

Bleeding Mexico

By LINN A. E. GALE

The United States sways back and forth, unsteadily, on the edge of war with Mexico. Unless the Radicals, Liberals and peace-loving people generally, north of the Rio Grande make an almost superhuman effort, their country will be plunged into another blood-bath within a few months or even a few weeks.

Nothing short of Social Revolution in the United States or England, can permanently prevent intervention, for intervention is the inevitable next move on the program of imperialistic capitalism. Intervention in Mexico, war with England, war with Japan and God only knows what next—they are unavoidable, sooner or later, unless Wall Street's government or Lombard Street's government topples down.

But, while only the Revolution can permanently prevent intervention, it is possible for organized public opinion in the United States to bring such powerful pressure that it will be delayed a year or two. And during that year or two, in all probability, England will have an upheaval. One is imminent there now. It is too early to expect anything like that just now in the United States but Bolshevism in England would hasten the Great Change in North America and affairs might easily get so serious for capitalism in the United States that Wall Street would have its hands full at home. In such a case, intervention would never take place and Mexico would be free to work out her own destiny.

The chief reason why Wall Street wants intervention is, as everybody knows, told in the one word—"oil." It cannot be said, however, from the standpoint of bourgeois governmental procedure, that Carranza's taxes on oil properties have been excessive or "confiscatory." Compared with the rates in Texas and Oklahoma, both rentals and taxes are moderate. The total value of petroleum exports for 1918 was about \$70,000,000, American money, and the official tax for that year, according to Mexican government figures, was \$5,560,198.95, American money, or about 8 per cent of the value of the exports. Hardly an unjust tax, when it is remembered that 54 of the oil companies pay an annual rent of about one dollar an acre, these 54 companies occupying 7-8ths of the oil land under exploitation, and the other 24 oil companies own their own land in fee simple and pay no rent.

However, it is not the tax itself that has stimulated the intervention movement. The petroleum magnates don't like the tax, to be sure and probably it would be reduced some under American rule, but the tax is not the real trouble. If that were the only difficulty, a few grumbles would be all that would ever come of it.

American capitalism is far less concerned about the oil tax than it is about the fear that "Bolshevistic tendencies" are lurking behind it. What Wall Street is really afraid of is, that if it lets the oil tax stand and virtually acknowledges the principle of eminent domain which the Mexican government has proclaimed with regard to oil wells, mines, etc., that same government will some of these days seize the wells and mines and operate them itself.

Carranza is not a Socialist, nor is his Secretary of State, Manuel Aguirre Berlanga, but their sympathies are with

the common people rather than with capitalistic exploiters. They know what foreign capitalism has done to Mexico. They can see every day in Mexico City what Wall Street did when General Diaz was President—how it erected elegant public buildings that cost millions of dollars wrung from a long-suffering people, how alien contractors received staggering graft on every one of these buildings, how helpless peons were paid niggardly wages for working on them, and how two mammoth unfinished structures, the National Theater and the Legislative Palace, with now rusty iron beams and sinking abutments, testify to the thievery of those capitalists and to the profligate extravagance and corruption of Diaz.

It would not take much to swing Carranza and Berlanga into open espousal of Socialism, or to at least make them put into practice a mild form of state Socialism. That is, if it were not for outside pressure. Just at present there is little danger of any such action because the Carranza government is struggling for its very life. But under ordinary circumstances, there would be a tendency in the direction of more Radicalism that would be at least distinctly uncomfortable for outside capital invested in Mexico.

This is the **real reason** why Wall Street raves and rages at Carranza and wants American gunmen hustled at once to the border. Morgan, Hearst, et al., do not want to take any more chances with such a government. Who knows but Bolshevism may sweep across another country or two and Carranza may catch the disease and do a little Bolshevizing himself? Such a possibility is too terrible to be considered with complacency. Such a government is too dangerous potentially to be left alone. It must be overthrown and some form of a stable "protectorate" substituted. So reason Morgan and Hearst—and quite properly from their standpoint.

This uneasiness on the part of the American money kings has been increased not a little in the past few months by certain symptoms that are clearly indicative of growing Radicalism among the Mexicans. William Gates, who wrote a series of articles of a very abusive and unfair nature for the **Worlds Work**, mentioned reproachfully in one of them: "Before me lies a recent Mexico City newspaper with photographs of a poster advertising copies for sale of the Bolsheviki constitution on the walls of the government buildings in Mexico and a clerk at the window of the Chamber of Deputies, selling copies. My current Mexican papers are daily filled with increasing numbers of notices of Russian Bolsheviki propagandists." Gates is not the only fossilized foreigner who has been perturbed by the fact that Bolshevist propaganda is for the most part unchecked in Mexico.

