

## MEXICO: THE LAND, THE PEOPLE AND THE CULTURE

There is a story which relates how one of the Conquistadores, a member of that hardy band which accompanied Cortez on one of the most amazing military adventures of all times, was asked by one of the court officials upon his return to Spain for a map of the country which he had helped to conquer. "Here", responded the soldier, crumpling up a piece of paper in his hand, "here you have a map of New Spain."

And this is the first and almost the last lesson to be learned about the geography of the land once called New Spain and now known as Mexico.

The impression which the average person in the United States has of the climate and topography of Mexico may be summed up in two words -- low and hot. For many people it is a distinct shock to learn that the greater part of Mexico is neither low nor hot but, on the contrary, high and relatively cold. The tropic of Cancer, it is true, passes through the center of the country and thus locates Mexico at about the same latitude as the Sahara Desert. But one must not be misled by this fact or by the common assumption that invariably the farther south one goes and the nearer one approaches the equator, the hotter the climate becomes.

### MOUNTAINS

The all important geographical fact about Mexico is that altitude tends to counteract latitude; to get a true understanding of the geographical situation of Mexico one must think in perpendicular as well as horizontal terms. Due

to the tremendous upthrust of her mountains, Mexico is in the peculiar position of being in the tropical and semi-tropical zones, but, for the most part, not of them. Mountains rearing their heads 10,000, 12,000, 17,000 feet high; mountains topsy-turvy and helter-skelter, mountains climbing on top of each others shoulders, mountains forever and eternally rimming the horizon in jagged masses of purple and blue -- this is the dominant geographical note in Mexico, "a land on end, a tumbled down world."

### PLATEAUS

So much for the general impression of Mexico's physical background. However, in giving due importance to the hero of Mexican geography, and in seeking to correct the commonly held notion of the general flatness and lowness of the country, we must not neglect the other characters in the story. Where there are mountains, there must be valleys and more than likely plateaus.

As you will see from a glance at the map before you, the general shape of Mexico is that of a great inverted triangle, its base determined by the Rio Grande river and its apex located in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. The sides of the triangle are accentuated and thrown into relief by two great mountain ranges -- the Sierra Madre Oriental and the Sierra Madre Occidental -- running from north to southeast and roughly paralleling the east and west coasts. Spreading out fan-wise from the knot of convergence of the two cordilleras and enclosed between the two mountain ranges, there lies the high central plateau of Anáhuac -- an enormous inclined plain which

descends by easy grades from its highest point in the region of Mexico City and merges finally into the flat prairie of Texas.

Rising from about 4,000 feet in the north to an average elevation of some 8,000 feet in the southcentral area, over a distance of more than 1,000 miles, the altitude counteracts the latitude with such nicety that the mean temperature on the entire plateau is nearly uniform.

The great plateau of Anáhuac is the third highest in the world and occupies over one-third of the total area of Mexico. And if we add to this the highlands of the states of Guerrero, Oaxaca and Chiapas, we find that well over two-thirds of the Republic is located at altitudes varying from 5,000 to over 10,000 feet.

## COASTS

The outer slopes or escarpments of the Sierra Madre Oriental and the Sierra Madre Occidental descend precipitously in a series of terrace-like table lands which finally level off into the tropical plains of each coast. The hot low-lying regions which have given Mexico its unmerited reputation for torridity, we now see are restricted to two relatively narrow ribbons of land skirting the Pacific coast and the coast of the Gulf of Mexico.

The tropical littoral of the east coast extends much farther inland than that of the west coast. Broad in the north, the Gulf coastal plains reach their narrowest point near Vera Cruz and then widen out again to form a great plain in the states of Tabasco, Campeche, Yucatán and the territory of Quintana Roo. The Pacific littoral attains its greatest area in

in the long narrow Sonoran desert in the north. In the southwestern Pacific coastal regions the mountains in many places reach to the very sea itself.

