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THE MEXICAN
REVOLUTION

A DEFENSE



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OTHER WORKS BY DR. RAMON BETETA

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROGRAM OF MEXICO. Mexico. 1935.

LA PALACRACIA MEXICANA. Mexico. 1936.

TO THE READER



THE Mexican Revolution—A Defense, is a collection of lectures having the aim its title indicates. Although a number of topics are dealt with, topics that are fundamental in each case, there is among them a bond uniting and coördinating them; the intent inspiring them all—the vigorous defense and clear explanation of what our revolutionary movement really is.

The reader familiar with Mexican affairs should keep in mind that these lectures were delivered before American audiences, whose perceptive ability is unlike ours, and whose special way of looking at things is wholly at variance with our own, due to difference in language, habits, customs and social environment. These circumstances, which added to the difficulties of the enterprise, involved the necessity of relating events and propounding problems in a simplified form, so as to bring them within focus of minds which, though cultivated, were far removed from our social realities.

It was, therefore, no easy task to explain our revolutionary ideology to a people who, though close to us geographically, are Mexico's diametrical opposite in other respects and live in utter ignorance of our idiosyncrasy and social structure.

As such a lack of knowledge has been the result of misleading judgments and absurd stories, deliberate for the most part, and unfortunately all too eagerly accepted in foreign countries as true statements regarding our manner of being and way of thinking, this book comes to fill a real need for those fair-minded foreigners willing to understand Mexico.

Dr. Beteta studies the three fundamental aspects of our Revolution: Education, basic among Mexico's problems and prime reason for the existence of the others; Labor, a problem of an economic and social nature, for which a solution is being sought in efforts to improve the conditions of so important a factor of our social conglomerate, and the Agrarian Problem, stated in terms of a better distribution of the land and its more efficient utilization, for the benefit of the peasant class, who in Mexico—essentially a farming country—constitutes an absolute majority of the population.

Some other aspects related with the integration of our nationality and needed to round out the picture of the internal structure and physiognomy peculiar to Mexico are also treated in these lectures; the problems

arising out of the Indian element in our social milieu, its undeniable influence, and the phenomenal work attendant upon incorporating the Indian into the national life as a necessary consequence of the system of colonization by inter-breeding, followed by Spain in America, in contrast to the practice adopted by the Anglo-Saxon race; the so-called religious conflict, with special features that give to it a character of its own; and finally that question of paramount significance: teaching a common language, as an element for the unification of our nationality.

Dr. Beteta sets out his ideas with neat clearness and with that absolute ideological independence with which he has always uttered them, as a citizen of the Republic of Mexico engaged in the study of its problems and keenly anxious to contribute to their solution. One must be aware of the fact, moreover, that these ideas were voiced at different times and before Dr. Beteta filled his present post of Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, and that, consequently, he was by no means officially expressing the criterion of the Mexican Government.

In his felicitous observations, and in his well thought-out conclusions, Dr. Beteta aims at explaining, in each case, both the historical fact in itself, and the social transformation to which it gives rise, stressing all the while the fundamental part played by the eco-

conomic factor. As he was talking to members of a society of capitalistic type which has carried its proceedings to extremes, señor Beteta had to present our historical and social phenomena in a manner admitting of comparisons, thereby seeking, by simplifying ideology and adapting facts to mentalities different from ours, a better and fairer understanding of Mexico and its Revolution.

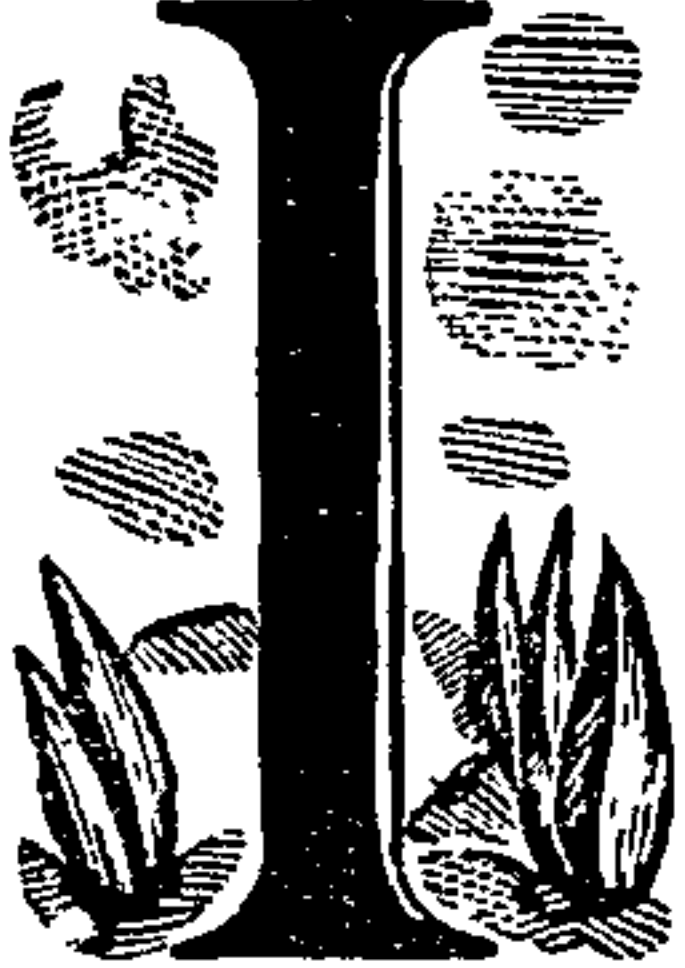
This is also the aim of this book.

Celestino Herrera FRIMONT.

LECTURES

THE MOVING FORCES IN MEXICAN LIFE

Lecture delivered July 22, 1930, before the "Mexican Seminar," sponsored by the Committee on Cultural Relations with Latin America.

 IN this time of transportation by airplane, it ought not to be difficult to give a bird's-eye view of anything, but when the thing to be described is Mexico, the task becomes a difficult one. Perhaps it is difficult because I do not know very well what Mexico is. Nevertheless, the bird-eye view I am supposed to give you of "The Moving Forces in Mexican Life" includes about everything there is in my country.

Some one has called Mexico the land of contrast. At least it is the country of differences: physical differences as well as social differences and this again makes any description difficult. The peculiar characteristic of my country is that no one part of it and no one person living in it seems to be like any other part or any other person. That is not true of the United States in general. You are rather a homogeneous people with attitudes and minds and ways of living more or less alike. When I am about to meet an American, I know more or less what sort of person he is likely to be; I have some idea about his religion, his education and

government—and perhaps even of his opinion concerning evolution; I am able to guess with a fair amount of accuracy what color his eyes will be and the way will be dressed. But when you are about to meet a Mexican, you will almost never know what sort of a person he will be. He may be dressed in English style or he may be dressed in a pajama-like costume; he may speak Spanish or Aztec or one of a number of other languages. He may be dark skinned or he may be white. He may have the same idea of a God that you have or he may have an entirely pagan idea of God.

Everything in Mexico seems to be moving, and not only moving but filled with conflicting currents, each fighting the other. When one describes any force in Mexico, one must perforce describe as well the element opposing it if one is to understand what is happening.

The first living force in Mexico is, in my opinion, the Indian. According to some writers, Mexico is an Indian nation. Such a conception is only partially true. Mexico is a land with an Indian aspect and it is very important that this Indian aspect be understood. At the same time, there is a white side of Mexico and it, too, is important and must not be overlooked.

The Indian side of Mexico is all too apparent. It is the first thing you see when you cross the border. The food, the clothing, the housing, even the medicines commonly used in Mexico, are in many respects Indian. Statistically speaking, the Indian has always been and still is important. In the year 1805 (before we had secured our Independence from Spain and when officially Mexico was still known as New Spain), there were in Mexico one million whites, 18% of the population; two million *mestizos* (mixed Indian and white blood), 38% of the population; and two a half million Indians, 44% of the population. A century

later, Mexico had one million one hundred and fifty thousand whites, 7½% of the population; eight million *mestizos*, 53% of the population and six million Indians, 39% of the population.

The influence of the Indian in Mexico is great in everything. Not only have the Indians existed, they have married with the whites. If I were asked what was the main difference between the history of the United States and the history of Mexico, I would say that it is the fact that the English colonists did not marry the Indians. They killed them instead. The Spaniards, on the other hand, were so unscrupulous as to intermarry with the Indians! That very fact is central in understanding anything that has happened or may happen in Mexico. We are biologically and socially the product of the union of two races, of two civilizations that were, and still are, wide apart. And a great effort is now in process aiming to bring about a union and an amalgamation of the two that will be Mexico.

The Indian in us is to be found everywhere, not only in the dark eyes of our girls, but in our churches as well. These, the most Spanish of all things Spanish, were built by Indian hands, Indians who perhaps did not understand the God to whom the church was built but who just the same put the best of their artistic feeling into the task. That is why one often finds in our churches a certain pagan aspect which makes one suspect that the Indian did not exactly comprehend the new creed, but rather had adopted the exterior forms of a religion quite as he had adopted the Spanish language which expressed it, in reality keeping the old Indian spirit and ideas. This same result may be seen in our music and painting, in fact, in all that is Mexican.

In our attitude toward life, the Indian in us is also present. To the American business man who gets up early in the morn-

ing, who does not wake up his wife, but snatches a bite of breakfast and runs to the subway, hurries to the office and works all morning, has a glass of milk at noon, works all afternoon, takes the subway home, has dinner and then goes to bed, the Indian attitude must be unthinkable. The Indian is so perfectly satisfied. He is a person who really enjoys living, even if he be dirty, even if he be hungry, even if he be naked. It has taken many of us a long time to understand this attitude and we have the advantage of living in Mexico.

There are two fundamental ways in which to take life: one, the occidental attitude, exemplified by the American business man; the other, the oriental attitude, held by the Indian. The ideal of life is to be happy and, although there is no way to succeed, there are two ways to try to attain happiness; one, by having more and more needs each day, the other, by being satisfied with things as they are. The former is well known in the United States. One finds instances of it in Mexico too, for Mexico seems to be trying to work out a synthesis of these two attitudes.

If "civilization" means the having of things, then the Indian is out of luck. But when one becomes disgusted with production for production's sake; when one realizes that producing a Ford every few minutes has not saved the world: when one remembers that a crisis comes to our "civilized world" every few years; when one realizes that at the present time in the United States there are thousands, perhaps several millions, of men without work, men who want to work, who have the ability to work but who cannot find any work to do, and when one realizes that this is true in the face of so-called overproduction, then one begins to feel that the qualities the Indian contributes are worth while

after all. The Indians have given us a unique attitude toward life, an attitude which sometimes annoys you of the United States and even at times us Mexicans of white blood, but it is an attitude which also leads to much that is success in the real sense of the word, and of which art is but one expression.

The Indian has also given us his endurance, his physical and moral endurance. When you will visit the villages around Actopan, in the state of Hidalgo, where the Federal Department of Education has one of its "cultural missions," you will look about you and you will see nothing but *maguey* plants. You will be told that you are in an Indian village, but you will see no houses. Then you will begin to notice the people coming out of the holes where they live, and you will wonder how it is possible for people to exist in that dry land without water, without fertility, hostile to human life, without machinery, with none of the tools of civilization. Some of them, you are told, have been walking since before dawn to have the pleasure of seeing you, although their faces, their attitudes, their words tell nothing of their pleasure, for their pleasure is within them. But you must realize that it has taken great endurance to have persisted in that part of the world, against the great odds of nature and against us, the white part of the population in Mexico.

The Indians in Mexico exploited one another before the Spaniards came; they suffered three hundred years of exploitation by the Spaniards and then another hundred years by the Mexican leaders. One marvels that they have not disappeared. Our methods, it seems, were not so efficient as those you applied to the Indians in your country.

Physical endurance goes hand in hand with the mental endurance of the Indian. An Indian will walk all day long to come

to a village where he will sell a peso's worth of merchandise; he will walk all night long to return home; an Indian may also suffer acute pain without even so much as twitching the muscles of his face. We have ever so many examples of this in our history.

Then there is the "white" part of Mexico. The "white" part of Mexico will be easier for you to understand for it is closer to you. It has the same ideas, the same attitudes, the same purposes as you have. It has been contaminated with, and is sick of, industrialism, just as you are. You speak the same "language," even though you may not know Spanish and "white" Mexico does not speak English.

What of other social forces in Mexico? Certainly, the Revolution is the first of them. As Dr. Moisés Sáenz put it a year ago when speaking to you, "We in Mexico make a distinction between the Revolution with a capital and the revolutions with a small letter." The Revolution with a capital is the strongest force in Mexico. There are people who believe that we have had many revolutions, but we claim that we have had only one. True enough, it began in 1808, but it is still going on and we hope it will keep on going. This is not such a bloodthirsty proposition as it may sound, for there are two sides to the Revolution, the destructive and the constructive. I love them both equally, for one could not exist without the other.

Other speakers will deal with the Revolution, so I shall not take your time explaining it. I do feel, however, that I should tell you why we have had this Revolution.

Let us consider why at the present time a revolution is quite impossible in the United States. It is not because the economic conditions of the country are perfect, not because everybody is satisfied, nor is it because you in the United States are a peace-

loving people and we in Mexico are like fighting cocks or trained bulldogs. These things are not true. I have been in a revolution and I have felt, with those who have been in it, that fear of death, that reluctance to inflict death. Why then do we fight?

