



A NOTE ON MEXICO

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Mexico is an excellent and significant living laboratory for the study of social, economic, and political change. It would be difficult to find any major country in the world in which economic growth and progress has been more rapid during the past 20 years. This period of rapid economic growth was preceded by 25 to 30 years of intense activity in reorganizing the social, economic, and political framework of Mexican society. Thus we have in Mexico a classic example of a country which, within the past half century, has moved from a culture dominated by the values and methods of an agricultural aristocracy with strong elements of feudalism into the realm of a modern industrial and commercial society. In general, this is the type of change which the United States and its non-communist allies are trying to promote in many underdeveloped areas of the world. Mexico made the shift with little outside help.

Although the shift is not complete and the road ahead is a long one, the course has been set. There is no turning back. Romantics and idealists may wish and pray that beautiful, Latin-spirited Mexico, with her warmth and charm and never-ending contrasts, will somehow always remain untouched by the materialism, grime, and sordid routineness of the urbanized and industrialized countries of the world. Their wishes and prayers, however, are likely to go unanswered. Mexico's compass is set on the road that Western Europe and the United States have already traveled. Indeed, Mexico is now quite a way along that road. Because this transformation is taking place in the 20th century -- not in the 18th or 19th -- the road will be different, but it will lead to the same place. If we think that it will be greatly and significantly different we may be engaging in the kind of wishful thinking that is typical of the romanticists, who really don't want much change but hope that by some vague means Mexicans can enjoy all the fruits of an industrial civilization while at the same time they live in flower-bedecked houses, wear wide-brimmed hats and white pajamalike suits, and drive their patient little burros to the dusty market squares of centuries-old villages. It will be a long time before these quaint and interesting scenes, which thrill thousands of North American tourists each year, will pass from the Mexican landscape. Yet the transformations which are now taking place in the organization and orientation of

Mexico's economy will gradually crowd them out of the picture.

As a background for understanding the changes which are under way in contemporary Mexico, we need to look briefly at the geography of the country and its population, to dip sparingly into its history, and to try to grasp the major outlines of the Revolution which started in 1910 and carries on to the present day. Most of these features of Mexico have been described by authors of works that are readily available in any good library in the United States. Therefore, in this note my task is to capture the highlights of past studies in a short statement which will save reading time without too greatly distorting the picture.*

One of the greatest problems which Mexico has faced throughout its history has been that of how to become a unified nation, as distinguished from an agglomeration of regions, neighborhoods, and cultural and social groups. This problem has sprung from many sources, among which the lay-of-the-land, the climate, and the conquest of highly-developed indigenous civilizations by a backward fragment of Western European culture, have been important. First, let us look at the physical factors.

LAND AND CLIMATE

Mexico, the country where the cliché "land of contrasts" is extraordinarily applicable, has a total area of 758,450 square miles, which is about 36,000 square miles less than the combined areas of the six States of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada,

*Among the good books available in English which the serious student can turn to are:

1. Howard F. Cline, The United States and Mexico. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953.
2. Henry Bamford Parkes, A History of Mexico. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, rev. 1950.
3. Frank Tannenbaum, Mexico, The Struggle for Peace and Bread. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951.
4. Nathan L. Whetten, Rural Mexico. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948.
5. Eyler N. Simpson, The Ejido, Mexico's Way Out. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1937.
6. U. S. Department of Commerce, Investment in Mexico, Conditions and Outlook for United States Investors. Washington: Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, 1955.

Texas, and Utah -- states where the topography is much like that of Mexico. In 1950 these six states had a population of approximately 11,300,000 persons; whereas, Mexico with its slightly smaller land area had a population of nearly 25,800,000. Since 1950 this number has grown to over 31,000,000. As Preston E. James, the noted Latin American geographer, says:*

Mexico has a little of everything. In addition to the spectacular snow-capped volcanoes there are rugged surfaces throughout the country where the slopes are so steep that the people who live on them think in terms of 'up' and 'down' rather than north, south, east and west. Two-thirds of Mexico is like this. The other third is classed as level, but it includes intermont basins, narrow valley bottoms, coastal lowlands, and a wide limestone plain where solution has produced underground rivers and sinks. There are parts of Mexico so high that the air is cool, even in summer; there are also low-lying regions where the temperature, especially in summer, is very high. About half of Mexico, including the desert regions of the north and northwest, is deficient in moisture; but the other half receives an abundance of moisture.

It is important to note, as the foregoing quotation points out, that two-thirds of Mexico is made up of rugged surfaces, and that half of it is deficient in moisture. Even the level parts, other than the limestone plain of Yucatán where the rocky layers are so close to the top of the ground that much of the land is of limited value, are scattered in small chunks in intermountain valleys, lowland coastal strips, and narrow river bottoms. It is a land which is all wrinkled -- full of folds and curlicues.

There are four major surface divisions of the country: (1) The great highland area which runs from the border of the United States to the narrowest part of the country -- the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in the south -- and which occupies most of the width of the cornucopia-shaped country; (2) The low mountains and basins of the northwest, most of which are in the peninsula of Lower California; (3) The lowlands along the Gulf Coast on the east, including thumblike Yucatán which sticks out into the Caribbean toward Florida; (4) The highlands along the southern border with Guatemala.

By all odds, the most important of these four divisions in terms of size, population, and general status of development, is the central highland region. It can be thought of as a great central plateau with mountains to its south, east, and west that make up its dissected borders. The plateau itself is by no means

*James, Latin America, p. 545.

level. It is filled with moderate slopes, intermountain basins, block mountains, and a few extinct volcanoes. In its northern part -- usually for a good 300 miles or more south of the Texas border -- it is dry and has an elevation of from 3,000 to 4,000 feet above sea level. In its southern part the central plateau is higher and wetter. Moreover, in this southern area of the central plateau the mountains are more or less continuous, and the intermountain basins are clearly separated from one another. The basin in which Mexico City is located is 7,500 feet above sea level; the basin of Toluca, just west of Mexico City, is 8,600 feet; and the one in which Guadalajara (Mexico's second largest city) is located, is 5,000 feet above sea level. Within this great central plateau and its mountainous borders are found most of the people, most of the cities, most of the minerals other than oil, and most of the agriculture of Mexico.

The borders of this central plateau are areas where the land literally stands on end. The western border is known as the Sierra Madre Occidental, and the eastern as the Sierra Madre Oriental. Both have long narrow valleys running roughly north and south between steep, rough ridges. Neither border offers easy access from the plateau to the coasts. The western one is a particularly effective barrier in separating the Pacific from the central highlands. The eastern border is penetrated most easily from Veracruz in the south and Monterrey in the north, which accounts in large part for these two cities being large and important urban centers. The southern border is considerably wider than either the eastern or western, and somewhat easier to penetrate in a physical sense. However, the most underdeveloped area of Mexico is in the south.