## CLIMATE

Corresponding to the different levels of elevation, three major climatic zones may be identified in Mexico: the tierra caliente or hot tropical coastal plains running from sea level to 3,000 feet in altitude have a mean range of temperature of from 77° to 82° Fahrenheit; the tierra templada or temperate middle areas, between 3,000 and 5,000 feet with a temperate or sub-tropical climate and a mean range of temperature offrom 62° to 70°; and finally the cool plateau regions or tierra fría, the altitude of which varies from 7,000 to 9,000 feet and the mean range of temperature from 58° to 64° Fahrenheit.

Climate in Mexico then, becomes a vertical rather than a latitudinous matter. And in many parts of the country, if you like, you can change climates to suit your mood. If, for example, you find it too cool in Mexico City you have only to drive 36 miles to Cuernavaca and there, thanks to the fact that in going 36 miles you have also descended some 2,400 feet you will find yourself in the sub-tropics glad to drink lemonade in the shade of a banana tree. On the other hand, if you feel that it is too warm in Mexico City, in two hours you can be in the City of Toluca, only 42 miles distant but about 1,000 feet and an extra blanket on your bed different from Mexico City. Indeed, if it is simply a change in temperature you desire, you need not leave Mexico City, for I can assure

you from personal experience that there is a very appreciable difference between being on the sunny and the shady sides of the street.

And speaking of Mexico City, it may interest you to know in case you plan to add to the increasing number of American tourists who are crossing the Rio Grande each year, that Mexico City has the climate which California is supposed to have. The mean annual temperature is about 60° Fahrenheit; it is never much hotter than 80° or colder than 50°. One of the chief joys of living in Mexico City is reading the weather reports in the New York Times.

#### RAINFALL

Returning to our summary review of the principal features of the Mexican physical environment, I would like to call your attention to two more points, both related to the matter of water.

The variation of temperature in the yearly cycle are so slight throughout most of the country that the usual division of the year into Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall is relatively meaningless. Since in the uplands it is, speaking by and large, uniformly cold and in the tropics uniformly hot, some other basis than change in temperature is necessary for designating seasons. This basis is found in the peculiarities of the rainfall. Throughout the greater part of the country it rains almost every day during the months of June, July, August, September and part of October; during the rest of the year the precipitation is so scarce and irregular as to be almost non-existent. There are, accord-

ingly, in Mexico only two seasons -- the wet and the dry.

What we might call the "intensity" of these two seasons varies greatly in different sections. Over half of the country, principally the part north of the twenty-second parallel, receives less than 10 inches annual rainfall. Generally speaking the further south one goes, the heavier the precipitation becomes. In the states of Yucatán, Campeche, Chiapas and Vera Cruz -- sometimes called the tropical belt -- the rainfall varies anywhere from 45 to 150 inches annually. By way of comparison we may note that the average rainfall for the state of Illinois, for example, is around 32 inches a year while the highest annual precipitation recorded in the United States is 57 inches in Louisiana.

## RIVERS

In the matter of rivers, from the point of view of agriculture and navigation, Mexico is not very happily situated. The great cordilleras which traverse the country from north to south form the two principal watersheds and with the exception of a few streams in the plateau region, practically all the rivers drain either into the Gulf of Mexico or the Pacific Ocean. The vast majority of the rivers are accordingly relatively short, torrential, mountain streams unfit either for navigation or to provide a steady supply of water for agricultural purposes.

From this bird's eye view of the geography of Mexico, there emerges a picture of a country characterised by the most extreme climatic and topographical contrasts. As one writer has put it, "Mexico is the zone where Nature has

put, one opposing the other, the two most powerful but least controllable elements: the tropical heat and the mountain." Mexico is a land of ups and downs, of sudden heat and sudden cold, of dry deserts in the north and dripping tropical jungles in the south. It is a land of unexpected extension, tremendous vistas and weary distances. Within the 762,000 square miles of Mexico's territory it would be possible to enclose the combined areas of France, Germany and Spain and still leave room for Belgium, Czechoslovakia and the whole United Kingdom. It is a land which, like Caesar's wife, is all things to all men; hot or cold, wet or dry, up or down -- whatever may be your heart's desire in the way of climate or topography Mexico has it. You have only to pay your money and take your choice.

#### POPULATION

Mexican geography is a fascinating subject, but it is high time we turn our attention to a consideration of the Mexicans themselves. As an introduction to this phase of our discussion let us first note how many Mexicans there are and where they live.