When men go out to kill each other, there is always a reason for it. One need not go into the details of the Spanish Colonial system or into the matter of the exploitation of the Indian and lower classes to be convinced that the majority of the population of Mexico has been persecuted and kept in misery; that they have been almost unbelievably exploited. In order to realize this fully, one needs only to visit a *hacienda* or to consider the standard of living of the masses of Mexico's population, or to recall the story of that Indian I have mentioned who walked all day to sell fifty cents worth of merchandise. You must put yourself in the place of the underdog and see if you would not have been willing to kill under the same conditions. When one is well-fed and satisfied, it is hard to realize the point of view of those "who do wrong," as we say; but when one feels the misery of millions of men, men who have been exploited for years upon end, for generation after generation; exploited economically, spiritually, morally, exploited in everything that is sacred to human beings, one realizes that it is natural for them to rise up with the desire to kill the men who have selfishly oppressed them. True, their situation after the killing is not always better than before. Often they have gone to the other extreme and matters have become worse. But, sooner or later, improvement will come, as the natural result of the Revolution. When that day arrives, when the ideal is realized, armed uprisings will cease. The Revolution will have killed itself. Thus, curiously enough, the Revolution has within itself the seeds of its own destruction. We know that it is owing to the Revolution that in

some future day we will have no more revolutions. This, however, will not come to pass until the majority of the people in Mexico are able to live like human beings.

The Revolution, then, is the most important living force in Mexico. It has been in operation for many years, and it will still go on for a long time. Consequently, one must keep it in mind as one describes the land problems, or justifies the labor unions, or explains the separation of the Church and State, or talks about nationalizing the natural resources of the country. For the Revolution is a fundamental force in Mexico; it exists in the core of the country, in the hearts of the people. It is to be found in our paintings, in our songs, in our churches, in our poetry. When the Revolution seems to fail, when one of its leaders becomes an exploiter himself, or when the big movement degenerates into banditry, we do not become discouraged, for we believe in the Revolution; we have faith in the essential force of our social life.

I have said that the Revolution kills itself. This needs an explanation, and the best way to explain it is by an example. The International Workers of the World make it impossible for their leaders to hold property. Experience has taught them that radicalism and property go ill together. As soon as a man in Mexico acquires a little land or has a decent salary, or ascends to a higher position in society, he ceases to desire far-reaching changes. With each new phase of the Revolution, we come nearer to the end of it, because only in a more equitable distribution of wealth, only in a more just system of government, in a larger control of foreign companies, is there a possibility of permanent, institutional peace in Mexico. In fact, I should hate to see any order established on a different basis, for I know that such an

order would not last and that it would but make the next revolutionary outburst all the more painful.

Not everything, however, in the Revolution is destructive; it has its constructive side as well—albeit a side which could not have existed had it not been for the destructive aspect. The constructive purposes are two: first, to attain to the ideals of the Revolution; and second, to destroy the causes of its existence. In other words, thanks to the Revolution, we have “discovered” Mexico and have come to realize that our political uprisings are not spasmodic, misdirected movements without explanation or cause, but rather symptoms of an existent social maladjustment which must be corrected if peace is to be established. Therefore, the constructive forces of the Revolution are endeavoring to bring about such reforms as will give our people a chance to better their condition, an opportunity for self-expression and leadership other than through the medium of violent, destructive revolt. They attempt to create a political, economic and social system in which revolutions are unnecessary. This constructive side of our great historical movement is well exemplified in our present educational program.

Later on in this Seminar, other speakers will tell you about education in Mexico. I will not go into the details of this program here, but I do want to call your attention to a few fundamental facts. By education, we do not mean book instruction. We think it foolish to teach people how to write when they are not going to have paper to write on, or any one to write to, just as it is useless to teach them how to read and then never give them a book, or a magazine or even a newspaper. Reading and writing are, after all, but means of expression, and they are not always the best suited to our people. Singing, dancing and art in general are sometimes better ways of expressing one's personality. By

education we mean economic, moral and social education. We mean to give, by means of education, what the Revolution offers to our lower classes in a quicker, yet more dangerous way. We know for instance, that a peon who joins a revolutionary army goes to it half-naked, semi-starved, barefooted, owning nothing in the world, for he cannot even call a family his own. When he joins the army, he is given a horse that is his, a gun that is his, a hat, ammunition and shoes that are also his own. Those are his first possessions; he is ready to fight for them. Eventually he goes to a city and eats, and perhaps he gets drunk. In due time he may drive a car and own a home, and, perhaps he may become a Minister in the Cabinet or even a President of the Republic. Those who have died in the struggle are forgotten; those who achieve success are visible. What a great stimulus for future revolts! But if an economic education would give that peon a possibility of self-improvement, of ascending to a higher level in society, of having power and a place in the world, the revolutions would be discouraged. A farmer who owns a piece of land, some cattle, a tractor and a coming crop will not listen to revolutions. He is conservative because he has something to lose, and he does not take unnecessary chances.

We hope then by means of education to make farmers of this type out of our peons, knowing that if education fails, they will become farmers through the medium of revolutions. This, perhaps, will give you a glance at the agrarian problem in Mexico, a problem intimately connected with education. It is not surprising, then, that in our rural schools, quite as as we teach the three "Rs," we teach methods of cultivation of the soil, hygienic habits, the care of pigs, cows, rabbits, bees, chickens; we teach a coöperative system of marketing and we place greater faith in

singing, dancing, playing and acting than we do in reading and writing.

With this aim in view, we have multiplied the number of schools and greatly increased the amount of money spent on them. Some figures will show you the increase; during Colonial times, among one and a half million children of school age, only sixty thousand actually attended the schools. In the years following Independence, education did not improve. It was not until 1865, immediately following that phase of our Revolution known as *La Reforma*, that rural education under government control was established in Mexico. From that time until 1878, there was an increase in the number of schools. They reached the four thousand mark. However, at the end of the Diaz régime, after more than thirty years of peace and so-called material progress, only three out of every ten children of school age went to school.

The days following the fall of Diaz were filled with destruction and the number of schools did not increase. Yet at the present time, we have over fifteen thousand schools on which the Federal Government alone spends over twenty-three million pesos a year. This makes it possible for more than fifty per cent of the children of school age to attend school. ⁽¹⁾ I do not mean to give you the impression that we have reached our goal; I do not overlook the fact that fully half of the children of Mexico do not go to school because they have no school to go to; but I do pretend to show you the greater emphasis which has been given to education in the last few years.

We have attempted, as you have seen, to increase the number of schools and while this increase in mere numbers interests us greatly, of far greater significance to us is what we call the "orientation" of the methods of education in these schools. If you go

(1) These data refer to the year 1930.

to our rural schools you will find that the teacher is not solely a person who gives out knowledge. She is the center of the town. She is the one who knows about health, who tells the people what to eat, who cares for the mothers when their babies are born and gives them advice on their feeding and care, who works in the schoolroom with the children by day and with the adults by night, who shows them how to improve the land and work it to better advantage, and how to care for domestic animals. In every rural school you will find nearby a small orchard, a patch of land, also cultivated by the pupils, a beehive, a pigsty and a chicken-pen, and all of these things are considered by us of far greater importance in the education of the people than mere books.

With enormous increase in the number of schools, we were confronted with the problem of training our rural teachers. In the beginning, we simply improvised them, using any young man or woman who had the desire to work and the right attitude. Later on the rural normal schools were founded for the special purpose of training rural teachers. Besides, in order to improve the technique and to be certain of unity in action, the Rural Missions were created. Rural Missions are groups of men and women with special training in the different fields—a teacher, a social worker who is also a nurse, a teacher of popular arts, a musician, an agronomist, a physical director and an expert in small industries. The *misiones* hold institutes in strategical places throughout the country where the rural teachers of the region meet. There the local school is taken as a model and for a few weeks the mission works with the teachers, with the children and with the community. Their work is imitated by the rural teachers when they go back to their villages and thus the new ideas in rural education grow like a snow-ball throughout the Republic.

In addition, some permanent *misiones* have been founded in those places in which they seem most necessary. The excellent results of these institutions can already be felt. Education then, as it is peculiarly understood and as it is being carried out in Mexico, is one of the greatest forces in the life of the country.

Then there is the agrarian force, the driving force of our rural classes who had been land hungry for centuries. Other speakers will tell you how few were the people who owned land in Mexico before the Revolution, how wasteful the system of production was, and of the injustices of the social and political régime of the country. They will tell you also about the *latifundio* system and about the peonage; they will mention to you, I am certain, the various attempts made throughout the history of Mexico to get the land back to the people and about the failure or success of those attempts. But for the present it will be sufficient to say that one of the driving forces in Mexico is the desire of our people to have land, and, having land, to free themselves from economic and political servitude.

You will listen also to lecturers who are going to tell you of the many difficult problems in connection with the agrarian situation: the need to finance the people and to give them a technique which will enable them to work the land after they have secured it; the necessity to arouse in them a desire to till the soil; the urgent need to teach them better methods of cultivation and the use of modern machinery. But no matter how difficult a problem the land question may be, no matter how complex, how involved, the agrarian movement must go on with its distribution of land, with the establishment of agrarian banks and with the creation of agricultural coöperatives and agricultural schools. The methods of solution may change, it is true: radicalism might possibly be substituted by a more peaceful policy; land might be paid

for in cash instead of bonds; a scientific attitude might, perhaps, take the place of the existing methods of political expediency. But should the movement be stopped we shall never have peace in Mexico, for we should fail irremediably in the other aspects of the Revolution. And no matter how the process may be, we must always keep in mind that it is people and their happiness and not the production of wealth that matters.

Another force in Mexican life is organized labor. The laborers in Mexico have acquired a class consciousness which has made it possible for them to unite and struggle in an effort to better their condition. Thanks to their unions, our workmen have finally understood their rights and are acquiring a sense of responsibility and a knowledge of their duties; but above all, they have succeeded in raising their standard of living. There are in Mexico, to be sure, strikes and lock-outs. Sometimes the fighting is not necessarily fair, but as a whole, the unions have helped not only the workmen themselves, but also the production of wealth and society at large. Besides, our laboring class has become a political factor in Mexico. This, of course, as the history of other countries shows, may prove to be rather more dangerous than promising for the future of the labor movement.

You have no doubt heard a good deal about the so-called religious question in Mexico, a question which I dare say is not religious but political. Yet, call it as you may, this unrest caused by religious or by pseudo-religious, motives has been an important factor in the history of my country and should perhaps be accorded some explanation at this time. Very early in the history of the Revolution in Mexico, that is, at the time of the War of Independence, the church as an institution began resisting the revolutionary movement. The church excommunicated Hidalgo and was responsible for the execution of Morelos.

Throughout later years, the church, as an institution of land owners and of conservative minds, has symbolized in Mexico everything the Revolution has been fighting. The liberal movement known as *La Reforma*, was directed mainly against the church as a land owner, rather than against any system of beliefs or any dogma or ceremonial. Unfortunately, our reformers missed the point, and although they took the land away from the Catholic Church they did not solve the agrarian problem.

Yet if this struggle between the Catholic Church and the Liberal and Revolutionary Governments is not a religious question, we do have a problem in Mexico in connection with religion; it is the problem of establishing a common belief among our people.

I have just heard Mr. Herring say that many of you represent the different churches of your country, and yet I believe that this group before me undoubtedly possesses some fundamental unity in religion. Such a group could scarcely be found in Mexico, if it was to be representative of our people, for every one of us understands religion in a different way, and the difference is not one of mere details but of essentials. Millions of the people in Mexico could not be called Christians in the exact sense of the word, for they still believe in their ancient gods. The names have changed, but the beliefs remain, as true to their past as the ceremonies expressing them. Many of the religious celebrations you will see in our smaller villages have unquestionably a pagan flavor, though they may have a Catholic name.

The unity of sentiment of the Mexican people as expressed in their art, and which seems to have been born since the Colonial times, has not been attained in religion. True enough, many of the Catholic saints now have Indian names added to the original Spanish ones, but this nominal synthesis does not represent a

synthesis of feeling, for we have not, as yet, a religion we may call Mexican.

I have attempted to give you a bird's-eye view of the moving forces of Mexico. Now I may ask: Out of all this, what? What is it that we revolutionists of Mexico are hoping for? What is there in the future for us to do? Are these social forces in Mexico like those blind forces of nature, having no purpose, no goal, no aim? Are they like the torrential force of an over-flooded river which would destroy everything in its path with no apparent motive? I do not think so. I see in all these forces I have described a common end, the nation of Mexico. We do not expect that this will come to-morrow, but no matter how far in the future it may lie, the goal exists and all the forces are working in that general direction.

With the Revolution, our greatest force, we have discovered ourselves; analyzing the Revolution, we have understood our heterogeneity, our lack of unity; studying its causes, we have found at the base of our society a system of injustice and oppression; investigating its results, we have found a movement of integration, a desire for mutual understanding and a realization of better economic conditions for our lower classes. All the various sides of the Revolution point toward the same goal; the agrarian movement, which has come to the point of constructiveness; the labor movement, which has already united more than a million men; the nationalization of the natural resources which is helping the Mexicans to develop Mexico; our oil and mineral laws which prevent the wasteful exploitation of our subsoil with no profit to the country itself; the paintings covering the walls of our public buildings which already represent the true types of Mexico—our Indians and our *mestizos* and our few whites, the scenes of our revolutions with their sorrow and their hope, with

their cruelty and their enlightenment; our songs, which, while neither Indian nor white, already express the sentiment and the aspirations of the newly born Mexican soul. In all of these, as well as in many other phases of the Revolution, we perceive the attainment of our great hope; that Mexico may become a great nation.