The three surface areas of Mexico other than the great central plateau with its rugged borders can be identified as the mountains and basins of the northwest, the lowlands of the Gulf Coast, including Yucatán, and the highlands near the Guatemala border. They are in the nature of outlying appendages. In the northwest many of the surface features of Southern California continue into Mexico. Generally, it is a dry, sparsely settled, mountainous country, which in recent years is growing in importance because of heavy expenditures for irrigation facilities. On the eastern side of the country the Texas coastal plain continues into Mexico to the region of Tampico, about 300 miles south of the southern tip of Texas. At about that point, the eastern mountain range, Sierra Madre Oriental, juts down to the Gulf, but the coastal plain picks up again to continue as a narrow strip southward, and properly includes the Yucatán peninsula. This coastal area is the seat of the Mexican oil industry; its southern part is abundantly supplied with rainfall, and has significant agricultural potentialities. The coastal strip includes Veracruz, the major seaport of the country, which together with the oil industry makes it a very important part of Mexico. The Isthmus of Tehuantepec, the narrowest part of Mexico, separates the mountainous southern border of the central plateau from the southern highland region which borders on Guatemala.

This highland region in the south -- usually called the Chiapas Highlands -- is made up of folded and faulted block mountains covered with volcanic materials and interspersed with a few high valleys. As a whole, this is a rough, hot, underdeveloped and forbidding region, though sulphur mining has in recent years developed quite rapidly at some spots in the Isthmus proper and the opening of the Pan-American Highway into Guatemala may give a boost to the whole area.

The foregoing thumbnail sketch of the four major surface divisions of Mexico is sufficient to give some idea of the way in which mountains cut up the country into pockets, valleys, and rugged plateaus. This means that there are no large level areas of good soil and bountiful rainfall. It means also that transportation and communication facilities are difficult and expensive to construct and maintain. These surface characteristics also provide a setting in which population groups tend to become isolated from each other, to become ingrown, and to maintain old and accustomed ways of living and thinking. Each more or less isolated group tends to develop allegiances to its own particular valley or stretch of level plateau which may be stronger than its allegiance to the nation. These are important impediments both to the material aspects of economic development and to the task of welding a nation together so that its people can act in concert in a positive and constructive manner through national institutions.

Moreover, these difficult features of terrain are not substantially ameliorated or offset by climatic conditions. Temperatures in Mexico are closely related to elevation. Along the low coastal areas we have the hot lands; in the middle altitudes -- from 4,000 to 7,000 feet above sea level -- there is usually a delightful and temperate climate; at the higher elevations are the so-called cold lands, which usually are not very cold, except on the peaks of some of the highest mountains. However, in much of the central plateau the nights are too cool for good corn production, and corn is the basic crop of Mexico. Of even more importance are the crop losses suffered from early or late frosts. Moreover, hail is a problem at many of the higher altitudes. Frost and hail, when coupled with the extreme variations in annual rainfall which characterize much of the central plateau, make farming a risky business. But for the country as a whole, the lack of adequate rainfall, rather than its annual variability, is a more important handicap. Simpson has made the following classification, which shows the percentage of the total land area of Mexico relative to moisture conditions:

Deficient in moisture throughout the year....	49.9	per cent
Deficient in moisture in the summer.....	1.4	" "
Deficient in moisture in the winter.....	35.9	" "
Deficient in moisture at no season.....	12.8	" "

The very dry regions are in the northern sections of the country where livestock raising predominates except in irrigated areas. However, a large part of the central plateau is at

least semiarid. The areas of the country which are not deficient in moisture at any season, lie mainly within two belts. One of these follows the Gulf Coast from south of Tampico to the state of Tabasco and then turns inland. The other is along the southern half of the Pacific Coast, particularly the part in the State of Chiapas. Central Mexico, where most of the population and agriculture is concentrated, receives most of its annual rainfall during the period from June to October. Almost no rain falls in this region from November to May. The annual precipitation for much of this region is from 20 to 30 inches per year.

When we view the physical and climatic characteristics of Mexico without the aid of travel agency posters or overindulgent guidebooks, which usually center their attention on special points of beauty and the delightful climate of the southern part of the central plateau, there is no escaping the conclusion that Mexico is a rugged and relatively poor country. It is especially handicapped by nature as an agricultural country. Yet most of its people have for centuries been farmers, and primarily they have been crop farmers. Nature has never lavished her abundance on Mexico, except for mineral deposits. It was gold and silver which interested the original Spanish conquerors, and down through the years Mexico has benefitted greatly from deposits of minerals and pools of oil. But these were the resources that attracted the "get-rich-quick" kind of foreign capital and influence, and created illusions among Mexicans themselves with respect to the wealth of their nation, without, in the last analysis, proving to be the real foundation for the spurt of growth which Mexico has had in recent years. I do not mean to imply that minerals and oil have not been of real importance as earners of foreign exchange and as sources of power and raw materials for Mexico's rapidly developing economy. Mexico would be much poorer today than it is, if there had not been such underground reserves on which to draw. But it is not in these deposits of natural wealth that we will find the main explanation for Mexico's rapid economic development.

THE PEOPLE

Most Mexicans are mestizos, having mixed Indian and Spanish blood. There are some pure-blooded Indians and some pure-blooded whites, but both are minority racial groups. Mexicans are mestizos, biologically and culturally. The mixing started soon after the Spaniards arrived in 1519. At that time, the country had a large Indian population (estimates range between 7 and 30 million inhabitants at the time of the conquest) and several centers of highly developed Indian culture. The Spanish conquerors, mainly adventurous men from the middle and lower classes of Spain, soon started a fusion of the races, which has continued to the present day.

The Spaniards came as conquerors, succeeded in subjugating the Indians, established themselves

as a ruling class, and superimposed their own institutions and culture on the previously existing native cultures. This fact is fundamental to an understanding of the problems which have confronted Mexico throughout her history. Quite different was the process of settlement which took place in the United States. The Pilgrim Fathers came as colonists to settle a wilderness, inhabited only by scattered Indian tribes so few in number that they were either exterminated or driven farther westward into restricted areas to make room for the new settlers. In the United States, European peoples as well as European institutions and culture were transplanted to a virgin soil that was easily cleared of previous encumbrances; the population and its institutions therefore grew from the beginning as a more or less homogeneous civilization. In Mexico, on the other hand, both the Indian and his culture survived, and throughout the years they have constituted the fundamental and basic elements of Mexican civilization. The superimposing of a Spanish civilization on the previously existing Indian base, has resulted in a much more complex and heterogeneous rural society than that found in the United States.*

The mixing of races has been so complete that it is now virtually impossible to define the word "Indian" in biological or ethnic terms. It has a cultural or sociological connotation in the sense that some people live like Indians while others live more or less like the people of Western Europe and the United States. Still others live somewhere between these two extremes of the cultural spectrum. As yet, insufficient studies have been made to provide a basis for sound quantitative estimates of the numbers of people in each of these three broad categories. One estimate suggests that in 1940 the Indian World represented about 15 per cent of the population; the Modern World about 48 per cent, and the Transitional World about 37 per cent.** This is far from an ethnic classification (it is probable that over 95 per cent of the people of Mexico have some Indian blood in their veins) but it points up the fact that probably not more than half of the people of Mexico are part of the culture to which we are most accustomed in the United States.