Just the other day, ~~Secretary~~ of the Treasury Luis Cabrera, who is considered the second most influential man in the Republic below Carranza—Secretary of State Berlanga ranking first below the President—was interviewed by a reporter for **El Democrata**, a Mexico City newspaper. The reporter asked Carranza if he did not think Bolshevist agitators in Mexico ought to be imprisoned or deported. Cabrera said, "No," and remarked

that Bolshevism was an ideal social system but Mexico was not yet ready for it. Perhaps Cabrera would not have made that latter statement if it had not been for the Damocles' sword of intervention hanging over the head of the government of which he is an important part. But even if he really made it in all sincerity, the preceding remark is sufficient to show that he is not a "safe" man for Wall Street to permit to have charge of the finances of a large, rich and fertile country like Mexico—that the Mexican government is not a "safe" government when it tolerates such a Secretary of the Treasury. It is not enough that he thinks Mexico is not ready for Bolshevism—just now. Wall Street won't stand for a chancellor who thinks Mexico will ever be ready for it!

A worse thorn in the flesh of Wall Street than Cabrera—and Cabrera has been honored by being called "pro-German" by New York newspapers—is Secretary of State Berlanga. During the war, Berlanga was everlastingly opposed to any participation in it and some think he, even more than Carranza, was responsible for Mexico's flat decision not to listen to the siren song of the Allied Committee of Public Information, the oil magnates and American vested interests when they pleaded with the government to help save democracy. All American capitalists consider Berlanga "pro-German"—much more so than they consider Cabrera. Perhaps he was a little "pro-German" in the war. If so, his position was undoubtedly the same as that of not a few Mexicans who told me they wanted to see Germany win, not because they liked the kaiser or the junkers, but because they felt that with Germany victorious, Potsdam would keep Wall Street from gobbling up Mexico—one set of thieves would balance the other and meanwhile Mexico would have a chance to live in peace. If the United States won, they maintained, Wall Street would immediately prepare to seize Mexico. In the light of present events, the idea was not as far wrong as it may have seemed.

Be this as it may, it is an undisputed fact that Berlanga is the bitter enemy of alien exploiters. He is a lawyer by profession, a student by inclination, and a temperamental pacifist and democrat, hating alike military trappings and official obsequiousness. The gaudily uniformed soldiery of Diaz and the pomp and display of the Diaz regime are still nauseating memories to him. All thru his career, his hostility to anything militaristic or imperialistic, has been evident. If Mexico is free from coercion in the presidential election of 1920, he may succeed Carranza. There is little doubt that he is Carranza's preference. If he became President, the Mexican government would be still less kindly disposed toward the oil and mining magnates. In fact, Berlanga might decide, some fine day, to make an alliance with Lenine. He might and he might not. Nobody knows. But Wall Street cannot afford to take any such chances and let Mexico elect such a man as its chief executive. Another reason why intervention is necessary.

Two little happenings lately furnish additional proof of which way Secretary Berlanga inclines. One of them concerns myself. I was arrested by order of the Mexico City health department for publishing a Spanish edition of Margaret Sanger's birth control pamphlet, "Family Limitation." There is no law in Mexico against contraceptive information but the health department, which is under the influence of Allied capitalists who particularly hate me, construed a certain paragraph in the book to

mean approval of abortion and also claimed that an advertisement in the book of a suppository violated the patent medicine license regulations. I was fined \$500, Mexican money, and sentenced to a penitentiary term if I did not pay the fine. I appealed to Berlanga and Berlanga summoned the secretary of the health department before him. What happened, I heard from a witness who said that Berlanga gave the frightened secretary a lecture that he will not soon forget, warning him to take no more orders from foreign capitalists or the American embassy! I was already in the penitentiary, having been railroaded there as quickly as the health department could get a policeman to take me. I did not stay long, however, for very shortly thereafter, the health department was compelled to revoke its penalty and order me freed. This action by Berlanga was taken in the face of a storm of savage articles in *El Universal* and *Excelsior*, the two principal newspapers in Mexico City under the control of Allied money.

The other incident in which Berlanga showed his hand lately, was that of Dmitri Nikitin, who was arrested in Monterrey and conducted to the city of Victoria, en route for Tampico, where he was to have been deported for being a "pernicious foreigner." Nikitin is a Russian by birth, lived in the United States 10 or 15 years and is, of course, a Bolshevik. He is a "slacker" and was conducting a school of languages in Monterrey with his wife, a Mexican lady. He also sold radical literature and advocated Bolshevism. American capitalists "framed" him, getting the police to arrest him in the belief that he was a supporter of Villa. Friends appealed to Berlanga and Berlanga communicated with the governor of the state of Tamaulipas who ordered Nikitin's release. He is now free to pursue his own inclinations and will be—unless intervention comes. These are only little incidents but they are significant.