According to the preliminary figures of the 1930 census, the population of Mexico at the present time is a little more than 16,400,000. In other words, Mexico has a population something less than three times that of the state of California or about twice that of the New England states.

These 16,400,000 people are scattered over Mexico's 762,000 square miles in a very irregular fashion. As you may note on this map, although the average density of population

is 21.6 per square mile, ( about the same as that of the state of Kansas), in many states, the density is considerably greater than this figure. As a matter of fact, the population density varies from .6 persons per square mile in Quintana Roo to 2,125 in the Federal District.

Generally speaking the northern and southern states are very thinly populated. About a third of the people of Mexico are concentrated in the central states which comprise only a little more than one-twentieth of the total area of the Republic. Or to put the matter in another way, about two-thirds of the area of Mexico is occupied by only one-fifth of the people.

With these figures in mind, we are now in a position to justify somewhat our preoccupation with geography during the first part of this lecture. For we have only to compare the map of population density with the map of the climatic and geographical zones to discover at least one very important reason for the curious and disproportionate fashion in which the Mexican people are distributed over their country. It is no mere accident that the great majority of the Mexicans live in the upland plateau areas while relatively few live in the desert states of the north or in the tropical coastal states of the south and east.

Frank Tannenbaum has pointed out a very interesting and significant correlation in Mexico between altitude and the concentration of population. The greatest density of population is found in those states - Hidalgo, Mexico, Puebla, Tlaxcala and the Federal District - whose capital cities have



the highest mean altitude. Although the five states just mentioned comprise only 4% of the total area of the Republic, they contain one fourth of the total population of the country. On the other hand, the nine states, with capitals having the lowest mean altitude and comprising 52% of the total area of the country, contain only 12% of the total population. So closely interrelated are the factors of rain, temperature, altitude and population, that the average size of the Mexican community located at over 7,000 feet is at least three times as large as the one located about 2,000 feet.

In a later lecture we will again touch this point and note the relation between the distribution of Mexico's population and certain economic and social problems, notably those connected with agriculture. Meanwhile let us return to the subject under consideration: Who are the Mexican people?

## RACE

In the last United States census only 65,000 of the million and a half Mexicans living in the United States were classified as belonging to the "White Race". All other Mexicans were put in a special group and labelled as such. These figures were recently published in Mexico City on the front page of one of the leading morning papers under the headline:

"Our Fellow Citizens Do Not Belong to the White Race -- According to the United States Census We Mexicans Are Something Indefinite."

Now, as a matter of fact, really the Mexicans are

a little "indefinite" -- although one might remark in passing that they are not nearly as "indefinite" as that ethnological hodge-podge sometimes designated by the term "Americans". The original inhabitants of Mexico were, of course, like the original inhabitants of the United States, descendants of those monogloid stocks which somewhere between 10,000 and 25,000 years ago, according to the anthropologists, began to migrate from Asia accross the Bering Straits ( and possibly by other routes) and to wander further and further South until they had spread over the whole of the western hemisphere. These peoples, whom, thanks to a slight geographical miscalculation on the part of Christopher Columbus, we call "Indians", at the time of the Conquest were present in large numbers in the area which is now known as Mexico. Just what the population of Mexico was in 1521 when Cortez finally and officially conquered the country, it is impossible to state with any accuracy. Rippy estimates that when the Spaniards arrived there were at least 20,000,000 Indians in all of Latin America and probably 8,000,000 in what is now Mexico.

To the original Indian stock, during the three centuries of Colonial rule, were added about 300,000 Spaniards and practically no other Europeans. During Colonial times there were also introduced into New Spain possibly 20,000 negroes. Both the negroes and the Spaniards intermarried freely with the indigenous population.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, (1805), as the result of the mixture of these various racial elements, the population of Mexico was divided about as follows:

1,000,000 or 18% of the total population was classified as white:- i.e. unmixed Spanish immigrants and their descendants.

2,000,000 or 38% were Mestizos - i.e. Hybrids: Indians containing various amounts of Spanish blood or vice versa

2,500,000 or 44% were pure Indians.