The mixing of cultures which has taken place in Mexico has many interesting and important features for the anthropologist

*Whetten, Rural Mexico, pp. 21 and 22.

**Cline, Mexico and the United States.

and sociologist. Unquestionably it has been an important factor influencing the rate of development of the country, as well as having left its earmarks on many political, social and economic institutions. It is not amiss to point out that the original Indian cultures of Mexico, though highly developed in a few centers relative to those in other parts of North America, were in terms of technology and science far below the cultural level of Western Europe of the 16th Century. Moreover, the Spain of that day and throughout the Colonial Period, which lasted until the early 1820's, represented a relatively backward segment of Western European culture, if we are thinking in technological and scientific terms. Of course technology and science are not the only gods to be worshipped when we are engaged in that nebulous task of trying to pin some kind of evaluative tags on different cultures, but they are extremely important indicators of economic progress and are related to the growth of some of the social and political institutions that have been closely intertwined with the economic development of Western civilization. It seems to me that Mexico -- and the same is true of several other Latin American countries -- has been something of a melting pot for two cultures that were relatively backward in science and technology. On the other hand, both were highly religious cultures, at least in a formal and ritualistic sense, and both were cultures in which a relatively small proportion of the people -- the "upper crust" -- dominated the lives of the majority.

Repression of the masses was not a new invention of the conquering Spaniards. It had been characteristic of the Indian cultures for centuries before Cortés and his 633 men landed in Mexico. The thousands of Spaniards who poured into the country over the next two or three centuries, conquered Mexico with the sword and the Catholic religion. The soldier and the priest went hand in hand in the process of superimposing Spanish institutions on the native Indian culture. The scientist, the skilled artisan, or the engineer was rarely, if ever, present. This may help to explain why Mexico languished for several centuries without making much progress. Her awakening interest in science came mainly in the last quarter of the 19th century and the first quarter of this century, but until the Revolution which started in 1910, science was still looked upon as a tool to be manipulated and controlled by those who governed. In other words, authoritarianism continued, and science and technology became minor partners to the soldier and the priest as ministering agents to the poor and humble souls who made up the manpower of the nation. This situation has pretty well changed since 1910, but it took a civil war to start the nation down the new road of modernism on which science, technology, and individual freedom are important guideposts to the inexperienced travelers.

The Mexican people thus appear to have shaken off in relatively recent years many of the old forms and ideas which they inherited from the early Indian cultures and from their Spanish conquerors. Moreover, Mexico has a young and rapidly growing population. In light of its recent gains in empirical

and scientific knowledge, and the desire of its leaders for both economic progress and social justice it is likely to have a future quite different from its past. During most of Mexico's history, the population grew slowly, but the last 20 to 30 years have brought phenomenally rapid gains. If we take 7 million as a conservative estimate of the size of the population in 1521, the figure was about unchanged at the middle of last century. It probably did not pass the 10 million mark until the 1880's, and as recently as the general census of 1940, the total population was given as 19,653,552. Between 1940 and 1950 however, there was an upsurge of over 6 million, with the census of 1950 giving a total of 25,791,017. Since then, the population has continued to increase at a rapid rate. The newspaper Excelsior on June 19, 1957, reported the latest figure as 31,426,190. These gains indicate that the annual rate of population growth in Mexico is somewhere between 3.10 and 3.20 per cent per year. This is extremely high. It is certainly among the highest rates of natural increase for any large country in the world. The rapid growth of the Mexican population in recent years is largely due to a sharp drop in the death rate. The birth rate has remained about constant. For instance, the number of births per 1,000 inhabitants in 1931 was reported as 43.8. Twenty years later it was 44.6, and in 1954 it was 46.4. In contrast to these relatively minor changes, the general death rate in 1931 was 25.9, but by 1951 it had been reduced to 17.3. The 1954 death rate was 13.1 per thousand. The infant mortality rate declined from 137.7 in 1931 to 80.6 in the year 1954. We see in these declining death rates the influence of better medical care, greater sanitation and better diets. These are factors which will probably continue to pull the death rate down, but as yet there is no indication that the general birth rate is declining. Herein may lie the seeds of a real population problem for Mexico. With population increasing at a rate of more than three per cent per year, total national output has to grow still more rapidly if the level of living of the people is to rise.

A rapidly growing population usually indicates a young population. In 1950 the average age of the Mexican people was 23.2 years. The distribution by age groups was as follows:

Four years and younger.....	15.39	per cent
From 5 to 14 years.....	26.31	" "
From 15 to 64 years.....	54.76	" "
Over 65 years.....	3.54	" "

The burden of old people in the society is not yet heavy, but the education of the children is a severe drain on resources. This problem is pointed up even more sharply when we realize that the 1950 census classified only 8,345,240 people as being economically active out of the total population of 25,791,817 at that time.

The majority of the people of Mexico live in villages or small towns. In 1950, the urban population -- made up of people

living in communities of over 2,500 inhabitants -- represented 42.3 per cent of the total. However, urbanization is accelerating. The comparable figure for 1940 was 35.1 per cent, and in 1930 it was 33.5 per cent. An official estimate for 1954 puts the urban population at 43.5 per cent of the total. This rapid growth of urban centers is not only an index of the rate of economic development, but it is also causing major problems around many of the cities with respect to housing, water and similar services, not to mention the social and moral problems that arise when large numbers of poor country people move to the city.

An idea of the way in which Mexicans make a living is given by the following census data with respect to the distribution of the labor force in 1950 and the changes that took place between 1930 and 1950. The total labor force of the country was counted as being 5,165,803 in 1930 and 8,272,093 in 1950. This was a gain of 60.1 per cent.

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Per cent of total--1950</u>	<u>Per cent increase 1930 to 1950</u>
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	58.3	33.0
Industry	14.8	64.4
Communications and transport	2.5	96.7
Commerce	8.3	149.8
Others, including mining and oil	16.1	220.7

Whether measured in terms of total population or of the labor force, Mexico is predominately an agricultural country. Yet, it is of great significance that between 1930 and 1950 the labor force in agriculture increased much less rapidly than in other lines of economic activity. We have here again another index of the fact that Mexico is becoming an industrial and commercial nation. The significance of this change can be appreciated more fully if we sketch a few points of past history, and then take a look at the Revolution.

HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

A degree of distortion is inevitable when one tries to cram the long and complicated history of Mexico into the short space available for a general note of this type. But perhaps it will be helpful to think of three great periods in the life of the country. One of these is the colonial period, which lasted just over three centuries, from the coming of Cortés in 1519 to September 1821, when Augustín Iturbide set up his regency and Mexico became free of the Spanish Crown. The second covers the 89 years between Iturbide's rise to power and the call to revolution by Francisco I. Madero in October 1910. The third is the revolutionary period -- the period since 1910 in which modern Mexico has come into being.

The Colonial Period: When Cortés and his handful of men landed

on the shores of Mexico, near what is now the city of Veracruz, the vast area before him was peopled by more than a hundred different Indian tribes, a few of which had highly developed cultures and at least one of which -- the Aztecs in the central valley of Mexico -- held political sway over a large number of other groups.

Long before the white man reached the shores the area was divided into 'empires,' 'principalities,' 'kingdoms,' 'states,' tribes, races and languages, each in its own locale, each at war with the rest or kept in subjection and paying tribute. The one thing it did not have was unity. It was not a country, a nation or an empire. It was a welter of particular cultures, no one strong enough to dominate all the others. Violence and war ruled the political scene.*

The separateness of the various Indian groups, with their jealousies and conflicts, continued to be an important element in Mexican history for many generations and explains how Cortés, with just a few more than 600 men, was able to march to the great capital city of the Aztecs, where Mexico City now stands, and conquer the largest, richest, and strongest of the Indian nations. On his way over the great mountain barrier which separates Mexico City from the eastern coast he was able through bribes, blandishments, and a few minor skirmishes to gain numerous allies who were anxious to throw off the Aztec yoke and be free of paying tribute to that proud and haughty group. Even so, the going was not easy, but by 1521 or thereabouts Cortés had defeated and destroyed the leadership of the Aztec nation. The Spanish Crown was in control, or more accurately, first Cortés and then the Spaniards who followed him were in control. The Spanish Crown was three thousand miles away issuing orders and dispensing favors to those who wanted to go to the New World.

The whole three-hundred-year colonial period was characterized by three sets of conflicting interests -- those of the Crown, those of the conquerors, and those of the Church. Generally speaking, the Crown wanted to grant to the Indians of its new domain essentially the same rights, duties and privileges of "our subjects in Spain." The conquerors, however, had not risked their necks for nothing. They wanted booty in the form of gold, silver, jewels, and they wanted Indian slaves who would pay them tribute or work land assigned to them. The Church assumed the role of the Indians' protector -- first by opposing the centralizing desires of the Crown, which of course was a threat to the strength of the Church, and second, by defending the Indians against the worst inclinations of the Conquerors. Although these conflicts of interests existed and must be taken into account for an understanding of the tangled skeins of Mexican history, there also were

*Tannenbaum, Mexico, The Struggle for Peace and Bread, p. 20.

areas where the three antagonists had much common ground on which to stand. The Crown wanted precious metals, just as did the Conquerors. The Church wanted greater power over the lives of the people; it also wanted to construct church buildings, and homes and places of worship for the members of the many religious orders. These different interests found a common ground in that the Indians were the manpower of the country; they had to do the work. The Crown issued some fine orders to protect the rights of the Indians, but the agents of the Crown often were weak and corruptible after they reached the shores of the New World. The Conquerors and the Priests ruled the roost, and the Indians mined the gold and silver, worked in the fields, carried the water, and hewed the wood. The priests converted them to Catholicism while directing them to tear down their old temples and erect new churches on their foundations. The Indian was converted into a slave, a forced laborer, or a tribute-payer. He lost his own culture without being admitted to that of the Spaniard, except as a second-class citizen and a beast of burden. Yet he was the manpower and also the artisan on whom his conquerors had to rely for their sustenance and wealth.

The Indian was communal, impersonal, submissive, mystical and self-denying. He wanted little for himself and aimed merely to live out his round of days in an unperturbed universe, following an ancient pattern and living by old rules. He was parochial in his vision and, after the conquest, remained broken in spirit and oblivious of outside stimulus. He mainly wished to be left alone. The Spaniard on the other hand, was arrogant, self-assertive, and ambitious. He had a sense of direction. He wanted to get on in the world, acquire land, silver, houses, servants, and honors. He could assume individual responsibility and was a man in his own right. The individual incentives of the European made no appeal to the Indian. The white man found that he could not bribe the Indian to labor for him by the payment of a wage, and so resorted to one or another form of compulsory service. The mingling of the races and their culture took the form of attrition, a long process of wearing each other down that has now lasted for four and a half centuries and whose end is not yet in sight. In time the Indians accepted some of the things the white man had to offer, but chiefly in the cities. It was mainly through the mestizo that Spanish culture found an increasing role in Mexico. But the process required centuries.*

*Tannenbaum, Ibid., pp. 32 and 33.

The great gap between the Spanish and Indian cultures continued as a major factor throughout the colonial period. The two never got together on fundamentals. The Spaniards became the owners of the lands, the mines, the factories, the banks, and commercial houses; the Indians were the workers and artisans. The one group ruled, while the other slaved (though, technically, not always as slaves). The Spaniard's interest in mining brought about the development of new cities, especially in the northern part of the country and opened up roads and trails for the transportation of metals and the supplying of the new mining communities. The growth of mining and commercial activities in the cities demanded an expansion in agricultural production, and many of the Spanish immigrants became great landholders, with the Indians doing the farming and paying rent or tribute to them. They introduced horses, mules, and cattle, which the Indians had never had, as well as some new crops and many new agricultural practices.

The two cultures lived together in relative peace and harmony for almost three hundred years. The Spaniards made up the dominant aristocratic class, with strong allegiances to the Spanish Crown and the Catholic Church. They were the masters, the property owners, the feudal lords; the Indians were the workers, the artisans, the serfs, the underdogs. The Church worked hand-in-glove with the upper classes, though at the same time showing more respect for the Indians than did any other element in the society. The Church became a great property-owner and the members of its upper echelons exerted much pressure on the government. The Church had no desire to bring freedom to the masses; yet hundreds of individual priests, both in pulpits and classrooms, showed to the Indian the only compassion, understanding, and love that he received from the white man.

Over the years two new groups began to enter the picture, and cause some ripples on the original ocean of serenity. One of these was composed of the criollos, the unmixed descendants of families direct from Spain. The Crown refused to allow them all the rights and privileges of the original Spaniards. Particularly were they excluded from some of the power posts in the Colonial government. The other group was the mestizos, the people of mixed Spanish and Indian blood. This group increased rapidly in numbers because most of the early conquistadores took Indian wives. Neither of these groups found a ready-made niche in the social, political, and economic organization of society that had developed during the early decades of the Colonial period. The criollo, the American-born child of the European Spaniard, inherited the wealth of his parents, but he was at a lower level on the scale of prestige because he could not hold top positions in government or in the Church. The mestizo, the child of a Spanish or criollo father and an Indian mother, was the connecting link between the two cultures, and over the centuries, has turned out to be the dominant element in Mexican society. Yet he held a still lower position in the social hierarchy than the criollo. The lack of a satisfactory status for these two groups, particularly

for the criollos, provided a seed bed, or fermentation vat, from which an attempt at self-government could come when news reached Mexico in 1808 that Ferdinand VII, King of Spain, had abdicated and had been imprisoned by Napoleon.