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MEXICO AND THE WORLD ECONOMIC CRISIS

Lecture delivered July 9, 1933, before the "Mexican Seminar," sponsored by the Committee on Cultural Relations with Latin America.

WE read that during the Middle Ages it was a common occurrence for a good crop to be wasted away, in the place where it had been harvested, while a few miles away a whole village would be starving to death. Those who could use the commodity knew nothing about the crop, while the farmers did not know about the starving village. Lack of communications, imperfect technique, deficient knowledge, and a general condition of warfare were responsible for such a situation.

But progress came. The industrial revolution transformed the world. Science was applied to agriculture. Mass production took the place of the handicraft economy. Transportation of people, commodities and ideas became easy and cheap. One would think that the repetition of such a happening as those frequently seen in the Middle Ages could no longer take place. And yet, the cotton growers of Texas leave their cotton to rot away in the fields while good Brazilian coffee is thrown into the ocean and ripe cantaloups of California are mercilessly destroyed, and

people are advised to use wheat as fuel. This is called "over-production." But the full meaning of it does not dawn upon one, until ones watches the bread-lines of New York and Chicago get longer and thicker every day, and one reads about the number of unemployed in Germany, and France and England and the United States which has reached the thirty million mark. A single line made by them and their dependents, with their arms on each other's shoulders would go two times around the world.

What has happened? Has humanity gone mad? Is progress an empty word? Has science failed humanity? No. The answer is to be found in the fact that we all are blessed with the sacred rights of private property.

There is a difference, however, between the present situation and that of the Middle Ages: The owners of crops and manufactured goods at the present time do know about the people who are starving to death, or suffering from exposure, as they also know that those people cannot buy their commodities, no matter how much they may need them. This state of affairs is known as "Depression." We also like to call it "bad times" for opposition to the other period called "Prosperity." But perhaps it would not be out of time or place, now that half of the world is telling the other half what to do, so that prosperity will return, to analyze, even though it may be briefly, what prosperity really is.

Prosperity means an increase of production, high prices, good profits, a decrease of unemployment, larger exportation, easy credit, plentiful capital and larger acquisitive power of the people. They all seem to be good things to have. And yet high prices mean low salaries, but most of us—the great majority of the population of the world, indeed—live out of salaries; for us, then, high prices mean to work the same as usual for smaller amounts of goods. Money wages may grow, following the trail of

high prices, but while they do, the proletariat must suffer. High profits—another great blessing of prosperity—mean low costs (again low salaries, low raw materials, low taxes) and of course high prices. Then it means an ever-increasing ill-distribution of wealth; a greater concentration of capital in the hands of the few, and naturally a proportionally great decrease in per capita enjoyment of the wealth of the world.

Then comes unemployment, a real blessing indeed. It is particularly great in times of depression, but it does not disappear during prosperity. Even in the year 1929, during the greatest boom the world has ever seen, the United States had around two million unemployed. This is natural, for in a profit seeking society, each entrepreneur endeavors to keep costs low and prices high, and he succeeds partially, at least he does temporarily. And while he succeeds, he obtains profits, and people keep on being unemployed and salaries keep on being low.

Another symptom of prosperity is a substantial increase in production. This does not mean, as you, perhaps, are thinking, that more people have their fundamental needs covered, nor does it signify a more intelligent satisfaction of our normal necessities. No, increase of production means multiplication of the things that people must buy, because they were created for that purpose.

Things, whose acquisition permits those people fortunate enough to be able to buy them, to become admired by their neighbors and keep up with the Joneses. Production of things identical to others already existing, but with new names, new presentations and new trade-marks. Production which exists before the need it is supposed to satisfy; which often exists, even though that need is never created. To avoid this failure, advertising, propaganda, the movies, the radio, electric lights, high-pressure salesmen, all get busy in a effort to create more and more needs,

newer and newer habits; in making our life more and more artificial. Thanks to them, our necessities are satisfied in a distorted, abnormal manner to keep the machines roaring, to keep production going.

Also for that purpose, capital is used freely; profits are reinvested and so are savings. Bankers, teachers and churchmen, all agree that we must provide for the future. And so as to be able to do it, the youth marries late, or does not marry; old people save their money; boys and girls are sent to college to better equip themselves for the mighty struggle; shares are sold and bought, bonds are floated; governments start public works; loans are given at home and abroad, practically with no regard as to their purpose. Useless railroads, theoretical dams, new war-ships are built with loans made by the bankers, who in turn obtain them from their credulous customers. And the savings of the people are wasted. This is what is known as plenty of capital and easy credit.

Neither control, nor care, is used for the employment of these fertilizing forces of industry; at home, savings are used for speculation as well as for consumption; abroad, the loans are often still worse misused. No wonder that capital so employed, not in the production of wealth, but in its consumption and even in the destruction of it, cannot be repaid.

Production, high prices, good profits, low costs, easy credit, plenty of capital, all suddenly stop. An incident which in itself may be unimportant, stops the upward movement. Prices fall, production is reduced, men are fired, salaries are cut down, purchasing power decreases, credit is restricted to its lowest limit, banks fail, loans are not paid, shares and bonds become worthless, and thus the tragedy of depression is visible. Its causes, however, should be searched for in prosperity.

To save themselves from the effects of depression, each manufacturer tries to shift the burden to the other fellow and in his selfish, though natural effort, he helps in sinking the ship a little lower. Judging their situation from his own narrow point of view, each manufacturer attempts to get afloat by reducing his costs and overhead, and in that fashion each one contributes in reducing the general purchasing power that, in turn, will force him to new readjustments.

Nations do not behave any wiser. They, too, have a selfish and narrow outlook which is called "Economic Nationalism." Each nation wants the other to suffer; each one wants to sell more than it buys; each one wants to have a favorable balance of trade. Even creditor countries have that attitude; they want to receive payments, but no importations. They want to keep on exporting, but give no credit. This being an impossibility, international traffic decreases. It is then that tariff barriers and inflation in currencies are thought out as the best ways to obtain the looked for aim. When successful, international traffic stops completely.

The decrease in exportation has the same effect as new production at home, and consequently, causes a new fall in prices and all the other consequences already mentioned.

No doubt that depression destroys itself, and so does prosperity; but this gives me no consolation. On the contrary, because it means that so long as the system remains what it is today, it is not wise to expect a change. Prosperity is followed by depression, depression by revival, this by a boom, and the boom again turns into a slump. Ever since the industrial revolution began we have seen that cycle, and it is not likely to be different in the future.

SOME ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF MEXICO'S SIX-YEAR PLAN

Lecture delivered July, 28, 1934, before the "Mexican Seminar," sponsored by the Committee on Cultural Relations with Latin America.

MEXICO has been fertile in revolutionary plans. A "revolutionary plan" has generally preceded not only a true revolution, but even a private revolt. These plans have almost always been a means of criticizing the Government and the dominant group, and of formulating a campaign for overthrowing them. The Six-Year Plan is fundamentally different from these others, not only because it is not a criticism by an opposition, does not attempt the overthrow of any government, but also because it is actually a program of action laid down by the Government and the party in power to guide their future course.

The convention of the National Revolutionary Party, held in Queretaro, in November, 1933, approved the Six-Year Plan as a program for the Government during the coming presidential term. General Lazaro Cardenas, having been chosen as its candidate, appeared before the convention and promised to accept the Plan. It began to be put into effect during 1934, as Pre-

sident Abelardo Rodriguez wished to adopt it during the last year of his term.

Strictly speaking, the Six-Year Plan is not a political platform, used to attract votes, nor a series of more or less vague promises which might shore up the confidence of the Mexican people in the National Revolutionary Party. On the contrary, the Plan implies self-criticism, a revision of the revolutionary proposals, ideals, and principles. It thus has other importances, the greatest being that of defining, at least in part, the actions of the leaders of the group which has governed the country for twenty years. For the first time in Mexico, the compilers of a plan did not satisfy themselves with the expression of abstract ideals, but proceeded to detail the methods of their carrying-out, means which could convert into realities the principles for which Mexico has been fighting, not only since 1910, but probably since the War of Independence, in 1810.

The formulation of the Six-Year Plan occurred at a particularly opportune moment, when there seemed to be doubt about the fundamental principles of the Revolution, not only among the conservative elements in the country, but also among some of the most distinguished men in the revolutionary group itself. A need was felt to define ideas and map out roads, a feeling to which, no doubt, the political vogue in other countries of a tendency toward planned economy contributed.

To translate into English the 190 pages of the Six-Year Plan in its official edition, and then to give a résumé of them, would be a task beyond the limitations of this lecture. For that reason, I shall refer to only two of its principal points—the agrarian and labor questions—of special importance in that they treat some of the most fundamental and widely discussed problems of Mexico.

No further discussion is heard in Mexico of the justification of the agrarian policy, or of the unquestionable necessity of giving to the villages the lands of which they were despoiled by force, by deceit, and even by legal procedures of doubtful morality. Nor does anyone defend the *latifundio* system, by means of which two per cent of the population formerly possessed all the land in the country. Nor, finally, does anyone doubt that the agricultural technique of Mexico is extremely backward, and its production too limited to supply the fundamental needs of the population. That which has been the subject of discussion by some writers of both left-wing and conservative groups, is whether the methods followed in carrying out the agrarian reform have been the best-advised. The policy has been criticized for decreasing, rather than increasing, the agricultural production, for having created a sense of insecurity among the land-workers through fear of red tape, and for not having visibly bettered the level of life of the *peones* and land-workers to whom land has been given. Notwithstanding the fact that these criticisms are justified only in part—it is not certain that the divided land is cultivated less than that still in the hands of small or large private holders, nor that agricultural production has been diminished, since indications exist that it has been augmented—this doubt nevertheless found a place even in the center of the revolutionary group itself.

The argument concerning the insecurity created by the distribution of lands has been repeated whenever the agrarian problem has been discussed. There is no doubt that the division of lands, whether by donation or restitution, has resulted in a modification of the criterion of the right of private property in Mexico, causing it to be considered as a social function rather than a divine right. It is obvious that large *haciendas* adjacent to centers of population having the right to lands, live under the

constant menace of being broken up. But this proves only the necessity of arriving at an immediate decision in regard to the agrarian problem, not in the form suggested during the presidency of Ortiz Rubio—that of fixing a limit of time during which the villages might present their petitions—but in that of completing the distribution of all available land, until there remains in Mexico no land-worker lacking a parcel of land from which he can live.

Again, to deny the economic betterment of the *peones* who have received land is to make a foolish, baseless statement, one not seriously to be discussed if one considers the utter lack of statistics relating to the standard of life before and after the distribution of lands. Also, the most superficial observation shows that there has been improvement. But even if that were not true, the change in the people's psychology, from one of well-defined servility to that of the independent land-worker, is an achievement not to be denied.

In view of these discussions and doubts, the National Revolutionary Party, in the Six-Year Plan, formulated its criterion of the agrarian question in the following terms: "...Mexico's most important social problem, beyond any doubt, is that relating to the distribution of land and its better exploitation from the point of view of the national interest, which is intimately bound up with the social and economic liberation of the large group of workers directly employed on the land..." This introduction, recognizing that the agrarian problem has not yet been solved, ends with the following two statements:

First. The giving of lands and waters to all the nuclei of population, without exception, which either lack them or have them in insufficient quantity to satisfy their needs, must be continued.

Second. The object of the division of lands is to convert the *peón* into an independent land-worker, able to get the best from

his land because he owns it. The only limitation to the division of land should be relative to the small property.

To attain these ends, the Plan proposes various concrete means:

a) To increase the economic and human resources dedicated by the government to the carrying-out of the agrarian measures, changing the National Agrarian Commission into an autonomous Department. At the same time to substitute for the Local Agrarian Commissions, Mixed Agrarian Commissions made up of a representative from the new Department, one from the Governor of the State, and another from the land workers' organizations. The autonomous Department will have a budget of 4,000,000 *pesos*, instead of the 2,200,000 allotted to the National Agrarian Commission.

b) To simplify the carrying-out of land-transfers, and to give final character to the provisional solutions, made to date.

One of the best-founded criticisms which has been made of the agrarian policy deals with its complicated and slow machinery, which always includes two procedures: the first, before the Local Agrarian Commission, which ends with the decree of the Governor of the State, allowing or denying provisional possession; and the second, before the National Agrarian Commission, allowing or denying final possession. Because of this arrangement, there is a period, frequently very prolonged, of insecurity. This period, originally conceived to allow the owners of the land a real opportunity to defend themselves, has in reality only caused uncertainty of rights on the part of both of the owners and the recipients, and has, in consequence, been a general evil.

c) To give the so-called *peones* living on *haciendas* the right to receive lands.

Until now, the law has not considered workers living on *haciendas* to be legal personalities with the right to petition for land. This right has, in reality, been limited to villages, that is to say, to centers of independent population. It was considered unjust that the men working on an enterprise should divide it. With this reservation still in mind, the Six-Year Plan gives these *peones* the right to be included in the agrarian census of neighbouring communities, but not that of asking for the lands of the *hacienda* on which they work.

d) To divide the rural holdings of the federal and local Governments, since it is illogical and absurd that a nation acting to end large landholdings should itself be a large landholder. This concrete means of distributing land has a certain importance, for the federal Government owned, in 1925, lands of an area estimated at 36,600,000 hectares. It should be noted, however, that most of this land is in the States of Guerrero, Campeche, Chiapas, and the Territory of Quintana Roo, that is, in slightly populated places which have been insufficiently explored and surveyed.

e) To subdivide the *latifundios*, whether through their owners, voluntarily, or by forced expropriation, among small land-workers.