The negroes do not appear in this census; by the end of the Colonial period they had apparently been completely absorbed.

In the century and more since Mexico gained her Independence from Spain, permanent foreign immigration to Mexico has been negligible. Such racial changes as have taken place have all been internal and in the direction of Indianization. This is clearly shown by comparing the figures given in the 1921 Census. In 1921, of the total population of some 14,300,000:

1,400,000 or about 10% were classified as white;

8,500,000 or a little more than 59% were mestizo; and

4,200,000 or 29% were pure Indian.

In other words, a century ago nearly one-fifth of the population was counted as white; in 1921 the whites numbered less than one-tenth - a decrease of almost 100 %. During the same period the number of Mestizos increased four times, or from 38% to 59% of the total population, while the number of Indians increased by 63%. Nine-tenths of the population of Mexico is either Indian or Mestizo. When we recall the relatively small amount of Spanish blood present in the Mestizo hybrid it is clear that Mexico is now and always has

been predominantly Indian in its racial composition.

### BIOLOGY

In stating that the racial complex in Mexico is basically Indian, it should be clearly understood that for the moment I am simply stating a biological fact. In view of the confused scientific opinion on the subject of race, I do not presume to make any suggestions with regard to what the significance of this biological fact may be in terms of the intellectual, emotional and other capacities of the Mexican people. At the present time, the only conclusion which can be drawn from the findings of the anthropologists in this field is that, while racial groups apparently differ psychologically one from another, there is no basis in fact for assuming that any given race taken as a whole is inherently superior to any other race.

One might also add in this connection that there is very little support either in anthropology or biology for that popular short-cut method which would explain Mexico in terms of a conflict between the two principal ethnical strains. By this theory the Mexican is conceived as a "plaything of primal forces", a being in whom the "stolid contemplative Indian" struggles with the "urge of the Spanish conquistador and pioneer". This kind of explaining is not only based upon doubtful biological principles, but it has the additional defect of assuming that which it seeks to explain.

Finally, I do not wish to engage in any speculations with reference to the extent to which the biological fact of Mexico's Indianism may be said to underlie or enter as a determining factor in the present cultural pattern in

Mexico. There can be no doubt that the fact that the Mexican people are fundamentally Indian has some bearing upon the way in which they live and have their being, but exactly what weight should be attached to this factor of race in comparison and contrast with the numerous other factors which we know have entered into the formation of the Mexican cultural complex, cannot be stated at the present time.

In point of fact, both the Mexican Indian and his culture as they actually exist, wholly apart from any question of casual factors, racial or otherwise, present almost every conceivable variation. We have Indians like Benito Juárez, the Lincoln of Mexico, who stands in the front rank of American statesmen of whatever country or whatever time, and we also have the lowly Indian peon. There are Indian tribes in Mexico like the Seris, the Chamulas, and the Tarahumares whose way of life is among the most primitive to be found anywhere in the Western Hemisphere. Some Mexican Indians, like the Yaquis on the Northwest coast, are fierce and warlike, others, such as the Mayas in Yucatan, are noted for their peacefulness and sober industry. In the length and breadth of Mexico it is possible to find samples of almost every type of culture listed in anthropological literature.

And this brings me to the final section of this lecture.

## CULTURE

Up to this point we have answered in a more or less satisfactory fashion the questions: "What is Mexico - the geographical entity"? and "Who are the Mexicans - the racial

stock"? We must now complete our study of the basic factors in the Mexican situation by formulating an answer to still a third question: How are the Mexicans? - i.e. how do the Mexicans live? What is the pattern of their social existence and the structure of their economic relations? In a word, what is Mexico's culture?

## HISTORY

Now this is the place where any properly educated lecturer on Mexico ought to launch into a long description of the Maya, Aztec and various other tribal civilizations of ancient Mexico followed by a more or less detailed relation of the main outlines of the Spanish conquest. However, I am going to ask you to excuse me from making this historical excursion. Time is short and if you have not read Prescott by now, you should do so at once. Or if Prescott's two volumes are more than you care to tackle, you may read the warmed over version of Prescott, Bernal Díaz and the several other classical accounts of early Mexican history in Greuning's "Mexico and Its Heritage", Brenner's "Idols Behind Altars", Robinson's "Stout Cortez", Chase's "Mexico: A Study of Two Americas" -- or any one of a half dozen other books published on Mexico during the last five years.

