

# The Martyred Colonel

By MANUEL GOMEZ.

THE aircraft investigation at Washington was a two-days' wonder . . . which means that of all the sessions of the investigating board, those two days when Col. Billy Mitchell was on the witness stand, boasting and snarling and spitting out sarcastic epigrams at the expense of his pot-bellied superiors of the army and navy, were the only ones that counted. And they were a memorable two days! Instinctively, newspaper editors realized that something significant was taking place, not merely because the scandal of it and the fact that Col. Billy is a "typical matinee idol of the army," made it "good copy," nor yet because it has become policy now to play up all things military—but because the testimony of the flashy, vulgar colonel was true talk which implies a new stage in modern warfare, so terrible as to take one's breath away.

COL. MITCHELL says to the generals: "Take your spurs off and get into a motor car. Get the most powerful missile-throwing weapons that can be devised, both for rapidity, penetration, and for range." He foretells the use of yet more murderous explosives and poison gases, with the all-seeing airplane dominating sea and land, sinking ships, destroying supply depots, railroads and canals, and forcing the evacuation of whole cities by the simple process of dropping tons of explosives upon the inhabitants.

What especially characterizes Colonel Mitchell's testimony is a sense of the world-wide scope of contemporary military operations, and of foreign policy. Having learned well Clausewitz's familiar phrase that "war is just a continuation of politics by other means," it is not difficult for him to locate presumptive enemies. First of all Great Britain, the foremost world competitor of American capitalism; then Japan, then a combination of Great Britain and Japan, with or without additional complicating alliances.

REGARDING Great Britain, he says ironically: "Altho it may be unthinkable that we have any trouble with her, it is the main reason that our defenses on the Atlantic are necessary."

Arguing for a powerful and mobile air force, he calls attention to the clash of interests in the Far East over the domination of Asia. The aspirations of Japan in the Far East

are, he emphasizes, "to control all ingress and egress to the continent of Asia, half the population of the world, and to hold Asia, Asiatic (that is, Japanese)." "A perfect laudable ambition!" he adds with the cynical urbanity of the true imperialist. Laudable or not laudable, it brings Japan into conflict with the equally "laudable" ambitions of American capitalism—with the result that Col. Mitchell calls for airplane bases in Alaska and the Hawaiian Islands, and stresses the value of the air force in a joint war against Great Britain and Japan on the ground that it "can be used along the Atlantic coast and within 36 hours can be applied on the Pacific coast, or vice versa."

As if to indicate beyond the shadow of a doubt that he knows his way around in the world, the charming witness devoted an extra paragraph to the importance of the air force for future operations centering about the Caribbean sea.

WHETHER or not the spectacular colonel is right in saying that "an airplane can sink any ship that is built or that can be built," he undoubtedly represents a new era in modern warfare, the era when all war is world war at least in its implications—because of its basis in world imperialist policy. Warfare was once largely a matter of relatively small armies—of infantry, cavalry and light artillery; this was under feudalism and during the earliest wars for the establishment of national states, when markets were extremely limited and local economy was the rule. With the expansion of markets the navy came more and more prominently to the fore, until, with the development of imperialism, Admiral Mahan was able to say that he who controls the seas controls the destinies of the world. It appears as tho the day of the airplane will come next. Col. Billy Mitchell, the passionate advocate of airplane supremacy, is "the fair-haired boy" of contemporary super-imperialism.

OF course if the airplane is to dominate it will be only as a technical instrument, as a weapon. The war of 1914-18 proved, among other things, that the machinery of industrialism is the real determining factor in present-day warfare. Germany held the allies at bay for three years, and defeated them, because of her industrial advantage, consolidated at the very outset of the conflict; it was only the superior industrial resources of the

United States that turned the scale against her. Today, the industrialism of the United States dominates the capitalist world. American industrialism will be able to forge whatever weapons may be necessary for its purposes.

Already, according to the testimony of Admiral Moffett, this country has the most powerful air force in the world. If the point of view of Col. Mitchell prevails, as it will prevail ultimately, American capitalist industrialism will set out to become undisputed "mistress of the air." And this precisely because that same industrialism is fighting for monopolization and control in Asia, in Latin-America and in Europe—because such a policy means inevitable war—because that is the whole method of modern imperialist competition on a world scale. Col. Mitchell realizes all this, at least as much as it is necessary for a soldier to realize it. That is the difference between him and the pettifogging bureaucrats of the army and navy departments, who still move within the narrow circle of an outworn routine, clinging to it in desperation because they sense that they will be left behind and will not be able to maintain themselves in the new world that Billy Mitchell speaks of so familiarly.

BILLY MITCHELL is to be court-martialed. No doubt he will be hounded out of the army, amid the lamentations of the "liberals" and socialists of all shades, who are already bemoaning the unjust fate of this young "martyr of reform." But the liberals and socialists can cease wailing. Billy Mitchell's career is not at an end; it is just beginning. Billy Mitchell will be taken care of. He will be given ample opportunity to complete the revolution which he has started. Five seconds after he is out of the army his figure will loom portentously across the political horizon of these United States. Billy Mitchell has still more valuable services to give to American imperialism.

How Chairman Morrow (of the aircraft investigating board—and of J. P. Morgan & Co.) must have chuckled to read the lofty interviews given out by the delegates to the inter-parliamentary union, who began to arrive in Washington to discuss peace and disarmament—on the very day that Billy Mitchell took up his concrete analysis of war preparations for a struggle with Japan, with England, with a combination of allied powers!