The *latifundio* is still the prevailing system in Mexico. Even in the Agricultural Census of 1930 we read that there are in the country 13,444 holdings each larger than 1,000 hectares, having a total area of 102,881,607 hectares, or about 83.48% of the nation's arable land. In this category are included 1,831 holdings each larger than 10,000 hectares, having a total area of 68,743,996

hectares, or about 33% of the nation's whole area. That is to say, in 1930 less than 2,000 persons were owners of one-third of the area of the Republic. There is, then, nothing strange in the desire to divide the land in Mexico.

f) Redistribution of the rural population, creating new agricultural regions. This is included to cover the case of nuclei of population which cannot obtain lands in the region wherein they live, either because such lands do not exist or because they are not subject to division into small properties.

A map of the density of population in Mexico clearly shows that the majority of our population lives in the high lands of the central plateau, for the States of the North and Southeast show up as sparsely populated. It seems, then, logical to carry out a more adequate distribution of land-workers, sending them into the tropical regions of the coasts and the temperate ones of the north. However, there is nothing more difficult than to withdraw people from the place in which they live, above all when, as in Mexico, one is dealing with indigenous races which have frequently lived in the places they now occupy since before the arrival of the Spaniards in America. Furthermore, the peoples of Mexico are sedentary. Journeys do not appeal to them, and changes of residence are exceptional. The only important recent migrations are the movement toward the United States, the economic causes of which are evident, and those occasioned by the Revolution, which brought out of their mountains and valleys groups of men who, lacking this strong politico-social stimulus, would probably have remained there, as their fathers and grandfathers did.

As a corollary to the redistribution of population, the Six-Year Plan envisages an internal colonization by Mexicans. The sad history of colonizing companies—which under the pretext of

bringing European immigrants, in reality merely monopolized huge *latifundios*—puts the proposal of foreign colonization in rather unflattering perspective. On the other hand, Mexico must solve the problems created by the workers repatriated from the United States who, between 1929 and 1933, increased to 381,644 and who, not having been absorbed by agriculture, can create an unemployment problem.

g) The last fundamental principle relating to the agrarian problem is the recognition that the division of land, even carried to complete realization, is insufficient completely to solve the agricultural problem. The Plan desires, in addition, an augmentation of production through the helpful organization of communal landholders and land-workers, the introduction of more adequate crops, their rotation, and the general improvement in agricultural technique signified by machinery, fertilizer, profitable use of sub-products, selection of seeds, etc.

To what degree the technique employed in agriculture in Mexico is rudimentary, and how small the returns are in consequence, are demonstrated by the following statistics: of the area under cultivation in the country, which is only 14,500,000 hectares, or 11% of the total area, only 49% was cultivated during the agricultural year 1929-1930, due to the custom of leaving land fallow every third year in order not to sterilize it. It is interesting to note, in passing, that while the lands cultivated under the system of private property constitute only 48.27% of those in work, in the communally divided lands of the same category 57.35% were cultivated. This seems to indicate a better use of the communally divided lands than of those still within *haciendas*, this despite the fact that their equipment was insignificant, the Agricultural Census of 1930 showing that the machinery, im-

plements, and instruments utilized by communal landholders was worth less than 4,000,000 *pesos*. It is evident that with such equipment the yield cannot be abundant. Further, the value of the machinery and implements of all land-workers, excluding the communal landholders, was only about 66,500,000 *pesos*. This helps to explain the small yields obtained in Mexico. Thus, for example, in the country's most important product, maize, Mexico is very low on the scale of yields compared to other nations, producing only 640 kilograms per hectare, while the United States obtains 1,730, Argentina 2,000 and Egypt 2,320. The situation in regard to wheat is no more flattering, for the yield of it in Mexico is 550 kilograms per hectare (average 1924-1928), while that of the United States is 990, Chile, 1,170, and Belgium 2,670. To this must be added the fact that the agricultural trinity maize-bean calabash, continues to be the principal cultivation in Mexico.

The Six-Year Plan also proposes concrete ways of obtaining the improvement of agricultural technique: agricultural credit must be increased in usefulness by the help of the state and the development of the banks which to this end have been established around the National Bank of Agricultural Credit, and which, in conformity to what the Plan foresees, must receive from the federal government 50,000,000 *pesos* to be divided among the workers of communal holdings and small land-workers in general, with the aim of social service, rather than that of earning interest.

Besides the development of credit, the Plan suggests the usefulness of organizing the workers of the field into coöperatives, which would allow them the acquisition of machinery in common, the installation of industrial plants for the transformation of their products, the common use of store-houses, packing-plants,

and transportation, a system of insurance, and the organization of common markets.

As, in addition, there is required, for the improvement of agricultural technique, a betterment of the cultural level and the teaching of better methods of cultivation, the Six-Year Plan treats this aspect of the problem in the chapter relating to education, proposing the increase of rural schools, of which it requires the founding of not less than 1,000 in 1934, 2,000 each in 1935, 1936, 1937, and 1938, and 3,000 in 1939, or a total of 12,000 new rural schools.

According to the statistical division of the Department of Education, there were, in 1932, 13,719 rural schools, in which case the proposed increase is one of almost 100%. It must be said here that the rural school provides the teaching, not only of writing and reading, but also—and principally—of the essential rules for a more hygienic existence and of practical preparation for the increasing of crop-yields and the standard of life, of the rotation of crops, the selection of seeds, the use of agricultural machinery, the care of animals, and thousands of other details which make life more comfortable in the country.

To sum up, the Six-Year Plan aims, with respect to agriculture, to bring about a more complete, intelligent, and technical cultivation of all the arable land of the country, this land to be divided into small properties, the owners of which will be organized into coöperatives, as much for the better use of the land and the obtaining of credit as for the use of a common outlet for their products. It follows that the program of the National Revolutionary Party not only respects the small private ownership of land, but has that as its ideal and thus removes itself definitely from the idea of socialism.

In this aspect of its agrarian policy, the Six-Year Plan puts an end, at least temporarily, to an old ideological dispute, clearly implanted in Mexico after 1925. There have, since, been two tendencies in regard to agrarian matters in revolutionary thought: that which upheld the idea that the divided lands should be the beginning of a communal régime which would be extended to all agriculture until the complete socialization of the land had been achieved, and that which believed that the small communally divided land-holding should be only a passing step toward the small private holding. Each of these points of view has cited the history of Mexico in its own support. The former pointed to the indigenous groups to whom private ownership of the means of production, and especially of the land, is inconceivable, as they have known no other form of life than the communal. The latter was supported by the history of the northern part of the country, principally on the west coast, in which private enterprise and individualism have been almost the absolute rule. In reality, from the point of view of the economic régime, and even of the attitude of their peoples, the States of Sonora and Sinaloa have had much in common with the frontier life of the United States. For the inhabitants of those regions, the right of ownership of the land has been the basis of the prosperity and high agricultural level they have enjoyed, particularly since, thanks to irrigation, they have reached a level of development permitting them to export their products to the United States in very considerable quantities, and thus to elevate their standard of life. To this second group, what is objectionable is not the right of private property, but the monopolization of land and the creation of *latifundios*.

The Six-Year Plan decides this argument in favor of this second group, and makes of the communally divided lands a step toward the creation of small proprietors. Even though this

solution seems logical when it is remembered that Mexico, in her agricultural aspects, has not yet emerged from feudalism, and that the regime of capitalism seems therefore progress for her, it nevertheless is too bad to throw away so brilliant an opportunity to initiate a new economic régime in a place where its first foundations are already laid, and in which everything indicates the possibility of its immediate success.

On the other hand, it is not fruitless to observe that the conversion of the divided lands into a temporary step really formulates a criticism of the system of land-division which Mexico has been following, and frankly orients the policy of the government toward a rural bourgeoisie. In this, the Six-Year Plan seems to forget much of the history of Mexico, as well as what is now happening in other countries, for to preserve the right of private ownership of land, convert it into the legal system, protect it, and make it flower, leaving this instrument of production—the most important, without doubt, in a predominantly agricultural country—in the field of free competition, is dangerous, as nobody and nothing guarantee that it will not return to new forms of concentration and monopoly, as has happened in the past. This without taking into consideration the unsatisfactory experience of capitalist countries, which shows that the small private ownership of the land is not a final solution of the agrarian problem. It would seem more prudent to make permanent and strong a regime which at the present time has such wide horizons before it, which breaks old molds, the injustice and inefficiency of which have been proved, than to return to them, going back to the middle of the road.

With our experience of the communally divided lands in the past fifteen years, and that of the world since the Industrial Revolution, it seems evident that the agrarian policy here should

tend toward the abandonment of private ownership of the land, converting the small communal holding into the center of rural economy, instead of making it a means to the creation of an agricultural bourgeoisie which, though new to Mexico, is outworn in the world. It ought to be made a force organizing rural life within a new and proper juridical régime, which would not seek to borrow the old forms of organization within which the *latifundio* system flourished. It should not be forgotten that the history of Mexico repeats itself, and that after the triumph of a revolution there is frequently an unrecognized return to the methods, procedures, and ideas against which the Revolution was fought. To stop with the distribution of the land, and not to take advantage of the opportunity for its complete socialization, is not only a weakness, but a danger, the danger that in its agrarian aspect the Revolution, having triumphed, will die through not having been carried to its logical conclusion.

As with regard to the agrarian question, so in dealing with labor the Six-Year Plan sets up a general principle which constitutes the ideal of the National Revolutionary Party, and then outlines concrete means which clarify it a little further in its attitude toward the economic conflicts of the world.

The first is expressed as follows: "The National Revolutionary Party recognizes that the masses of laborers and agricultural workers are the most important factor in the Mexican collectivity, and that—despite the prostration in which they have lived—they preserve the highest conception of the collective interest, a circumstance which permits the basing on the proletariat of the hope of making Mexico a great and prosperous country by means of the cultural and economic improvement of the great masses of workers of city and country."

For those who see in Mexico a "red menace," there must be satisfaction in finding that the directing principle of the labor policy, as expressed by the Six-Year Plan, is far from being radical, or from intending a fundamental change in our economic organization. On the contrary the ideal—well limited, to be sure—is solely to better the economic and cultural situation of the workers, whom the dominant group in Mexico recognizes as the social element of greatest interest, and who preserve a clear conception of the collective hopes. Certainly the Plan speaks of the prostration in which the proletariat has lived, but it means to have understood that this was caused more by an erroneous political régime than by an economic structure which fatally condemns the laboring groups to that prostration. The principle is, furthermore, too vague to have any great importance. Of more significance are the following propositions, with which the Plan goes on:

I. "Every individual, as a consequence of the obligations society imposes on him to contribute with his energy to the collective development, has a right to the work which permits him to satisfy his needs and honest pleasures."

This is a criticism of the unemployment aspect of the capitalist régime—which has, for some years, constituted an essential characteristic of capitalism. The right and the obligation to work thus expressed are, nevertheless, little more than a beautiful ambition. For that reason, the second principle aims to complete the concept, saying:

II. "The State will intervene, directly or indirectly, to the end that every individual in the Republic be able to exercise his right to work."

Even though the Plan nowhere expresses the concrete means to be used by the government in doing away with unemployment, it at least fixes as a matter for State intervention that of guaranteeing to every man the right to work. It is useful here to note that unemployment has never been very important in Mexico. The 1930 Census showed only 89,690 unemployed persons in a population of 16,500,000 inhabitants. Those later than 1930 do not seem to show any considerable increase in unemployment (250,000 men, more or less, in 1933) notwithstanding the number of repatriated citizens (about 300,000 for 1930 and 1931) and the general conditions of the crisis which affected Mexico very specially in 1931, above all in mining.

Without doubt, the explanation of this lies in the fact that Mexico is still agricultural, rather than industrial. In effect, according to the 1930 Census, 3,626,278 persons, or 70.2% of the active population of the country, were working in agriculture. In reality, large fluctuations of employment have been noted only in mining. The drop in the prices of metals and the restriction of markets brought about a considerable limitation of production, which left a proportionately high number of workers without employment. But these men were quickly re-absorbed into agriculture, in which, though their standard of living was lowered, they did not have to live on public or private charity. On the other hand, industry in Mexico does not need, as that of other countries needs, the pressure which armies of men without work exercise upon those who have employment, in view of which the low level of life of agricultural workers and the system of exploitation under which they have lived guarantee to the industrialists a supply of hands as abundant and continuous as they desire.

The next concrete proposal of the Six-Year Plan says:

III. "The dispositions of Articles 27 and 123 of the Federal Constitution will be enforced until they constitute an integral reality in our social affairs, and with respect to their enforcing laws it will be watched that they do not weaken the nationalist spirit and the profoundly human tendency which animates those precepts."

Article 27 deals only indirectly with the labor question, as it treats of the distribution of lands and waters and with the nationalization of the subsoil. On the other hand, Article 123 establishes the bases of the Labor Code, and fixes a series of protections for the worker, such as the eight-hour day, the protection of women, the prohibition of child-labor, the minimum wage, the six-day week, the wage for overtime, the fixing of the responsibility for accidents as that of the employer, in accord with the theory of professional risk, the right to strike, etc. These guarantees still constitute the ideal of our dominant political group, which desires only that they come to be realities, having recognized that these principles have remained, at least in part, dead letters within the Constitution and the Labor Code.