For the purpose of this lecture, I am going to assume that you are already familiar with:

(a) the fact that within the borders of what we now call Mexico there came into being two very highly developed civilizations; the first of these, the Maya, reached its greatest development before the year 500 and later flourished

again in the peninsula of Yucatan; the second, the Aztec, developed somewhat later (1000 - 1500) in the Valley of Mexico;

(b) that both the Aztec and Maya cultures evolved complex systems of social, economic, military and religious institutional structures and, apparently without contact with any other peoples of the world, made tremendous advances in art, agriculture and astronomical and mathematical sciences.

(c) and, finally, that the Mayas and Aztecs together with other less developed peoples in Mexico, fell before the sword and cunning of Hernando Cortéz in the first quarter of the 16th century, and thereafter for 300 years were ruled by the Spanish Crown.

So much for the historical high-spots.

#### ABORIGINAL CULTURE

Obviously, the first point to be made in any attempt to discuss the culture of present-day Mexico is that the foundation of that culture is aboriginal and indigenous, the superstructure is European and imported. Or to change the figure: Mexican culture is a mixture or compound in which the base is Indian and the principal active reagent is Spanish.

We who live in the United States and sometimes refer to ourselves as "Americans", do not, I believe, fully realize how different is our situation from that of Mexico or how little American we are as compared with our neighbor to the South. We are American largely by virtue of the fact that we occupy part of the geographical area of the Americas. Our culture, however, both base and superstructure, is fundamentally

European. Mexico, on the other hand, is American in the much more original and deep seated sense that Mexico's very mode of life is still in large degree indigenous and autochthonous.

The contrast between the cultural complex in the United States and in Mexico springs originally from a fundamentally different experience and method of procedure in the settlement of the two countries. As Beals, Greuning and other students have pointed out, in the North the Anglo-Saxon pioneers encountered a country whose few inhabitants were scattered over a vast area, leading, for the most part a wandering nomadic existence. In the South, the Latin pioneers found a relatively densely populated country in the central and southern sections of which there were already developed settled agricultural civilizations of a high order.

In the North the pioneers promptly began a campaign of extermination based on the principle later formulated by General Sheridan: "there are no good Indians, but dead Indians" -- a campaign which was waged unceasingly and apparently continues down to the present day. In the South, once the carnage of the conquest was over, the Spaniards stopped killing the Indians and settled down to the business of exploiting and "Christianizing" them.

In sum: the United States was to all intents and purposes a wilderness which was occupied and settled; Mexico was a settled land which was subjugated and conquered. Mexican culture, accordingly, is the result of the grafting of



Spanish branches onto an ancient and indigenous plant; the culture of the United States is essentially a new growth from roots transferred from Europe to a new and virgin soil.

HETEROGE-  
NEITY

I have said that Mexican culture is a mixture or compound. As a matter of fact, this figure of speech is not accurate. Mexican culture is rather a solution in which the mixing process has been only partially completed. If we analyze this solution, we discover the presence of three clearly distinguishable elements: at the bottom there is a heavy, dark, brown, Indian sediment; on top there is a lighter, more volatile, Spanish element; and in between there is a thick, murky, imperfect coagulation which we may call Indo-Hispanic or, using the racial term, Mestizo. In other words, my second point with reference to a Mexican culture is that it is heterogenous rather than homogenous; a mosaic rather than a mixture.

If time permitted, I could expand and clarify this point by discussing each of these three elements in turn and describing for you a typical institutional structure in each category. I might, for example, indicate bull-fighting as one element in the Mexican cultural complex which is clearly Spanish; or certain types of Mexican architecture, involving as they do both Spanish and native characteristics, as being clearly Mestizo or Indo-Hispanic. However, probably the most striking illustrations of Mexico's cultural heterogeneity can be drawn from a consideration of the extent of the survival of pure Indian traits.

LANGUAGE

Take, for example, the matter of language. You perhaps are under the impression that the language spoken in Mexico is Spanish. And so it is -- if you mean that Spanish is the language spoken by most of the people most of the time, but that it is the universal language is far from being true.

