New Rivalries in Argentina

By Ellen Ward

IN the Argentine, Dictator Justo has just turned over the government to Dictator Ortiz. It is true that the country went thru the forms of an election in September 1937, and the election mumbo-jumbo is somewhat more complicated and lifelike than it is in Mexico, let us say. In February of this year, the people "celebrated" the inauguration and the United States sent its six largest bombers—flying fortresses we call them—to help celebrate whose victory?

Roberto Ortiz, millionaire, lawyer, gambler, represents the interests of the rich landowners who are not unfriendly to the embryonic fascist movements which they held in reserve. On the day of the inauguration, John White, New York Times correspondent, cabled from Buenos Aires:

"Ortiz has the complete confidence of the business interests, both foreign and local, and he is pledged to continue those policies which have made Justo's administration one of the most successful in the country's history."

Successful for whom?

Why shouldn't the business interests be well pleased? Ortiz was finance minister in Dictator Justo's cabinet. At the same time, he was attorney for British interests in the Argentine—this means all utilities and railways—and he was the preferred candidate of the landowners and the reactionaries of the land. It is no secret that his election was secured by force and fraud. He has no majority in the present Chamber of Deputies but soon they will hold a new election and the political gangsters will secure him a majority in the next Chamber.

Fascism in Argentina is not the unified, organized force that it is in Brazil. It has as yet no important national leader like Plinio Salgado.

The fascist Argentine Legion Civica is made up of some government employees, members of army officers families and sons of large landowners.

There are over ten fascist groups defending the interests of the landowners in the different regions of the country.

Industry In Argentina

Argentina's extreme nationalism began to develop during the years of the depression. As in other Latin American lands, the economic crisis resulted in considerable expansion of native industry which began to supply articles purchased abroad before the depression. During the last half-decade, there has been considerable growth in the manufacture of shoes, textiles, canned goods, toilet preparations, glass, furniture, pneumatic tires and other commodities. Argentina's shoes are today as good as the British in quality and workmanship and the development in textiles is making Argentina independent of the foreign market, so much so that some of our own New England manufacturers, who in former years supplied the Argentine market, have been losing so rapidly that they have been compelled to transfer their whole plant to Buenos Aires.

Altho Argentine trade with the United States has doubled in the last year and that of Great Britain declined slightly, England still holds first place in the market of Argentina. She buys one-third of all of the exports of the Argentine and has tied the Argentine currency to the British pound sterling. Before the depression her currency was tied to the American dollar.

Justo before, and now Ortiz, encourage the activities of the fascist groups because they find them exceedingly useful from time to time in protecting the interests of the landowners. The two more important fascist groups are La Guardia Argentina and La Legion Civica. Both have nuclei in the outlying regions of the country. They claim a membership of 50,000 in Buenos Aires and 150,000 in the entire country. Their political program includes: 1. abolition of political parties; 2. abolition of Congress; 3. reduction of the government burocracy; 4. complete centralization of political power; and 5. a legislature based on corporate representation.

Their economic program calls for: 1. planned economy to eliminate the middle man; 2 abolition of the financial and commercial hegemony of Buenos Aires; and 3. a fairer return to the "producer" for his labor.

Both of these groups are carrying on a campaign to win over the army to their program. The growing provincial newspapers are offered news telegraphed free of charge from Buenos Aires by Italian and German information buros. And even more influential than the newspapers is the propaganda bombarded by short wave from Rome and Berlin and from secret radio stations in the mountains of Peru and Chile.

People's Front In Argentina

To combat the activities of these fascist organizations a Popular Front was organized consisting of the Radicals (among the most conservative of the political groupings, even more conservative than the French Radicals), the Progressive Democrats, the socialists and the communists. This combination makes up about 85% of the electorate of Argentina but, up to the present, they have found that they could unite on one issue only—"to carry thru one public act—a demonstration for the unveiling of the monument of President Saenz Pena —author of the secret ballot"!

This public demonstration was followed by the withdrawal of the conservative Radical party, which controls 70% of the vote, while the socialists refused the support of the communists on any terms.

We see, then, that the opposition to the fascist groupings and to the