Of all the guarantees established in Article 123, that referring to a minimum wage is, by its character, one of the most difficult to enforce. General Abelardo Rodriguez directed his energies to converting in into a reality from the time before he was President, and something has been accomplished, at least insofar as fixing precisely what should be, in money, the minimum wage in various municipalities of the country. Thus there has been brought out of the vague place in which the Constitution placed it the problem of establishing that the minimum wage is "that which is considered sufficient, taking into consideration the con-

ditions of each region, to satisfy the normal necessities of the worker's life, his education, and his honest pleasures, considering him as the head of a family," and the first indicative step has been taken toward an elevation of the actual wage.

Entering now upon more concrete ground, the Six-Year Plan fixes the fourth point in regard to labor:

"The collective bargaining of wage-earners will be urged, with a tendency toward making it the only, or at least the preponderant, form of establishing relations between owners and workers, to which effect it will be imperative to include in the collective contracts of labor the clause by which the owner is obliged not to admit non-syndicalized elements."

This principle decides the old fight between individual and collective bargaining in favor of the latter, with a tendency toward the formation of special syndicates in each enterprise. Its aim is, without doubt, to strengthen the syndical organizations, as the plan later states with all clarity.

After repeating, as point five, the necessity to protect the worker, to guarantee him a minimum wage and security in his job, the Plan sets forth its sixth principle in regard to labor:

"Confronting the class struggle inherent in the system of production in which we live, the Party and the Government have the duty of contributing to the strengthening of the syndical organizations of the working classes..."

It is not, then, the intention of the Six-Year Plan to do away with the class struggle, since that would carry the Government fatally in the direction of fascism. On the contrary, it recognizes as essential within the capitalist régime—the existence of which

it does not at the moment seem to wish to destroy—the struggle of the two social classes created by the right of private property: those who possess the instruments of production, and the proletariat. In this struggle the Party does not remain neutral, but frankly decides in favor of the workers, implying its desire to do away with, not the class struggle, but the classes themselves, by means of growth of the proletariat, since to strengthen one of two contenders logically means to look forward to the weakening and final overthrow of the other.

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From this short survey of the agrarian and labor section of the Six-Year Plan the following conclusions are derived:

First. The aim of the Six-Year Plan was definition of the principles animating the present Government, and which are to serve as guide to action during the next presidential period (December, 1934, to December, 1939, the Plan having gone into effect during the previous presidency.) These principles are those expressed in the Constitution of 1917, but which have not yet been converted into realities.

Second. Notwithstanding the evident vagueness of many of its sections, the Six-Year Plan has great importance because it plots out, for the first time in the history of Mexico, the road which the Government will follow, with principles fixed in advance, during a given period of time.

Third. Despite the intention to go into detail which is generally notable throughout the Plan, a good part of it contains only general principles, suggestions, and good intentions, the realization of which will depend more on those charged with putting it into practice than on the original intention of its authors.

Fourth. The authors of the Six-Year Plan made a conscientious effort to avoid fascism in those cases in which their desire to achieve a planned and directed economy constituted a danger of inclining toward the corporative state; and

Fifth. The Six-Year Plan is not revolutionary in the sense in which that word is used outside Mexico. That is, it does not pretend to set forth a radical change in the economic organization of the country. Its radicalism is verbal only, since—as much in the suggestions embodied in the sections studied in this lecture as in those relative to the national economy—it is clear that the Party still respects and protects the right of private property, nationalism, and the private enterprise, and is thus very far from proposing a socialism analogous to that of Soviet Russia.

The explanation of this is very simple. The Mexican Revolution has kept an ambition, on one hand, to bring the country out of an oppressive feudalism into a semi-liberal bourgeois state and, on the other hand, to direct it further along the way toward scientific socialism. The exterior pressure, the conservative interests, and the very history of the country have delayed the realization of the second part of this change, preventing the speed and comprehensiveness which some of the leaders have desired. I believe, nevertheless, that Mexico, precisely because it finds itself in the period of pre-capitalist transition, is in a position favorable to the finding of a more human and just system of economic relations by means of the intelligent intervention of a government with working-class interests able—lacking fatal friction with that capitalist imperialism of other countries which could, in one moment, put an end to the Mexican experiment and even to our very national existence—to serve as a régime in transition toward a society without classes which in our day is the condition nearest to ideal in the economic relations of men.

WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM MEXICO

Lecture delivered August 27, 1935,
at Williams College, Williamstown,
Mass., U. S. A., at the proposal of
the Williamstown Institute of Human
Relations.

BEFORE the social and economic struggle known as the Revolution, no Mexican could discuss with sincerity the conditions of his fatherland. As a matter of fact, Mexico did not exist, except from a merely geographic standpoint, because within the territory of Mexico there were two countries: one, formed by the ruling classes, was a cheap imitation of Europe; the other one, composed of the native population, was a feudal State in which people lived in misery and isolation. Of these two countries, it was the former that the cultured Mexican regarded with pride. It was about it that he always talked. It was to it that he referred when he said: "Mexico had been admitted into the harmony of civilized nations." In the opinion of the Europeanized Mexican, the Capital (Mexico City) was a little Paris: the National Theater, a fine replica of l'Opéra, and our main avenue rivaled Les Champs Elysées. To make it look like Le Bois de Boulogne, our beautiful natural park, Chapultepec, was transformed by artificial lakes and English grass. French was the language used in "society," and also the tongue in which

our students learned law, medicine or engineering; our food was French or Spanish; European our habits; American the newly built railroads; English and American our mines and oil fields. Spanish our commerce; and the land from which our population derived a meager living belonged also to a foreigner or, what amounts to the same thing, to absentee Mexicans.

In accordance with such a situation, a young man's ambition always was to receive his education abroad and to live there afterwards without having to work, but deriving an income from his large Mexican states.

This was white Mexico. Around this artificial, almost absurd country, many fallacies were invented. We had a perfect and scientific Government, constitutional, republican and representative in form; a government able to guarantee life and property; ours was the richest country to the world; our natural resources inexhaustible; our weather the best, and our honesty internationally recognized.

In view of all those wonders, who should bother to remember the other Mexico, darker, poorer, sadder, though more natural? The least said about it, the better, and if one was forced to admit its existence there was always a ready apology; rich and poor existed in all countries of the world. If one's attention were called to peonage, you could always give a scientific explanation of it, for, was there not a natural law, the law of the struggle for life, which told us that the weak, the ill-adapted should perish? Was it not natural and just for the better specimens of the species to rule the poorer equipped individuals? Was it not this very undisturbed domination of the few over the ignorant masses, sufficient proof of the former's natural right to rule? And while these explanations were given and accepted, Mexico had the highest infant mortality in the world, with the possible ex-

ception of China; its population had barely increased in twenty five years; eighty per cent of its people lived in complete physical and spiritual isolation, exiled in their own country, deprived of their land, working as serfs on the haciendas, dying of tuberculosis in the mines, hopeless in their silent resignation; millions of them even ignorant of our language.

Thousands of tons of silver were extracted from the Mexican mines, thousands of kilograms of gold were exported out of the country, and millions of barrels of oil were shipped from our ports and went out to pay interest and principal to the foreign investors; but the wages paid to the workmen varied from twenty-five to seventy-five Mexican centavos per day. We produced wealth, but it was not ours; we had railroads which in shining parallel lines connected the Mexican Capital with Europe and the United States; but our people, like beasts of burden, trudged along the paths of our mountains, loaded to the limit of their endurance, pushing along before them their burros, their faithful and suffering companions on their endless journeys.

Given such conditions, what could a Mexican speak about to an American audience?

"White" Mexico was not interesting for it was a copy, often a caricature; unreal, artificial and even ridiculous; "Dark" Mexico was an object of shame which no well-bred Europeanized Mexican cared to mention without apology.

The Spaniards had lacked the courage, the ability or the ruthlessness to exterminate the Indians of New Spain, as less sentimental settlers had done with those of New England, and we, their descendants, were lacking the valor to face the tremendous consequences of that simple fact.

In the minds of those pseudo-Europeans born in Mexico, often of mixed blood themselves, the very existence of our Indians

showed our failure, and to keep our faces we should ignore their presence.

With the Revolutions which attempted to destroy the sovereignty of foreign interests, and landed aristocracy and Catholic Hierarchy combined, the artificial Mexico collapsed and we were forced to look into ourselves, to analyze our reality and to examine the actual conditions of the country in search of our real fatherland. Thus we discovered Mexico. We realized that there must be some hidden power in those native races which had enabled them to endure and persist, in spite of the hostility of desert, mountain, jungle and people alike, and a feeling of admiration was born of that realization. We also noticed that the Indian had not only survived, but also he had affected our lives in spite of ourselves.

While the white element of Mexico's population had remained stationary and our pure Indians had not increased considerably, the growing element was the mestizo (of mixed Indian and Spanish blood) who now outnumbered the other two combined two to one. With his blood, the Indian had given us a great deal of his original culture and attitude about life, and even our most Spanish characteristics, language and religion had been greatly affected and modified by the Indian influence. Our skins were darker, our beliefs more pagan, our language richer, than those the Spaniards had given us. Europe had subjugated, not colonized, Mexico, and in the process it had created a new product neither pure Spanish nor pure Indian; it had created Mexico. A country whose mixed races had contributed with multi-form beliefs, colors, costumes, rites, taboos, ambitions, ideals, to form a new nation.

Not everything was commendable in the resulting product, of course, but there were some very real virtues: endurance, adap-

tation, will to live, love of tradition, attachment to the fatherland; and dogged persistency in the presence of hostile forces. Disappointment, four hundred years of oppression, ruthless exploitation, had forced the Indian to withdraw within himself, but he was not dead for he had kept his inner life intact. And there, we found spiritual values which Western civilization had lost and forgotten.

In his mad desire to accumulate wealth, the white man had forgotten the very purpose of his productive efforts. He laughed at ideals; ignored spiritual values and considered justice impossible, while he worshipped force as the supreme means of attaining the only aim which appeared to him worthwhile: profits. As the economic motive became supreme, the psychology and the methods of business penetrated into every field of endeavor and thus mechanization expanded into such zones of life as amusements and art, which seemed far removed from the economic field.

He had invented machinery and increased his power by enchaining the tremendous forces of Nature, but those machines had in turn enslaved him, and his increased power to create, misdirected by his greed, gave him a wealth he could not use and which no one could buy. Thus he found himself confronted with a new form of the same old evils known to the world when production was scarce; Poverty. Starving among plenty the occidental man lost faith in his one ideal—wealth—but he could no longer believe in the ideals he had forgotten, nor could he regain his lost pre-industrial compensations: economic security, human relations, a calm life. His new world was impersonal, caused by an insatiable monster—profit—subjected to one system—rationalization—having one sole apparent aim—production. Then he learned that he was producing new things which no one wanted, or old things with a new presentation, or goods which preceded

the need they were to satisfy, because often that need was only the desire to be different, the satisfaction of conceit. When he produced more than could be consumed at home, commercial relations with other countries became indispensable, and war resulted as an effort to guarantee economic expansion. Out of those wars he came more disappointed than ever; his old moral values destroyed and blindly searching for a new goal.

The wave passed over Mexico but did not affect the Indian, who was able to protect himself against this new enemy as he had done against Spanish conquerors, Catholic missionary, foreign exploiter, Mexican absentee land owner and "scientific" government.

We also found a resistance not to be conquered that saved Mexico from becoming a colony of the United States and kept alive its spirit of independence and personality. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Revolution, realizing that fact, should insist so much on nationalism. Our nationalism, however, is not an aggressive, militaristic patriotism desiring to subjugate other people, annex new territories or conquer new markets. Far from that, our nationalism is a desire to understand the various elements constituting this heterogeneous whole which is Mexico. Our nationalism born of self defense against violent imperialism and economic pacific penetration appears superficially as an anti-foreign attitude, but rather than that, it is a necessity of self-assertion, and a desire to know, love, and develop the characteristics of Mexico, in order to better define our personality as a nation. Examining Mexico's real economic conditions, the Revolution learned that our wealth was a myth. In the agricultural field we found that our arable land was scarce (fourteen and a half million hectares or about 11% of the total area of the country), although more than 70% of our population, gainfully em-

ployed, derived a livelihood from agriculture. We also learned that the land had been monopolized and was concentrated in a few hands; 2% of the population owned 70% of the land, and in some of the States the monopoly of the land was such that 98% of the rural heads of families were landless.

We learned, furthermore, that those people tilling the land, who were living now in serfdom under a system of peonage, which was slavery without legal recognition or protection, had lived in free Indian communities where life was simple, land was worked in common and a sort of collectivism prevailed; or had been small agriculturists, enterprising and individualistic, and they all had been deprived of their fields by foul means, by actual violence or by chicanery. Small wonder, then, that Agrarian reform should be one of the outstanding principles of the Revolution.

As early as 1915 laws were passed making it legal for the Indian communities to recover their lands. Although these laws were incorporated into the Constitution of 1917, the real distribution did not really begin until 1920. From that time on, the Government has given back to the people over 11,000,000 hectares, of which 3,000,000 are crop land, the rest pasture or woodland not fit for cultivation. This distribution has benefited some 7,000 communities, known now as "Ejidos," where more than 800,000 heads of families live, with a total population of over 3,000,000 people. (1)

The sole principle guiding this distribution has been that of necessity; any community which needs land has the right to receive it. Within the limits of the "Ejido," "land belongs to him who works it with his hands," as the Indian poet had expressed it.

(1) Data referring to 1935.

In spite of the terrible opposition of land-holders who used all the legal and all the indirect means of their disposal to stop it; in spite also of the Catholic Church, whose whole moral influence has been used to keep the Indian from filing petitions for land, the movement is well on its way, as the figures cited above show, and as has been demonstrated by the increased productivity of the "Ejido."