At the time of the Conquest there were in Mexico some hundreds of tribal groups speaking somewhere between 50 and 100 separate and distinct dialects. Now, as you may note, from an examination of this map showing the "Survival and Distribution of Indigenous Languages" some two score of these aboriginal tongues have persisted down to the present day.

There are in Mexico at the present time around 2,000,000 Indians who cannot speak the Spanish language and possibly an equal number who speak their native tongue by preference. In other words, roughly from one-fifth to one-fourth of the people of Mexico cannot be reached through the ordinary channels of communications. The significance of this fact which I have chosen to illustrate the cultural diversity in Mexico cannot be overemphasized; for language is both an evidence and an index of cultural disparity.

If groups speak different languages it is almost inevitable that they will differ also in the other elements of their culture -- in their customs, beliefs and institutions. And this is precisely the situation in Mexico. There are thousands of villages in Mexico in which, despite the four hundred years of Mexico's contact with western civilization,

the people have departed hardly one whit or one jot from the ancient ways of their forefathers. And one need not make long expeditions into the mountains or tropical jungles to find them.

### TEOTIHUACÁN

A little more than an hour's drive on a paved road from Mexico City is the valley of Teotihuacán, Mecca of all tourists and famous throughout the world. In this valley are located the Great Pyramids of the Sun and Moon, monumental relics of the glory that was Nahua. This valley is also famous in the world of science because under the direction of the Mexican anthropologist, Manuel Gamio, it was the subject of the most thorough-going study ever made of a region in Mexico. Listen to Gamio's summary of his findings with reference to the way of life of 65% of the people living in the 22 villages in the shadow of the great pyramids:

"Today as before the discovery of America, the food of the Indian of Teotihuacán consists mostly of corn, chile, pulque (made of maguey) and occasionally frijoles (beans). There are individual cases where the economic situation would warrant luxuries such as bread, meat etc. etc., but they do not indulge in them, they prefer to continue their customary diet.... The habitation or home is, with but very few exceptions, the jacal, xacally, which was in use before the conquest, barely changed in a few details by contact with the Spaniards; and the same happens with regard to furniture and implements, the estera or petate (mat), the mortero or metate (grinding stone or mortar), the comal (pan) in which to cook the tortillas, the hogar (hearth

or fireplace) or tlecuil etc. etc.

"The use of preparations from the vegetal and animal kingdom for medicinal purposes continues, almost all of them conserving their aboriginal names.

"All intellectual activities bear a strong indigenous mark; transmission of ideas is not made in writing for, as a rule, there are no books or periodicals, nor printed matter of any kind in the valley, so that ethical, aesthetical, religious or political ideas or any other ideas are transmitted verbally as has been done for centuries. They have suffered more or less intensely from the influence of European culture, without, however, losing their typically Indian traits.

"It is true that since the conquest, the Indians have accepted many of the civilized comforts and commodities such as implements of metal, domestic animals, wearing apparel like the hat, powder for their feasts or for their firearms, etc., together with new ideas of all kinds which have more or less influenced their mode of thinking. Nevertheless, they belong to the Indian type of civilization, because the striking characteristics of the latter are far more numerous and much more deeply rooted than those of European or modern culture, or civilization."

#### FOLK CULTURE

Before leaving the subject under discussion, I would like to make it clear that I have selected the survival of indigenous traits merely as an illustration, as one

aspect, of Mexico's cultural heterogeneity. In truth, the significance of the essentially Indian character of a large part of the culture of Mexico, as Dr. Robert Redfield has pointed out, lies not in the fact that the culture is Indian or even that it is primitive. From the point of view of a social as opposed to a purely historical analysis it is more or less a matter of indifference whether the culture of a given community is pure Indian or Indian and Spanish mixed. What is important is the fact that the Indianism of a very large part of Mexico coincides with and in part determines what we call the folk character of Mexican society.