Another and very important reason why American capitalism wants intervention is the fact that Mexico provided asylum for nearly 30,000 "slackers" from the United States during the war. Nobody knows the exact number but there were probably 30,000 who came to this country. Many have now gone back, many others went to South America and quite a few went to various European countries, hoping to eventually get to Russia. Today there are not more than 5,000 here—probably much less. But the fact remains that these political exiles who refused to participate in what they regarded as an unjustifiable war, were protected by the Carranza government. A few near the border were returned by local Mexican officials who sold out for the \$50 a head offered for deserters, but this was not done with the knowledge or approval of the Mexico City government. Not only were the "slackers" protected from extradition, but they were allowed to engage in Bolshevik propaganda to their heart's content. Allied firms that discharged men on learning just why they were in Mexico, had to pay damages under the Mexican law which forbids discrimination by employers for political reasons. Allied stores that refused to sell goods to "slackers" were forced to serve them or pay a fine. Sanborn's Drug Store of this city was visited by ex-Governor Breceda of the Federal District and a delegation of Mexican soldiers a few minutes after one of the waitresses refused to serve "Jack" Johnson an ice cream soda, and "Jack" thereupon had all the sodas he wanted. Pugilist Johnson is neither a "slacker" nor a radical, having left the United States on account of a

charge under the Mann white slave act, but this is another instance showing the attitude of Mexicans toward fugitives from other countries. Johnson's color was probably the reason for his chilly reception in Sanborn's; and color discriminations are not tolerated.

There is still another reason why intervention is wanted—a big and influential reason. The Roman Catholic Church. Probably no man on earth is more hated today by the Pope at Rome than President Carranza of Mexico, because he confiscated vast church estates and exiled many priests who were robbing the ignorant masses. The anti-Catholic policy of the government has moderated a great deal in the last year or two, in an evident effort to stop the Catholic clamors for intervention. Lately many of the exiled priests have been allowed to return to Mexico, but the church knows that Carranza still detests it and would not hesitate to completely crush it if his government were free from outside coercion. Therefore, the Catholic Church of foreign countries is, almost to a man, loudly for intervention, and the Catholic hierarchy of Mexico, with its thousands of illiterate, degraded followers, stands ready to stab the Mexico government in the back while Allied capitalism attacks it from the front.

The stories of atrocities committed against foreigners in Mexico may be dismissed briefly. Foreigners have been treated no worse than Mexicans by the bandits. And if Carranza had been left alone during the years of his administration, there would be few bandits in the country. The cancellation of enormous land grants to political heelers and grafters of Diaz, the division of these lands into small tracts and their restoration to the people, the proper taxation of mines and oil wells and the socialization of certain industries that would have taken place, would have eliminated most of the terrible poverty that is the logical fruit, not of Carranza's policies, but of outside interference. Non-interference would have enabled Carranza to remove extreme poverty and thereby eliminate the banditry arising from it. The other kind of banditry, which is the bigger share of it, would have disappeared almost instantaneously, for it is traceable directly to foreigners who supply the brigands with guns and money.

It is common knowledge that oil men in the Tampico district pay \$200,000 a month to Pellaez, king of the bandits of that section. When L. J. de Bekker, an American newspaper man, asked an oil man why he did not refuse to pay this blackmail and appeal to the Mexican government for protection, the answer was: "We can't. Pellaez would blow up our wells if we did. Besides, the State Department at Washington knows each and every payment we make to Pellaez and approves it!"

The simple truth is that the bandits in Mexico get their

ammunition from American sources—there is no other place from which they could get it. In some cases the ammunition is sold them in cold-blooded commercial transactions. In other cases it is given them and money is also paid as a bribe, besides, to protect the property of the donors. The same aid given Carranza soldiers would probably protect the givers of the guns and dollars amply, but they would rather help cut-throats, ruffians and robbers than to help a government that tho faulty and weak, is honestly liberal and honestly making a hard struggle against uneven odds. **The Pellaez bandits in the Tampico region, who protect the property of the oil magnates never neglect an opportunity to dynamite a government railway train or kill Carranza soldiers!**

There are a very, very few gangs that loot and murder and that do not get help from foreigners. It is such as these that commit the crimes like the killing of Correll and the others that fill the American newspapers. But, in the first place, these gangs are no more numerous than were similar gangs in the early days of the United States; in the second place, there are more lynchings, "patriotic" outrages and the like committed in the United States, considering population, than there are crimes of these gangs in Mexico; in the third place, if the Carranza government were given the aid that foreigners now give its enemies, the government would be able to exterminate such outlaws; and in the fourth place, the members of many of these gangs are peons who have been cheated by foreigners and who seek revenge by attacking every "gringo" they see. If foreigners had not wronged them in the beginning, they would not be outlaws now.

After all, no matter what Mexico's offenses, they are the offenses of a child, unlettered, abused and enslaved. They are offenses that no nation that is genuinely great and no man who is truly human, can refuse to forgive. Her whole life has been a pitiful series of serfdoms, violations and tortures. A toy, a mistress, a thrall—this was her role for centuries. At last, freed by revolution, she has been beaten and bruised almost from the very moment she drew her first breath of freedom's air, and her newfound emancipation has been but a ghastly mockery.

Unjust and unrighteous as all wars of capitalist society have been, war with Mexico will be the most wicked and wanton that was ever waged. "War" is a misnomer. It will not be war but rape—brutal, vicious, lecherous, fiendish rape, committed against a nation that has suffered as no nation ever suffered; that is slowly and painfully climbing the steep slopes that lead toward light and liberty; and that, in spite of enforced ignorance and degradation, has never lost the love, laughter and music in her heart nor the democratic dreams in her soul!