With this news, there was a question as to Mexican allegiance. The King was in prison. The Spaniards in the fatherland were setting up popular councils, which announced that they would govern Spain in the name of the King. When some of the Mexicans tried this however, they met opposition. Many of the Spaniards in Mexico didn't trust popular government. They had a cozy situation, and the few Spaniards who wanted to try popular government, along with a goodly proportion of the criollos and a few of the mestizos, were immediately suspect. The country broke into two camps, and was plunged into war. It was really a civil war between those who wanted the country to remain attached, in some vague way, to the imprisoned Spanish King, and those who wanted Mexico to become a free and independent nation. The first overt cry for independence was sounded at midnight on September 16, 1810, by Miguel Hidalgo, a priest in the little town of Dolores in the state of Guanajuato. He gathered a motley crowd and marched on Mexico City. At the famous battle of Las Cruces, near Mexico City, the rebels probably won and could have entered the city. But in fact, they retreated, and Hidalgo's army -- if it could be called an army -- never won another battle. Hidalgo was subsequently captured and killed. The banner for freedom was taken up by José María Morelos, another priest and a mestizo. He had a clear program of social and political reform, including a plan for forming a government based on universal suffrage. However, he too was defeated and executed on December 22, 1815. This put an end to the mass movement for liberation, but there sprang up guerrilla leaders, who carried on the fight and in the process gained considerable personal prestige and plunder.

It was the upper-class Spaniards however, who made the next important move. They had been fighting against independence, but in 1820 they changed sides, "not because they had changed principles, but because they wished to preserve them. Ferdinand VII, who had returned to Spain after the defeat of Napoleon, had been forced to reintroduce the liberal Constitution of 1812 once again, and in Mexico the Spanish colony and hierarchy, who preferred the ancient rule, were willing to disrupt the Spanish Empire rather than assent to the liberal principles of the Constitution of 1812."* They arranged to arm Agustín Iturbide (who strangely enough was a middle-class criollo officer who had fought against Hidalgo and Morelos in their campaigns for independence) to go clean up the rebel bands that were opposing the Spanish Crown. But Iturbide went out and induced the rebels to join him in a plan to: (1) establish Mexico as an independent monarchy under the tutelage of Ferdinand VII, or some other Spanish prince of royal blood;

*Tannenbaum, Ibid., pp. 40 and 41.

(2) maintain the rights of the Church; but (3) provide equality for Americans and Spaniards alike. With this great compromise under his belt, Iturbide rode into Mexico City in a march of triumph on September 27, 1821. He soon set himself up as the monarch, and even granted himself a crown in a great public ceremony in the Cathedral of Mexico City in July 1822. Thus Spanish control was ended three hundred years after it had started. Mexico was no longer a colony of Spain, but it was still under the domination of the same group that had been running the country for years -- the rich, upper-crust families. The revolution had not brought significant social or economic reforms, and the political situation had been altered in form more than in content. But this situation couldn't last.

From Iturbide to Madero, 1821-1910: Within five months there was a formidable uprising of troops led by Antonio López de Santa Anna, one of the most inexplicable characters in Mexican history. Iturbide was pushed off his throne and shipped abroad in the spring of 1823. A congress was installed to draft a fundamental law to govern the new country, and in October, 1824 a constitution was proclaimed which resembled that of the United States. It provided for a Federal Republic, with a President, a Congress with an upper and a lower house, and a Supreme Court. The States within the Federal Republic were to be allowed to manage their internal affairs, and each was to have a Governor, a Legislature, and a judicial branch. This constitution, though representing the first in a long line of significant impacts that the United States has had on Mexico, did not, however, provide for the individual guarantees that characterized the Bill of Rights of the U. S. Constitution. Moreover, it contained the following significant article: "The Religion of the Mexican Nation is, and will perpetually be, the Roman Catholic Apostolic. The nation will protect it by wise and just laws, and prohibit the exercise of any other whatever."

But many high officials of the church still were not satisfied. Anything short of a centralized ecclesiastical government was not to their liking. In about 1827 a clear split became evident between the Conservatives on the one hand and the Liberals on the other. The former were also called the Centralists and the latter the Federalists, terminology that indicated one of the great differences between them. "Those who, for the most part, possessed special privileges, that is to say the Conservatives, chose centralism. The puros -- those who were opposed to the riches and privileges of the Church and the old Spanish party, and who had been infected by a desire to imitate the United States-- declared themselves Federalists."* For years, this general issue of central versus federal government, with the centralists being the conservatives and the federalists being the liberals, dominated Mexican politics. Santa Anna, who was probably the most

*Gonzalez Pena, History of Mexican Literature, quoted by George F. Kneller, in The Education of the Mexican Nation, p. 36.

influential man in Mexico during the first quarter century of independence, was first on one side of the fence and then on the other. In 1835, he abolished the federal system and the country became a military oligarchy; but with the coming of the Mexican-U. S. war in 1847, federalism was again re-established and the Constitution of 1824 was restored. However, there was a brief relapse into centralism again in 1853, which lasted until Santa Anna finally went into exile in the summer of 1855.

The first 30 years of life of the Mexican Republic was indeed a tragic period. The country was torn between the old ideas of Crown, Church, and special privilege on the one hand, and the new but nebulous ideas of representative government, individual freedom and equality of opportunity on the other. Leadership was weak, often corrupt, and rarely dependable. The federal treasury was often depleted. The country had few goods to sell, but was dependent on foreign sources for capital, and even for operating expenses to run the government. In the war with the United States Mexico lost about half of its national territory, and was left a weak and prostrate nation. The Centralists were strongest in Mexico City and a few other urban centers, while the Federalists' points of strength were scattered and generally outside of the central core of Mexico, which was then, as now, the Central Plateau. But in these outlying sections of Mexico a new generation of political leaders was coming to the front and constantly being frustrated by the Centralist rule from Mexico City, which took no account of local needs and aspirations unless they furthered the cause of the wealthy families, the church and the military. The most important of the Federalist leaders from outlying areas was Benito Juárez, a full-blooded Zapotec Indian from Oaxaco. He led a Federalist movement which started in 1853 and is known in Mexican history as "The Reform."