The Government realized, of course, that the mere distribution of land is not enough. Credit, and technical education, are just as essential; it is attempting to provide both of them within its capacity. The National Bank of Agricultural Credit was founded with 50,000,000 pesos capital in 1926. After some modifications which proved indispensable, it is now functioning as a not profit making institution, with the *ejidatarios* and small agriculturists, whom it previously organized into coöperatives. Our Six-Year Plan provides that the Federal Government should contribute with 50,000,000 pesos more during the time comprised by said Plan, which is a considerable amount for a Government whose whole budget last year was just over 200,000,000 pesos.

I will have something to say later about Education. Suffice it to say now that the whole philosophy informing our educational system has changed, and that our aim is, at the present time, precisely to teach our rural masses better methods of cultivation, the scientific care of domestic animals, and a better, healthier system of life. For this purpose, the Revolution which had founded about 8,000 rural schools by 1934, has pledged itself, in accordance with the Six Year Plan already mentioned, to establish 2,000 more this year, 2,000 the next; 2,000 in 1937; 2,000 in 1938, and 3,000 in 1939. This of course, also calls for Rural Normal Schools where rural teachers are prepared and Rural Cultural Missions to improve the training of teachers already in service.

The Federal Government spent 15% of its budget on education in 1934; this year it will spend 16%, the next 17% and so on, until by 1939, 20% of the total expenditure of the National Government will be used for education.

It is not the number of schools, however, that is the most significant point of the educational reform, but the fact that each one of the rural schools is the center of life and activity in each community and the most effective means of obtaining the physical and moral improvement of the villages.

Looking into our mining situation, we learned that Mexico was, and had been for many years, first among the silver producing countries of the world; that, in fact 40% of the world's production of that metal had come out of Mexico's mines; but trying to investigate what we had obtained out of all that wealth, we were unable to see anything, except large, dark holes in the ground which had been mines, high piles of poisonous dirt near the mines, and pale, sickly men whose lungs were undermined by silicosis, the miner's special way towards tuberculosis.

The results of these findings was the revival of Mexico's old laws in effect since the Colonial times and up to the dictatorship of Diaz, which provided that the sub-soil belonged to the Nation and not to the owner of the surface. Thus we attempted to limit the uncontrolled exploitation of the ores and oil of the country, in the hope of developing a system which would permit a more rational exploitation in the extractive industries, in which the human element would be given preference over the consideration of production.

We want Mexico to be Mexican, and Mexico's wealth to be produced for the benefit of the country at large, and in particular of those engaged in the productive process. We want our natural resources to be protected against waste and careless ex-

ploitation, for we know that those resources do not belong to us alone but also to future generations of Mexico.

Then turning our attention away from the mines where we have seen the miners overworked and slowly dying of the white plague, and also away from the agriculture fields where the Indians were using Egyptian methods of cultivation, bound to the land, we looked into the labor conditions of the cities, only to realize that our industrial workers were not much better off. Without the right to organize, lacking any protective legalization, our workers suffered under the growing incipient capitalism of the kind that develops in economic colonies. Labor unions were criminal offenses punished by the Penal Code. Strikes, when attempted, which was seldom, were ruthlessly broken down by the Federal army and workers massacred in the name of law and order. Twelve hour a day shifts were normal. No regulation prohibited child labor of protected women in industry. In its anxiety to bring foreign capital to Mexico, the Government was giving every protection to the industrial and none to the employee. As a result, salaries ranged from twenty-five to seventy-five Mexican cents per day, and were further decreased by fines and by payment of exorbitant rates of interest on the loans which the workman often found it indispensable to make. Women's wages were still lower, for discrimination as to sex was the rule.

Discrimination also existed against Mexicans in relation to foreigners, even when doing equal work.

Perhaps as a natural consequence of these conditions, or perhaps due to our Spanish heritage, menial occupations were looked down upon by the well-to-do classes, while liberal professions were followed by anyone who had the economic possibility. The outcome of such an attitude was, on the one hand, the lack of Mexican specialized trained workmen, and on the other, the

excess of Doctors, Lawyers, Engineers, and the like, who crowded the cities and who had lost all social function. Article 123 of the Constitution of 1917 was written as an effort to correct this situation. It established an 8 hour day, a seven hour "night," one day's rest in seven, equal pay for equal work, regardless of sex or nationality, and abolished labor for children under twelve years of age.

Debts contracted by the workman may be collected only from him and not from his children, and his salary is not subject to seizure.

The employer is liable for accidents and occupational diseases in all cases in accordance with the theory of professional risk, and working conditions must meet legal requirements of safety and hygiene.

But more important than all these provisions is the one stating: "workmen and employers shall have the right to unite for the defense of their respective interests by forming syndicates, unions, etc." For a right, without the power to enforce it, is almost meaningless, as the history of the Labor movement has shown everywhere.

The Government of Mexico not only has permitted the labor unions, but has encouraged them, and at the present time it has looked with sympathy upon the formation of a united front, which under the name "Frente Unico Proletario" comprises the majority of organized laborers.

Not satisfied with seeing the city workmen organized, the Government is attempting to convince the agricultural workers that they too should form one group. We feel that when they do the problem of the land will be easier, for coöperation in marketing and in credit would be more feasible and the distribution of the land will be carried out with greater speed, be-

cause the peons will not be so easily intimidated by the landlords and the Church, as they have often been.

We frequently hear the conservative papers tell us that such unions are dangerous, since they represent a tremendous growing force; but as President Cárdenas has stated, our present Government is supported by the working classes and feels that the improvement of those groups, so unjustly exploited, is its most pressing obligation. The Government must, of course, give protection to all social groups in accordance with the laws of the country, but it cannot help realizing that the immense majority of the population is composed of workmen and that they have been the weaker factor in the economic world.

To enforce their rights, the workmen in Mexico have a powerful weapon: the strike, which is like that of the union, a constitutional prerogative. Strikes are lawful, the Constitution says: "When they aim to bring about a balance between the various factors of production and to harmonize the rights of Capital and Labor." But a strike in Mexico is not only the right to quit work, but also to prevent other laborers from working in the factory in question. Picketing is unnecessary, for the laborers may use the police to keep the dissenting minority of the strike-breakers from entering into the factory.

As there is no obligatory arbitration in Mexico, the Government may not decide on the issues involved in the strike, unless both parties agree to it. The labor board may pass judgment on the legality of the strike, but its powers are limited to verifying that certain formalities are kept and property is not destroyed.

As you can see, in the Mexican New Deal, Labor has the central position. We think that if anything like prosperity should ever come to Mexico it should be based on a growing acquisitive power of the workers. Our idea is not high prices, which would

permit high profits, which in turn would stimulate industry and permit high salaries. We have seen that the process is not so simple. We have carefully watched its obstacles in the United States. On the contrary, we want commodities to be cheap and human beings dear.

As it had done on our economic conditions, the Revolution also examined our educational situation. What we saw was, if possible, even more discouraging. The country had 74% of illiteracy. The schools were formal, cold, scarce, inefficient and bore the symbolic names of "rudimentary schools," or "incomplete schools."

The well-to-do classes sent their children to Catholic Schools where they were taught to hate the Revolution as well as all the progressive leaders and Presidents Mexico had ever had; that land distribution was criminal; Mexico's only hope the repeal of the constitution, which was contrary to the Catholic faith, and the recognition of the supreme right of the Catholic Church to direct the Government in all moral questions. A right that was God-given and existed before that of the temporal power of the Government. In a Nation in which the majority of the population are Catholic, the temporal power should be in the hands of those people who, receiving orders from the Vatican, could rule the country in accordance with the authorized principles of the Catholic faith.

Labor should be taught to obey and respect their superiors in the name of the Lord, as archbishop Orozco y Jimenez explained in a pastoral letter, in which one reads: "As all authority is derived from God, the Christian workman should sanctify and make sublime his obedience by serving God in the person of his bosses." Then he added: "Poor, love your humble state and your work; turn your gaze towards heaven; there is the true wealth.

Only one thing I ask: of the rich, love; of the poor, resignation. (Quoted from Gruening's Mexico and its Heritage, page 341.)

Thus every movement of the Government and the Revolution was criticized and our children grew up with an attitude that made the achievement of our aims more and more difficult. Under the pretext of teaching religion, the Church was dividing the Mexican family against itself and making this trouble endless.

There was only one thing to do: to control primary education by the Government. For three and a half centuries the Church had had undisputed control of education. The result had been illiteracy, ignorance, fanaticism, bigotry, intolerance. For a half a century afterwards, a complete separation had been attempted, the Government teaching non-religious education and granting complete freedom to the Church. Conditions did not improve. It was necessary to go a step further. Non religious education was to be compulsory, whether imparted by the official schools or by private institutions. The principles of the Revolution should be explained to the children and sympathy for the laboring classes should be taught, together with the desire for the coming of a society based on justice and on a better distribution of wealth.

Education should be scientific, but not necessarily atheistic. It should include a rational explanation of the Universe, but not the negation of God. Contrary to what has been said by the clergy and their friends, we do not pretend that children belong to the State and not to their parents, for the family is still the center of our life in Mexico. We are not teaching communism, nor could we do so, without amending our Constitution.

Peculiarly enough, the Church which now pretends to defend the natural right of parents to educate their children, has never admitted it herself, if the teaching should be opposed to the ma-

terial intent of the philosophy of that institution. Parents do not have, according to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, the right to teach children anything that could be against the spiritual or the temporal power of the Church. It is ironical that the Church, which has never stood for liberty, which, whenever it has had the chance has subordinated civil authorities to its power and forced them to punish religious offenses, should be now the champion of liberty in Mexico. What really happens is that it had found a way to use so-called liberty to promote its own material interests and inculcate intolerance. The Roman Catholic Church is defending its vested interest in its last foot-hold: Education, because it knows that if it succeeds conditions will change again in the future, when our present children will be men, and the Revolution will be dead. The Church knows how to wait; besides, it has used all possible means to fight this social upheaval in Mexico, to no avail: from the confessionary where absolution has been denied to the voter who disobeyed an indication from the clergy, to open rebellion, where fanaticism has been used to convince the Indians that dying in the battlefield would assure them eternal salvation. The economic boycott used in 1928 in the hope of overthrowing the Government, as well as the assassination of President-elect Obregon. It has ordered parents not to send their children to school and it ordered the clergy not to officiate in the hope of embarrassing the Government. And all this while it has misrepresented the situation outside of Mexico, expecting to get sympathy and even material help from people of the United States, who always have looked with horror on religious persecutions.

The struggle of the Roman Catholic Church for temporal power is very old. In Mexico it is a hundred years old. It has been a bitter struggle which has stopped at nothing. Nationality

and patriotism are but empty words when they are found in the way of its temporal supremacy. It was the clerical elements of Mexico who brought the infortunate Maximilian from Austria. It was their influence, their flattery and their money that corrupted Diaz; they were responsible for the assassination of President Madero and for Huerta's cruel and hateful dictatorship. It was their indirect order that prompted Toral's hand to murder Obregon. It is they who, with pleasure, would urge the United States against Mexico even to the point of war, in the hope of stopping the work of the Revolution. The Revolution which has succeeded in carrying into effect the Reform laws confiscating the Church's property; the Revolution which denies the Church civil personality and which has ordered that the priests, to officiate, must be Mexican and must register; the Revolution which knows that no Government of Mexico could call itself independent, or the country sovereign if it were controlled by people who received orders from a foreign power, the Vatican; the Revolution that has distributed about 27,000,000 acres of land to about 7,000 Indian villages and to the benefit of almost 800,000 heads of rural families, thus ruining all possibilities for the Church ever to be again Mexico's largest land-holder; the Revolution, which has nationalized the sub-soil, unionized labor and given to it the right to strike, improved its economic conditions, thus weaning the workmen away from the fanaticizing influence of the Church. The Revolution, finally, which is now teaching our children that all those things are necessary and should be continued if we want Mexico to be independent and to be Mexican.

But where is the religious question, you may inquire. There is no religious question. We do not question the Catholic faith, nor do we pretend to substitute it with another Dogma, nor is

there any opposition between the Catholic ethics and those which the Revolution teaches in the schools; nor do we interfere with Catholic ceremonial. The temples are opened and under the care of Catholic priests, and when orders were given to close them they did not come from the Government, but from the Hierarchy of the Church. In short it is not a religious but an economic and a political question which exists in Mexico; a question which has divided the country ever since 1822, when Church and State in Mexico started this struggle for political supremacy.

To the foreign interests in Mexico the Revolution may signify plunder; to the land-holders, depredation; to the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, immorality, but to the mass of starving peons it means many precious things; romance in their monotonous misery; action in their inhibited existences; power after centuries of impotence; reward in their unnoticed lives; liberation, from the class of the oppressed, into the group of the leaders. In the mystic mind of the native, a true miracle.

WHY TEACH SPANISH

Lecture delivered November 28, 1935, in the City of San Antonio, Texas, U. S. A., before The Teachers Association of the State of Texas.



few years ago, our Secretariat of Education published a pamphlet entitled "How to Give Mexico a Common Language." For those who were not familiar with the conditions of my country, this booklet must have seemed very strange, for it is natural to suppose that everybody in Mexico speaks Spanish. The fact is, however, that almost 15% of our population either does not know our language, or speaks an Indian dialect in preference to Spanish. To be more exact, in 1930, out of a total of 16,500,000 inhabitants, there were 1,185,161 persons who spoke only Indian languages; and 1,064,234 who knowing both Spanish and an Indian tongue, spoke the latter in preference.