Mexico presents a picture of cultural disparity and lack of unity by reason of the isolation and self-sufficiency of the majority of the settled communities in the country. The typical Mexican community is one in which the mental world of the individual tends to be bounded by the actual physical limits of the village. It is a closed world governed by a local tradition and habits, and supported by local memories. As such, it tends to be unique and in its uniqueness to be separate and distinct from the other communities roundabout.

But however we may choose to analyze or illustrate the cultural pattern, or lack of it in present-day Mexico, the main point is clear. Neither the Spaniards during the three hundred years of the Colonial regime, nor the Mexicans in the century and more of Independence have been able to bring together the disparate and isolated groups scattered from one end of the country to the other and to weld them

into a homogenous, self-conscious nation, sharing a common heritage, working for common ends and aspiring to common ideals.

Most of the people of Mexico, "the 12,000,000 on the fringe of civilization", as former President Calles has called them, are yet too widely separated one from another and from the minority of "civilized" city dwellers to constitute a unified community. "Perhaps there is no nation on earth," writes José Vasconcelos, one of Mexico's most brilliant thinkers, "where it is possible to find in the same accentuated form a coexistence of human types separated by centuries and epochs of cultural development -- people different in blood, tradition, and habits of thought."

#### ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

The third feature of Mexican culture to which I wish to call your attention is the essentially agricultural character of the social and economic organization.

The population of Mexico is predominantly rural. Approximately 75% of the total population lives in small villages of less than 4,000 inhabitants and of the total rural population in Mexico 70%, in 1921, lived in communities of less than 1,000 inhabitants. In the same year, of 62,272 inhabited places, only 266 had a population of more than 4,000. There are only 10 Mexican cities with a population of more than 50,000 and only two cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants. Mexico is fundamentally and predominantly a nation of country-folk dedicated to agricultural pursuits.

The obverse of this fact is, of course, that Mexico is not a highly industrialized country. Indeed quite the opposite is the case. Mexico, to use Stuart Chase's phrase, is for the most part a land of "machineless men".

A few figures will illustrate what I mean. The Department of National Statistics reported in 1926 that there were in Mexico 2,877 factories employing some 95,000 workers. Compare these figures, for example, with those for the state of Texas. Texas, it is well known, is primarily an agricultural state and yet in 1925 Texas had 3,606 factories employing some 106,000 workers. And these figures for Texas do not take account of electric light and power plants which are included in the Mexican statistics. In other words, Mexico, undoubtedly superior to Texas in potential power, raw materials and other natural resources, and almost three times the size of Texas in area and population, yet scarcely equals Texas in the development of manufacturing industries.

Last year there were registered in Mexico around 85,000 automobiles and trucks, or one car for every 193 persons. In the same year in Germany, there was one car for every 99 persons, in France 1 for every 31 persons; in Canada the ratio was 1 to 3 and in the United States 1 to 4.5. In 1929, the state of California had 22 times as many automobiles as are to be found at present in the whole Republic of Mexico.

No, Mexico is not yet industrialized. With the exception of a few large centers of population and save for

the railroads and the great extractive industries of mining and oil, the machine has yet to stamp its iron imprint upon Mexican culture.

But even as I speak, as the very illustrations which I have just used indicate all too clearly, the walls of age-old custom and the dikes of isolation are crumbling and breaking beneath the ever growing pressure. The crevases which Porfirio Díaz opened fifty years ago in the walls are widening and the little streams of steel which began to seep into the land of cactus in the path of the railways are gradually and inevitably growing in volume. Tomorrow or the next day they will become full bodied rivers, sweeping everything before them.

Sarape-clad figures squatting for hours in picturesque indolence in the sun, a hundred and one fiestas, which now offer so often such good and sufficient reasons for doing any and everything except work, a thousand colorful markets filled with pottery, brilliant lacquer boxes, painted pigs, and dozens of other products of Indian handicraft and artistic skill, ten thousand and then ten thousand more smokeless, grimeless, sootless villages whose inhabitants have never heard of a time clock or a blast furnace -- all these and a multitude without number of other things which now so delight the soul of the tourist in Mexico will be swept away and down to the sea of the lost and the forgotten.

Or will they? And, if so, what of it?

These questions, before which every other question



in present-day Mexico sinks into insignificance, are the ones which I propose to discuss in my next lecture.