The avowed objects of the Reform group (Federalists all, but divided into liberal and moderate wings) were to make Mexico a modern, middle-class state, based on a federal republican constitution, the supreme law. The first moves in that direction were to liquidate the special fueros of the military and the clergy, and to subordinate these groups to the secular, civil authority. Their economic reforms envisaged increasing the Mexican wealth by putting the monopolized assets of the Church into streams of commerce, and building a nation of small landholders, each with his own farm purchased from the large ecclesiastical holdings now held in mortmain. If one likes such terms, the Reform can be described as a bourgeois revolution, carried out by and for mestizos; it was equally antagonistic to the Europeanized creole Mexicans and to the seemingly brutish and superstition-soaked Indians controlled by the clergy.

Soon Mexico began to ring with legislative changes and the political responses to them. Chief initial reform laws were the Ley Juárez (November 23, 1855) and the Ley Lerdo (June, 1856). The former reorganized the system of Mexican justice and abolished fueros by suppressing the military and ecclesiastical courts' jurisdiction over civil matters. This, of course, rubbed across the sensitive nerve-ends of the two most powerful institutions in the country [the Church and the military], and was the signal for uprisings, plots, and the re-shuffling of political coalitions. But the Reformers plunged on.

The Ley Lerdo had even more far-reaching repercussions on the future of Mexico. Aimed at the Church, it ordered corporate bodies to divest themselves of their landholdings. The theory was that Church sales would stimulate commerce, that the National Treasury would tax the sales (and thus keep sums flowing in), and that peasant tenantry would become small private holders, as preference in sale was to be given to those occupying tracts. It turned out however, that the law did not force the division of these ecclesiastical latifundias and that only existing large landholders were rich enough to pay the prices asked. Actually, at this time, few transfers of this sort were made.

An even more unexpected and far-reaching consequence of the Ley Lerdo was to strip native communities of their traditional possession of communal lands. To encourage small private interests, the Reformers considered village governments to be corporate groups, equally required to rid themselves of lands. In the ensuing sales, outsiders rather than villagers, snapped up the best bits....The whole Federalist economic theory was based on the idea of sanctity of private property and its dynamic incentives to the middle-class virtues of thrift, hard work, and morality. This attitude underlay both their reform of the upper-class system, and that of the lower, the Indians.*

The Ley Juárez and the Ley Lerdo were followed by the Constitution of 1857, which was the basic document governing Mexico until 1917, when another revolutionary constitution was

*Cline, The United States and Mexico, pp. 45 and 46.

proclaimed. The Constitution of 1857 guaranteed individual liberties and abolished special privileges. It did not dis-establish the Church, but it created enough furor and opposition so that the Centralists and some moderate Federalists repudiated it and drove Juárez and his group from Mexico City. The Centralists took over the national government in Mexico City, while Juárez and his group created another Mexican government in Veracruz. "For three years Mexico went through another blood bath. The cruelest form of strife -- civil war -- ravaged the land, as two governments disputed whether the Constitution of 1857 and the radicals would rule all of Mexico."* Just when the cause of the Radicals seemed to be at its lowest point, Juárez, in Veracruz, issued a series of decrees known as Leyes de Reforma, which have been called "the most transcendental decrees issued by a Mexican up to that time." They provided for religious toleration and for the general curtailment of the power of the clergy. Religious orders and religious communities were dissolved. The nation was entitled to possess all the properties of the clergy, both religious and secular and the Church was denied the right to possess landed properties. Church and State were separated and religious freedom of thought was established. The clergy was not allowed a stipend from the State and its members were made to depend on voluntary contributions from their parishioners. The State, rather than the Church, was made the agent for performing legal marriages and for supervising burials. These decrees were, at the time, war measures of a government that did not even have its seat of power at the traditional national capital. They finally became constitutional amendments in the 1870's, but before that Mexico was to have another interlude as a monarchy.

The Centralists and the moderate Federalists who were fighting Juárez conspired with the governments of England, France, and Spain to land troops in Mexico for the ostensible purpose of collecting debts owed by Mexico to these countries -- debts which had been repudiated by the Juárez government. Involved, however, was a conspiracy on the part of Napoleon III to add Mexico to France's foreign holdings. Troops of the three countries landed at Veracruz in 1861, at a time when the United States was embroiled in its own Civil War and could not move to enforce the Monroe Doctrine that had been proclaimed in 1823. When Britain and Spain learned of Napoleon's plan to make Mexico a dependency of France, they withdrew their troops. The French troops, however, moved on toward Mexico City. Juárez and his forces had managed to oust the Centralists from Mexico City in 1861 and had again occupied the traditional seat of power. Now, however, with the French army moving on Mexico City, the Juárez government was again forced to flee. This time it went north, and was kept on the move from place to place in northern Mexico until 1867. The French occupied the capital, and with the collaboration of the Centralists and the moderate Federalists, established a monarchy. They placed

*Cline, Ibid., p. 47.

Maximilian of Hapsburg and his beautiful wife Carlota on the throne. Maximilian, however, turned out to be a disappointment. He began to act like a liberal, and even invited Juárez to collaborate with him. This of course alienated his conservative Centralist support, including that of the Church and the Pope -- the latter had given his approval to the original scheme of intervention. At the same time it failed to gain him the support of Juárez and his group. To make matters worse, Napoleon withdrew his support, partly because of a changed political scene in Europe and partly because the Civil War had ended in the United States, thus freeing the U. S. Army so that it could come to the aid of Mexico. As a result, Juárez and his followers recaptured Mexico City in 1867, shot the Emperor Maximilian after a speedy trial, and

Once again that squat and somber figure, Benito Juárez ruled Mexico as a symbol of Mexicanism. During the Intervention and the Empire, his moral stature had grown to gigantic heights; as the implacable foe of special privilege, professional militarism and the political Church, and the inflexible champion of law and constitutionalism, he had brought the Mexicans through the most severe crisis of their national history to date, largely by strength of character and belief in the Mexican people's ability to shape their own fate. The liquidation of Intervention and Empire and the final triumph of La Reforma put an end to some of the main features of Neo-Colonial Mexico....

Juárez died in 1872, shortly after Porfirio Diaz, a war hero, had narrowly missed defeating him at the polls for his third term as President. His passing closed an era. He immediately joined other Mexican immortals in the pantheon of national heroes. Under him and his Federalist-Liberal group Mexico had, between 1853 and 1872, made another of its critical passages toward the present.*

Juárez was a friend of Abraham Lincoln. The two men had much in common. They came from humble backgrounds; they fought against injustices and special privileges; they steered their respective nations through great crises; and though the scars of their conflicts remained on the body politic for many years, their reform programs ultimately welded their respective countries into stronger nations. Perhaps Juárez's greatest accomplishment was the destruction of the Church as a strong economic and political power in the country. But because the

*Cline, Ibid., pp. 49 and 51.

great landholders and most of the wealthy families had supported the French intervention and usually had close ties with the Church, they too were on the defensive. It was no longer considered quite so natural for them to be the rulers and the pets of government. Finally, the idea of a monarchy for Mexico was wiped from the slate; constitutionalism prevailed. Juárez's program of land reform, however, was an utter failure. Although the Church was finally forced to sell its lands, many of the land-owning Indian communities were caught in the same trap. The result was that most of the best farm land in Mexico passed into the hands of large private estate owners, who converted the Indians and lower-class mestizos to a form of peonage not greatly different from the serfdom of the Middle Ages. Lincoln had his Homestead Laws and Juárez had his Ley Lerdo, but the outcome of this legislation was quite different in the two countries.