Almost seven hundred thousand people in Mexico speak the Nahuatlan tongue; half a million the Mixteco-Zapotecan; four hundred and fifty thousand, the Maya-Quichean; three hundred thousand, the Otomi, and so forth down the list through the Totonacan, the Piman and the Tarascan. In present day Mexico, at least, thirteen different Indian languages are absolutely independent of each other.

As you can see from these figures, teaching Spanish in Mexico has a peculiar aspect: it is a means to obtain the "incorporation of the Indian into our civilization," as, with some conceit, we have expressed it.

Our Indian problem, as you probably know, is entirely different from yours, and the solution that Mexico has attempted is exactly the opposite to what has been tried in the United States.

This is not the place to discuss the relative advantages of either system, nor am I qualified to pass judgment on them. As a matter of fact, they both have been subject to abuse. There is, however, a main difference existing between them, which I must mention; while you successfully excluded the Indian from your life, we have, on the contrary, readily accepted him from the beginning.

Yet, those two and a half million souls who do not speak our language are still practically excluded from our social and political life. They live in a primitive economic system in which money is not used; a pre-pecuniary, pre-capitalistic consumption system. By teaching Spanish to them, we want to help them to enter into our circle of activity; to be in the exact meaning of the word, Mexican.

The Revolution has already done a great deal to bring them in contact with the rest of the population. As a matter of fact, by shifting our people from one end of the country to the other, and by giving a chance to those who had never had one, our revolutionary movement has indeed become the greatest single force,—second only to inter-marriage— to promote the union and amalgamation of all of us. But even so, we still have some groups who live in a way that can be compared, much as I hate the comparison, with the way your Indians live in your reservations. Natural reservations, you might call them. These reser-

vations we mean to destroy by education, by improving our economic conditions and by teaching Spanish.

Two facts make this integration feasible: First, we have no racial prejudices. It is true that Mexico has had social classes, but it has not had a caste system. Anyone may climb to the upper classes by qualifying, for there is no permanent obstacle, such as race is here, to prevent any one of us to go out of his group into a higher level of life. That is why education in Mexico has such far-reaching consequence. Any Indian, through education, may go into a different level and mode of life, and, socially speaking, be an Indian no longer. In other words, to be Indian in Mexico, is not a matter of race, but of language, standard of living and education.

The second fact which makes for integration is intimately related to the one already mentioned: The realization that we are an Indian Country. Not only about two and a half million people are pure Indians, as shown by the language they speak, as it has been already explained, but also the bulk of our population is "mestizo," that is, of mixed Indian and Spanish blood. Only about 1,000,000 persons in Mexico could be called pure white.

But Mexico is more Indian than these figures would indicate, for in our food, in our dress, in our houses, and what is more important, in our attitude towards life, we have been greatly influenced by our Indian heritage.

Indian corn is one of our principal foods, fixed in any of the numerous ways of preparing it; beans, squash, turkey, chile, tomatoes and so on, down the long list of Indian contributions to the wealth of the world, which the white man found in America. Walk into a Mexican market. The little stands showing the wares will remind you of those famous letters written to the Spa-

nish Crown by Hernan Cortes. Here you see alligator pears, the native "aguacate," clean and shining, arranged in symmetric piles of three, four and five pieces. Next you will see the oranges similarly arranged, and not far from them, native pottery and Indian straw hats, and innumerable varieties of chile peppers of all possible colors. Back of each stand, in no hurry to sell, apparently satisfied, you will see the brown face of an Indian woman, who will smile at you, offering her merchandise as you approach.

Walk into a Mexican temple, the most Spanish of Spanish things. Of course, you find the majestic naves, the impressive towers, the wonderful architecture, common to almost all Catholic churches; but there also in an Indian touch. The colors of the decorations, the gaiety, the garrulous way in which things are arranged, especially on "fiesta" days, are telling you that even there, the Indian has put his personal touch.

Tourists often leave Mexico repeating the old phrase: "this is the land of mañana. "Although there is a certain sense of criticism in this sentence, and also a good deal of exaggeration, yet, it is true that we live in no hurry, that life has a slower "tempo" in Mexico. As some one has expressed it, we have not been yet crucified to the hands of a clock. All-important Master Time has not dominated Mexico.

Of the two ways known, to search for happiness, i.e., to obtain more and more things in order to satisfy more and more needs, and to be satisfied with whatever you have, the Indian in us often chooses the latter. What a handicap on progress! You may exclaim. I don't deny it, I am not making the apology of the Mexican; I am only trying to describe him. But, has the Occidental man, following the former method, gone very much farther in attaining happiness? In this mad rush to obtain things, to produce things, to multiply things, has not the white man lost

all sense of direction and all feeling of what production really is for? He has been so busy devising new mechanisms, establishing new systems of rationalization, inventing new machines with the sole purpose of increasing his power to produce more and more things, that he has not had time to stop and think about the usefulness of the new commodities he is creating, or about the economic possibility of the people to acquire them. The present day paradox, of a world which starves in the midst of plenty, would never happen to an Indian world, in which production exists for the satisfaction of human needs, and not for the purpose of selling things to get rich. I often wonder how would the world be, if this tremendous energy, which the Occidental or Occidentalized men exert in trying to create new desires to the people, to produce new ambitions and to make them feel, therefore, more miserable, would be used in devising new means of enchaining the forces of Nature for the purpose of producing wholesome, useful things for the benefit of those who created them.

But Mexico is not only Indian, it is Spanish as well. Spain brought to America and gave us the best she had: her faith, her blood, her language. What else could we ask for? She did not give us self-government, because she did not have any; she did not bring civil liberties to America, but Spaniards did not enjoy them at home; she did not give us economic liberty, but how could she when monopoly, restriction and privilege were the rule in the Iberian Peninsula? Greedy the conquerors were, thirst of gold was in their hearts, but they brought to America an indomitable faith in themselves, and in their country, and in their God. How powerful that faith must have been as a driving impulse, one does not realize, until one crosses this long distance from Mexico City to San Antonio, which seems so long while you

come on the train, but which must have seemed endless for those who came walking through uncharted lands, fighting the elements, and fighting the inhabitants. It was no accident that Spain conquered the largest empire that the world had known up to that time.

One thing the "conquistadores" gave us liberally: their blood. Contrasting with the one other great Mother Nation, England, Spain not only colonized, she created new Nations. Knowing that many races had contributed to the Spanish ethnical composition, lacking the racial prejudices of the English, proud of their nationality, their kind and their God, but more human than the Anglo-Saxons, the Spanish "caballeros" intermarried with the Indians from the very beginning. Thus establishing the foundation of what was going to be Mexico; a country neither Indian nor Spanish, but mestizo; mestizo in body and mestizo in soul.

The Spaniard came to conquer rather than to settle. Coming in a bellicose attitude, he brought no wife, no children.. Once he succeeded in subjugating the Indians, he developed a system of exploitation in favor of the Mother Country, which with all its defects, undoubtedly was one of the most efficient systems of government ever devised. For the lovers of quietness and prosperity, that government was faultless, for what else could they ask, than a system which functioned undisturbed and maintained "peace and order" for three hundred years?

In spite of his efforts to destroy the Indian civilization, which to the pious eyes of the Spaniard represented idolatry, he did not succeed. The very mixture of races made his attempt impossible. Consciously or unconsciously, the Spaniard himself changed, and even if his original motive had been to come to this continent for the purpose of enriching himself and then return to Spain, he did not do it. The palaces he built, the churches he

erected, were built and erected to endure the destroying hand of centuries. Those magnificent buildings stand now as a living testimony of the Spaniard's desire to make this New Spain his new and permanent home.

And Spain gave us her language and with it the greatest unifying element we have. It must be clear to you, by now, why the teaching of Spanish in Mexico is much more than a cultural effort towards polishing our means of expression; a common language is to Mexico the most important factor in integrating the Country. I must insist, however, upon this one point; we have no desire to exclude the Indian element from our life, we must rather, perform the double task of incorporating the Indians into the Mexican Nation, and at the same time, absorbing such a part of the Indian culture and the Indian mode of life as would be compatible with a higher standard of living.

Useless to say, that ours is a very delicate problem; on the one hand, we must give our people the advantages of sanitation, of scientific discoveries, of a better economic technique, of more adequate systems of agriculture, etc., and on the other hand, we must not destroy the genius of their lives. Fortunately, we are not so proud of our mechanistic civilization, that we would feel compelled to impose it upon the Indian at any cost. The incredible resistance, adaptability, persistence of the Indian which enable him to survive in spite of the attempt of the Spanish Conquest to stamp out his culture, has also saved Mexico from many of the evils of the industrial era, and will permit, we hope, to develop a system more in accordance with the genius of our people.

Our educational problem must, then, find that solution. The mixing of the races, the free marriage, has already created a new Mexico, but outside of this mixture, there are two other elements. At the top we have a dying well-to-do minority, that per-

sists in keeping itself aloof from the rest, and that in spite of the economic changes brought about by the Revolution, would like to bring foreign capital to Mexico for the benefit of a few individuals and at the cost of Mexico's economic independence. At the bottom there are these two and a half million people who also, in spite of the Revolution, have not as yet become one with us. We feel, however, that the time is not far when a complete integration will take place. To attain this aim, the Spanish language will be the one important factor.

From this peculiar country, south of your own, a melting pot in the making, hundreds of thousands of men, women and children have come to the United States at different times and are now staying here. Your official census returns register almost 1,500,000 Mexicans living in the United States (1,488,501), of whom 65,967 were classified as "white." Although this represents only 1.2% of the total population, there are some states, and Texas is one of them, where the Mexican population is relatively more important. In this state, there are almost 700,000 Mexicans (683,681) who represent 12% of the total population. In this city of San Antonio (the Spanish name is no accident) there are more than 80,000 native Mexicans (82,373), not counting all those who, having been born here, are Americans by birth, but who none the less, continue to have many of the Mexican characteristics.

I want you to notice that I have not said that they belong to the Mexican race, because the Mexican race as such does not exist. Besides, we who do not believe in the superiority or inferiority of any race, pay little attention to race as a social factor. As a matter of record, we no longer attempt to classify our population in Mexico by race. That we are not entirely mistaken is proven by the fact that the United States Official Census has also given up any attempt to classify the Mexican

population in accordance with their race. The official instructions given to the enumerators are very significant: "all persons born in Mexico or having parents born in Mexico who are not definitely white, negro, Indian, Chinese or Japanese, should be returned as *Mexican*."

If you ever want to understand the country south of you and the hundreds of thousands of Mexicans who live in your midst, it is essential that you learn their language. Without it, your knowledge of us will always be superficial, distorted by prejudices, unsympathetic, lacking all the essential human touch which makes for light and understanding.

Some of the early Missionaries, in their anxiety to christianize the Indians of New Spain, learned some of the native languages. It is still a subject of discussion, whether or not those noble friars were able to translate into primitive tongues the high ideals and ethics of Christianity, and really catechized the Indian; but everyone agrees that the influence of those friars made the Spanish Conquest possible, and took out of it some of its ruthlessness, for many of them became the protectors of the Indians against the cupidity of the "conquistadores." As the missionaries succeeded in teaching the natives some of the arts of Spain, such as pottery and textiles, they were also able to understand the psychology of the Indians, and, at least partially, to inculcate in them their own faith.

And it came to pass that the warlike native, who in front of the cruelty of the conqueror, had been brave and hard, and who latter on, before the snobbish indifference of the well-to-do Mexican, was to withdraw into himself and to present a passive resistance which nothing and no one seemed able to overcome, was soft as wax in the hands of those men, who learned his language, and kindly instructed him.

This ought to be a lesson worth while learning for any nation having within its territory some human elements, who, ignorant of the language and the habits of the majority, keep very much to themselves and take no part in the life of the country.

Since I am not an American, I have no idea as to what your policy might be, or ought to be, in relation to your Mexican population. As a Mexican, I cannot help feeling some personal pride in that resistance which I understand my countrymen present to becoming Americanized. I fully understand, however, that from the American standpoint, this resistance must be a serious problem, especially from the standpoint of the school system. Sentimentally, I would like to see that million and a half Mexicans return home. People, however, do not move prompted by sentimental reasons alone. Migrations are determined by economic motives, and although we have been receiving a good many of our countrymen, half a million, since 1930, I must admit that many of them will probable remain in this country. If that is the case, and if you want them to become American in the full meaning of the word, you must teach English to them, and you, yourselves, must learn Spanish.

RURAL EDUCATION IN PRESENT-DAY MEXICO

Lecture delivered November 30, 1935, in the City of San Antonio, Texas, U. S. A., before the Teacher's Association of the State of Texas.



NO school system can be understood independently of the social, economic and political régime in which the school lives and which it copies. The school, in fact, has two diverse functions: one is to perpetuate the existing institutions, and the other is to prepare the young people psychologically and technically for the coming changes. The first function makes the school, by necessity, a conservative social force; the second, makes it, on the contrary, an element of evolution. Thus, the school attempts a double and, in some respects, a contradictory function: to reproduce the man of yesterday and to create the man of tomorrow.

In so far as it attempts to re-copy in the future generations the habits of thought, the qualities, the virtues and even the prejudices of the past, the school is a microcosm which reflects the outside world. Accepted institutions are described to the children as the best; patriotism and nationalism are inculcated into their minds; social prejudices and economic discriminations are presented to the pupils as a matter of course.

