, industrial as well as political. Kindly cooperation she will welcome, but she needs no "protectorate" of self-appointed arbiters of the world's destiny and she will be far, far better off without it. Her ways are not the ways of the nations of colder climates and it is not necessary—in fact, it is absurd—to expect them to be. Under her warm tropic sun there will always dwell a race more romantic, care-free and pleasure-loving than the matter-of-fact, mercenary materialists of the frigid zones. The vivid vermilion of exultant living will always have a stronger appeal to her people than the pallid Puritanism of steel-cold souls who carry prayer books in one hand and pick the pockets of the public with the other!

As for "development of natural resources by foreign capital," this has been her bane these several centuries. It is this which has dragged down the descendants of the builders of the Aztec temples and pyramids into the wretched role so many of them occupy today. What Mexico needs

is not more protection for foreign capital, but more protection for the human beings within her borders. This she will get, not from foreign trade empires but from her own long suffering masses when they are fully free to realize their aspirations.

Intervention in Mexico, if successful—which is by no means certain, for when goaded to arms,

these kindly Mexicans can fight like fiends—would sink the just awakening people into a torpor from which they might not arise for centuries more.

Self-determination in Mexico, if unconditional and genuine, must mean their eventual complete emancipation and entrance into that larger liberty toward which all the world is turning.