For a synopsis of events between the death of Juárez and the Revolution of 1910, no better introduction is available than the list of "Chief Events in Mexican History" on page 272 of Terry's Guide to Mexico. Recapitulating history from guide books may not be the best of academic practices, but let's take a look. The entries are as follows:

- 1876. General Porfirio Díaz enters Mexico City (Nov. 24) at the head of a revolutionary army and is proclaimed Provisional President.
- 1877. Porfirio Díaz is elected Constitutional President.
- 1884. Porfirio Díaz is again made President.
- 1888. Porfirio Díaz is again made President.
- 1892. Porfirio Díaz is again made President.
- 1896. Porfirio Díaz is again made President.
- 1900. Porfirio Díaz is again made President.

Just to prove that the printer did not stutter, Terry also notes another event in 1900: "The great canal for draining the Valley of Mexico is completed at a cost of sixteen millions of pesos." But then....

- 1904. Porfirio Díaz is again made President.

Apparently nothing happened in 1905, but for 1906, '07, '08 and '09 we have entries about: the establishment of the gold standard; the national revenue exceeding expenditures; a shrewd financial plan by José Yvez Limantour, Mexico's greatest Minister of Finance, which placed a large part of Mexico's railway system under Government control; and unexampled prosperity marking the Díaz regime. But then we return to the old theme:

1910. Porfirio Díaz, though in his 80th year, is again elected President by an overwhelming majority.

Díaz was finally forced to resign in May, 1911, after having ruled the country from November, 1876. With his downfall a new era was ushered in. Before discussing it, however, let's take a look at the Díaz period. His was a regime of solid, conservative economic growth in which individual liberties were pushed into the background. He brought peace to the countryside by a highly efficient rural police force. He catered to foreign capital and to big business. He maintained the Federal system by controlling the State Governors and the members of the national congress. He recruited a group of advisors who became known as the Científicos (Scientists). As Cline says: "Científicos saw the future of Mexico dependent on the scientific allocation of scarce skills and scanty resources by an appointed élite, drawn exclusively from the 'rational' (science-minded) and productive Mexicans. The middle class -- between the rude Indian and the arrogant aristocrat -- was to act as a trustee for the rest of the nation until the national economic plant, created by self-interested bourgeoisie, poured out goods and services. These, trickling downward, would make liberal democracy a possibility. To reach political democracy -- never abandoned as an ultimate ideal -- the active enterpriser was to be encouraged. On him the future rested."

If this sounds like the economics of Adam Smith, that is exactly what it was. But with it went political repression and a belief that the Indian and mestizo was of inferior biological material. The worship of the man with money, the enterpriser who could build up the country, and the complete blindness of the "Porfirians" to social injustices and the woes of the poverty-stricken masses, particularly the rural workers on the large estates, was not too uncharacteristic of many ideas and opinions in Western Europe and the United States around the turn of this century. Moreover, Mexico made significant material progress under Díaz. It was a period when foreign capital flowed into the country and profitably exploited the natural resources with the active aid and encouragement of the government. The theory was that this would stimulate the accumulation of capital by Mexicans which would eventually push the foreigners out. Many Mexicans did accumulate capital during the Porfirian Era, but much of it went into large landholdings, the traditional symbol of prestige, and thus became immobilized in one of the most backward segments of the economy. "The 'trickle theory' did not work out in practice; great material benefits accrued to Mexico, but they did not soak downward to the masses. Rather, they were increasingly monopolized at the upper levels or drained off to alien shores."* To this difficulty was added two others. What had been originally sold

*Cline, Ibid., p. 56.

to the people as a temporary control over the lower classes to prevent disrupting abuses of liberty, often bordering on anarchy, became a firm and continuing repression of individual liberties, and finally, Díaz failed to make room in his following of politicians and científicos for new young blood. He not only became old while he was in office, but the same thing happened to his hand-picked Ministers and State Governors.

The Revolution of 1910: Although, as Terry said, Díaz was elected in 1910 by the greatest majority of his career, he was by this time no longer the "indispensable man." A frail little chap by the name of Francisco I. Madero, Jr., who had gone to school in France and the United States, published a book, The Presidential Succession of 1910, in which he criticized the Díaz administration and extolled the virtues of democracy, and in so doing set off a train of events that spelled the end of Díaz and started the Revolution in Mexico which is still under way. Madero was the son of a wealthy family from the State of Coahuila, in northern Mexico. He could hardly be called a social reformer, and certainly he was not a "revolutionary" in the ideological sense of that word. He was concerned primarily with political reform. His slogan was "Effective Suffrage and No Re-election." He wanted to get rid of Díaz and set the country on a true democratic course.

In the fall of 1910, after having been imprisoned for his criticisms of Díaz and then released, he gathered a small army of adherents and demanded the resignation of Díaz. There were a few skirmishes and numerous riots in various cities, including Mexico City itself. Outbreaks, demonstrations and riots continued into the spring of 1911 in various sections of the country, and finally on May 25, 1911, Díaz resigned as President. A week later he sailed for France. After an interim President, and elections, Madero took office on November 6, 1911. One era was ended and another was about to begin. But Madero was not equal to the situation. First, Zapata was revolting in the south with a sizeable army of peones in an attempt to force Madero into a program of land reform. Then there was a counterrevolution sponsored by some of the Díaz adherents. Madero was taken prisoner and shot on February 23, 1913, less than 18 months after he had taken office. Mexico was off to another blood bath. Until 1917, when Venustiano Carranza managed to head a coalition that began to bring a semblance of order, Mexico was in a state of chaos. Carranza was successful in holding the nation together, and in putting down revolts by Zapata and Villa, as well as numerous miscellaneous uprisings only after promising to use the power of government in the interests of the common man. The people had had enough of Díaz's "trickle down" policies and police repression. The countrymen wanted land, freedom from debt peonage imposed by landlords, schools for their children, and roads on which to go to market. Laborers in the cities wanted the right to organize and bargain collectively, and a voice in politics. Nearly everybody wanted to get rid of the foreigners, and to have Mexico for the Mexicans.