But if old political and economic régimes control education for the purpose of preserving themselves, new régimes do likewise with a similar aim; that of persisting in the future, for as Llopis has ably stated it: "all revolutions bear within themselves the germ of a profound educational reform."

Nothing so natural, therefore, as to find that the educational system during the Porfirio Diaz régime responded to the purposes, aims, ideals, prejudices and mode of exploitation then prevailing.

The so-called "scientific" government established in Mexico during the 30 years of dictatorship of Don Porfirio, was a logical one. Exploitation of the people had been rationalized; the Government was based on a "Natural Law," the law of the Struggle for Existence. In accordance with it, the weaker individuals should be eliminated, the stronger, better adapted ones, should survive and rule. There was no problem to detect who were the better ones, for it was only a matter of observation; those in power had succeeded, therefore, they were the better adapted ones; consequently, by natural law, they should rule. If the people were suffering, if they were oppressed, if peonage was established, if the masses enjoyed neither civil nor political rights, they had no one to blame but themselves, for they owed their condition to their very inferiority, inadaptation, and weakness.

Any attempt to improve their miserable condition would have been folly, like preserving a defective puppy in a fine kennel. If what you want is a strong race and the improvement of the species, no artificial methods should be used. Let Nature take its course. This liberalism, which on its economic side had resulted in the ruthless, wasteful exploitation of the country's natural resources by foreigners, also projected itself into the school system. While Mexico boasted of the oldest University in America and

had several other schools of higher learning, rural education had been practically abandoned. The Capital of the Republic and the larger cities had a few schools, but the rural communities were forgotten. In the minds of the rulers, the rural classes were beyond redemption. Officially, in our patriotic celebrations, the speakers highly praised the glory of our Indian ancestry, but in practice the Indians were looked down upon, considered as weaker brothers, in the best cases, or more generally, as lazy, shiftless, degenerate, vicious, traitorous tribes, a burden that prevented the development of our civilization.

As the natural outcome of such an attitude, we find, at the end of the Diaz régime, that 70% of the population were illiterate; that the schools were insufficient, the teachers were miserably paid, and that the few schools the government had established in the rural districts were rigid, conventional, city-like, ill-adapted to the environment, and bore the significant names of "rudimentary" or "incomplete" schools.

The privately supported schools were not any better, nor were they more numerous. By 1910 there were in the whole Republic only about eighteen hundred privately supported schools; most of them directed by the Catholic Church.

Coming from the outside, with no sympathy for the people or knowledge of the local conditions, the school pretended to improve the intellect of the pupils, regardless of the economic situation of the community. It gave out instruction with very much the same attitude that the institutions of public welfare handed out charity; with a feeling of their own superiority, and with that conviction of self-righteousness that often makes missionaries so distasteful.

Little wonder, therefore, that the peasants would view with suspicion such a school and would consider it as a new means

of conquest in the hands of that government, which had deprived the Indian communities of their lands, of those "hacendados" who now owned the land, and with the land, the peon's labor and life.

But the lack of interest of the people for attending such a school was, of course, immediately interpreted as a sure symptom of their inferiority and their incapacity to learn.

The few teachers who had at heart an interest in teaching, noticed in despair that after the child left the school, and went back to his home, he was swallowed up by the environment and soon forgot whatever instruction he had received. (A similar observation, I am told, has also been made by the American teachers on Indian Reservations.)

They did not realize the irony of the situation in which those children found themselves. All they had been taught was how to read and write, but they had no books to read, no paper to write on, no one to write to; they had been told of the existence of a Central Government, and of several State Governments, but lacking communications, they had no way to feel the reality of those institutions, except when the young men of the community were forced into the army, or when a local deputy, to give formality to his sham election, made an occasional tour around the District he was supposed to represent.

In moral and physical isolation, disconnected from the outside world, our people lived in wretched misery and complete ignorance. Some were up in the mountains, where they would cultivate their small "milpas," or down in the valleys where they would work as peons, from sun up until sun down, for a miserable wage of a few cents a day. Loaded like beasts of burden, they would trudge through the paths of our forests, or walk through the waste of our deserts, ignored and oppressed, having no chance

to improve and apparently, no ambition to change. For centuries, the white man and his mestizo children had ruled the country for their own benefit, and now also for the benefit of those powerful foreign companies which had been brought into Mexico under the pretext of civilizing the country.

In order to promote their enterprises, these foreign companies imported their own technicians and successfully took out of the country gold, and silver, and oil, and precious woods, and left nothing except holes in the ground, which were formerly mines, and a jungle of underbrush where mahogany trees had once formed a majestic forest.

The school system responded to this purpose and helped to keep Mexico in the condition of an Economic Colony. No technical education was imparted. In the University and the schools of higher learning the importance of "culture" was emphasized. Doctors, lawyers and engineers were turned out of the University with no training that would make them useful for the growing industrialization of the country, and with no desire to do any productive work. Following the old Spanish tradition that gentlemen should never do menial tasks, they lived a parasitic life, always hoping to leave for Europe or the United States, where they would forget everything about Mexico.

As is always the case, the Revolution started by destroying the system, and it was not until later that the reconstruction period began, and with it, the *new school* was established.

The first thing of which the revolutionary leaders were aware, was the lack of schools. Consequently, the educational movement started purely as a desire to found schools, many schools. Thirst for knowledge was everywhere. The Revolution, once successful, soon realized the lack of preparation of the people to carry through its ideals. This intensified the anxiety

for knowledge, not only for the children, but for the adults, as well. A political system had been overthrown, but we were still suffering from many of its evils which had survived. In spite of the provisions of the Constitution of 1917, Feudalism still prevailed; the land was still undistributed; labor unprotected; the educational reform which was to make the ideals of the Revolution live, had not been born.

Mexico had discovered herself, and was surprised at her encounter. The wealth of the country was a myth; its democratic government, a ludicrous fiction; its mechanic civilization, superimposed; its population was ignorant, starving, oppressed. We thought of the school as the *redeeming* instrument. The school was going to give us real freedom; freedom from ignorance and freedom from vice; freedom from prejudices and freedom from false political leaders and foreign interests. Thus Mexico started its Nation-wide campaign in favor of education.

With an apostolic zeal, of which we have no parallel, thousands of schools were founded and thousands of teachers improvised. The Constitution was amended so as to permit the Federal Government to establish schools in the states. People responded with an enthusiasm which swept cities, villages, and small "pueblos" alike. "Tierra y libros" (land and books) was the cry of the Revolution. The campaign against illiteracy was carried to the homes of the well-to-do classes; children would teach their servants; young ladies would go out to the poor suburbs looking for anxious pupils; the country was populated with self-appointed teachers. Mexico had become illiteracy conscious.

A few months later, however, sheer enthusiasm gave place to a more methodical and organized movement. The rural teachers had to be trained and, for that purpose, Cultural Missions were organized and Rural Normal Schools established.

The Cultural Missions were composed of an educator, a doctor, a trained nurse and social worker, a physical education teacher, an agronomist and an expert in home industries. They traveled all over the country, holding Institutes as strategical points. A village once chosen, the Cultural Mission began working with the school, so that the fifty odd teachers who there gathered would use it as a model and reproduce it in their own small villages. The Mission busied itself also with the community; visited the homes; vaccinated the children; examined the water supply, devised sanitary improvements, advised new crops, tried to convince the people of the use of fertilizers and the rotation of crops; organized a Mothers Club; built a model house and adapted a suitable place for an open air theater, and tried in all possible ways to better the lot of the inhabitants.

In the Rural Normal Schools boys and girls who expressed their desire to teach, were given a short two year course with the essential preparation.

The government has established, besides, Regional Agricultural Schools and Central Agricultural Schools, to give further education to the rural children, and also specialized schools for pure Indians in places where the population is solidly indigenous.

The year 1935 found Mexico with some eight thousand Rural Schools attended by about 350,000 children; eighteen Cultural Missions, which during the first six months of the year held sixty-two Institutes attended by more than thirty-six hundred rural teachers; Nine Regional Agricultural Schools, attended by some 1,300 students; three Central Agricultural Schools serving over 300 boys and girls; and twelve Indian Schools in our most isolated regions.

All these schools are Federal; the local governments have their own. Besides, we have about 2,000 more schools which are supported by factory owners and "hacendados," in accordance with Article 123 of the Constitution, which obliges them to support a school for the children of their laborers.

Mexico's Six Year Plan pledges the Government to establish two thousand new rural schools every year, except in 1939, when the number should be three thousand. By the end of this period we hope to have, at least, one school in every community of any size.

The Federal Government spent fifteen percent of its budget on education in 1934; it is spending sixteen percent in 1935; it will spend seventeen percent next year, and the percentage will grow to twenty percent by 1939.

More important than these figures, however, is the new philosophy back of our Rural School. Instead of coming from outside, this school grows from within and becomes a center of the social life of the community. Its flexible curriculum comprises many different subjects; agricultural methods, as well as history and geography; weaving textiles, as well as civics. Its activities are also wider than those of the conventional school of the city; vaccination, fruit canning, hair-trimming, devising new diets, improving the water supply, preserving vegetables, singing for the adults, dancing for the children, stage performing for the whole community. The care of rabbits, chickens, pigeons and bees, the cultivation by adults and children in coöperation of a patch of land which is always part of the school's equipment, are also activities of this school to which children go in the daytime, adults at night and both on Sunday; a school whose house and open-air theater have been built by the men of the com-

munity, in their spare time, without compulsion and without hurry, a school that belongs to the community and is part of it.

It was about this school that John Dewey wrote after his visit to Mexico in 1926:

"There is no educational movement in the world which presents a more intimate spirit of union between the school activities and the community than the one found in the New Mexican Rural School."

It is also in this school where the problem of compulsory education has become one of making children go home after school hours.

The new school must, besides everything else, give Mexico a common language. We now plainly realize that in the same way that Christianity was never really taught to the Indian because of his lack of a knowledge of Spanish, so also without a common means of expression, our various peoples will not become a homogeneous Nation.

A common language is essential, but it is not enough, because there are other better, more subtle, ways of self-expression. Dancing, singing, performing, painting, modeling will enable our population to express what is in them; those artistic and spiritual values of which we have had a glimpse, when the Indian's wonderfully plastic fingers have given us pottery and textiles of the finest quality, or when his delicate sense of humor has been expressed in toys, or when his aesthetic sense has crystallized in those impressive churches which a Christian faith inspired and pagan hands built.

The new rural school must give the Indian a possibility of expressing that perfect harmony existing between Nature and Man, which has enabled him to persist in spite of a hostile environment, and that sense of proportion and simplicity which is

so characteristic of his deeds; a possibility which would counterbalance the combined influence of outside oppression and snobbish indifference which had forced the Indian to withdraw within himself.

Thus the new rural school will incorporate the Indian into a white-man civilization, but at the same time it will incorporate Mexico into the Indian culture.

We go into the Indian villages with a humble attitude and not with a new ambition of conquest; for we have no certainty of our superiority. As we teach sanitary methods and a few scientific discoveries, we also learn; we keep our eyes, our ears and our hearts open, in the hope of understanding what once constituted a great civilization, what remains of a vanishing non-mechanized culture.

Follow me to a little rural school not far from the City of Mexico. It is Sunday. We have traveled fifty miles from the Capital and find ourselves in the mineral region of the State of Hidalgo. The country is barren; the Otomi Indians who inhabit that region are among our most primitive tribes. As we look around us, we may see at a distance, an old fortress-like stone house. It is the "hacienda" house. Around it, looking very much like mushrooms, are the huts where the "Hacienda" peons used to live. But nearer we find a different sight. We see a recently built house; it is also made of stone, but it is much smaller and less pretentious than the "hacienda." It is the school. The teacher, an eighteen year old girl, tells us that it was built on Sundays. She also shows us the new "pueblo" built with the school as a center. Its little houses looking—oh terrific influence of the movies and American imperialism!—very much like miniature copies of Hollywood bungalows. Men, women and children have by this time arrived and are looking at us with cu-

riosity. They are silent. There is nothing in their countenances which would betray their feelings; but we learn that some of them have walked a long distance to have the pleasure of seeing us. Then, following the signal of the teacher, the adults begin to sing. Children join in. They sing a Mexican popular song. When they finish, no comments are made, no speeches delivered, the children look at us, smiling, self-satisfied.

In these rural schools, like in all primary and secondary schools of Mexico, no religious instruction is imparted. It is this "socialized" school that we are pleased to call "socialistic." To avoid misunderstanding, however, let me explain what we mean by this "socialistic" education.

First of all, this education should be scientific, it should include a rational explanation of the Universe, but not the negation of God. It should have a scientific attitude and it should attempt to explain objectively, to the pupil, natural phenomena. Contrary to what has been said by interested parties, we do not pretend that children belong to the state and not to their parents, for the family is still the center of life in Mexico, a great deal more, in fact, that it is in the United States. Within the home and within the temple the children may receive whatever religious teaching their parents may desire. We do not teach communism, nor could we do so without amending our Constitution, which recognizes the right of property.

Our *socialistic* education pretends, besides, to inculcate in our children a true sympathy for the working classes and for the ideals of the Revolution. We want to convince them of the benefits of land distribution and the protection of labor; we want them to realize the necessity of protecting the country's natural resources and to appreciate the dignity of work.

At the same time we felt that the negative attitude implied in secular education should be abandoned and that the government should teach positive, well-defined, ideology. This is the spirit of the last amendment of Article III of the Constitution. What our ideology is, I have attempted to explain in this lecture. At any rate, if the Revolution is not to die, its principles, aims and hopes must be engraved in the minds of our children.

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