Carranza began to make progress in quelling the uprisings and revolts when he decreed a program of land reform and made promises to aid labor. He followed up these first steps by calling a constitutional convention, and Mexico got a new constitution in 1917 to replace the 1857 one that Juárez had fought so hard to maintain. The Constitution of 1917, though drafted and proclaimed under Carranza's guiding hand, was considerably more radical than he wanted. It is an unusual constitution: it is both a basic law and a political platform for a revolutionary party. It was drafted so that it embodied most of the provisions of the 1857 document with respect to personal freedom and individual rights; it retained the Federal system of government; but it also laid out a program for greatly weakening the power of large landholders, the Church, and monopolistic business companies. These three institutions appeared to the authors of the 1917 Constitution to be the vehicles through which government had constantly been shunted aside from its main responsibilities of serving the needs and desires of the common man.

The land problem was tackled in Article 27 of the Constitution. That article lays down a complicated theory of private property in which the basic aim is to subject private property in land to broad public ends. Among other things it asserts that the original ownership of land and water rests with the nation, which may transmit such ownership to the individual. The nation, however, cannot transmit the rights of ownership to mineral deposits or to the subsoil. For these, it may grant rights of exploitation to individuals only under specified conditions. Even in transferring the surface rights to individuals the nation reserves the right to impose limitations in the interests of the public welfare. Moreover, not everybody has the right to own private property. For instance, Mexican citizenship is a prerequisite, unless the protection of one's foreign government is revoked; and under no circumstances may foreigners own property within 50 kilometers of the sea coasts or within 100 kilometers of the frontier. Likewise, religious institutions may not hold real estate or mortgages thereon; commercial stock companies may not hold rural property; and banks are restricted in their ownership of real estate. In contrast to these limitations, Article 27 legalizes the holding of communal property and provides for a land reform program aimed at breaking up large rural landholdings and returning the farm land to the rural village. This program of rural land reform came to be one of the most important features of the Mexican Revolution.

Article 123 of the 1917 Constitution sets up minimum rights for workers, and in so doing singles out the Mexican worker for special treatment from other citizens. This Article prescribes the hours of work, a minimum wage, participation in profits, and sets up protection for women and children in industry; it regulates the procedures for terminations; allows organization of labor as a right; and legalizes strikes as a weapon of collective bargaining.

The itemized privileges with which the workers are endowed seem simple and innocent enough -- the right to organize, to an eight hour day, to participation in profits, and so forth -- and might erroneously lead one to assume that they are static. But by making the Union a legal instrument, the collective labor contract a source of industrial law, and the Board of Conciliation and Arbitration a judicial body with power, the Constitution forged an instrument for re-shaping Mexican industrial life. Let me repeat, it was done by the State and not by the workers. The State, legally speaking, created the working class. The few earlier labor laws enacted in Mexico, beginning in 1904 and with greater frequency after 1914, were passed without participation by the workers. The Constitutional Convention, influenced by foreign ideas, imposed this new legal doctrine and formula upon the country. The labor program had no local antecedents, whereas the agrarian revolution was essentially Mexican.*

The labor movement is still largely a political movement. Organized labor is one of the most potent pressure groups on government policy; is a substantial vote-getter for the party in power, and relies heavily on government for aid in negotiations of labor contracts. It is hardly a trade union movement of the kind to which we are accustomed in the United States.

The constitutional provisions for land reform and for organizing and protecting the rights of workers laid the basis for the new approach to problems that has characterized the modernizing of Mexico during the past 40 years. But constitutional provisions and economic, social, and political actions are quite different things. Carranza, under whom the new constitution was drafted, did little to carry out its provisions. He was a transition piece between the old and new orders. It remained for Álvaro Obregón, Carranza's successor in the presidency, to start the nation on its road to reform and reconstruction following the civil wars that had raged between 1913 and 1917. Obregón, who came into power in 1920 after Carranza was assassinated in an attempt to flee Mexico City with the public treasury, was a popular army general who had generally been identified as one of the more radical of the new revolutionary leaders. He was succeeded by General Plutarco Elias Calles (1924-28), who turned out to be the strong man, and was known as the Supreme Chief of the Revolution. Following Calles' term, there was an attempt to seat Obregón again as President, but he was assassinated by a religious fanatic before he could take office. This act effectively

*Tannenbaum, Mexico, The Struggle for Peace and Bread, p. 116.

interpreted the principle of "No Re-election," a part of Madero's early slogan, to mean what it says. Not even after a man has been out of the presidency for one or more terms is he to be re-elected. Calles virtually named the next three presidents -- Portes Gil, who acted as provisional president 1928-30; Ortiz Rubio, who took office in February 1930 and was forced to resign in 1933; and General Abelardo L. Rodríguez, who served out the balance of Rubio's term, until General Lázaro Cárdenas was elected in 1934.

The whole period, from the beginning of Obregón's term in 1920 until Cárdenas assumed the presidency in the fall of 1934, was a reasonably stable era in which the aims of the revolution made slow but steady progress. It became clear that the new revolutionary leaders were not in the pattern of Díaz. They were not the handmaidens of the large landholders, the Church, and the large companies. Political power had shifted to the hands of a middle-class leadership which was responsive to the needs and desires of the common man. The idea of "social justice" became an important and fairly meaningful political cliché. Land reform moved ahead, though slowly; the fight between State and Church boiled up again, with the former standing its ground; a start was made toward popular education; a road building program was started; the labor movement was strengthened and the beginnings of a one-party system of government began to appear.

It was Cárdenas, however, serving from 1934 to 1940, who really put the Revolution into high gear. He was definitely a man of the people and for the people. He carried out the land reform program with vigor, and in the process destroyed the political power of the old feudal oligarchy. He aided and encouraged the labor movement with a strong and vigorous hand. He nationalized the oil industry and the railroads, and generally returned Mexico to the Mexicans. During his term, the Revolution was in full swing. He and Franklin Roosevelt were both engaged in setting their respective countries on a new course, and their general ideas and policies had much in common. Juárez and Lincoln of the last century, and Cárdenas and Roosevelt of the depressed 1930's, represented important turning points in the history of the neighboring countries.

After Cárdenas came Ávila Camacho (1940-46), then Miguel Alemán (1946-52), and now we are in the fifth year of the term of Ruiz Cortines (1952-58). None of these three men has had the fire and push for reform that characterized Cárdenas. In a sense, the Revolution has turned to the "right" under their leadership. The country has been prosperous; the one-party system has been successful in transferring political power from one administration to the next without violence; production of goods and services is expanding rapidly; industrialization is being encouraged and is moving ahead. Finally, after long years of struggle and turmoil, it appears that Mexican leadership has learned how to use the power of the State to promote internal peace and progress, rather than to be a pawn for first one strong man and then another to

use for the personal advantage of his particular group of friends and cohorts.

Mexico is still a poor country. To North American eyes poverty is extreme and commonplace, while at the other end of the scale there are a few very wealthy families. There are still great social injustices suffered by thousands, though "social justice" ranks on an even par with "economic development" as one of the twin goals of the Revolution. There is a "brittleness" about political and social relationships which could again allow a bursting forth of bloodshed and turmoil. The willingness to compromise and the art of "muddling through" have both made great strides with an expanding middle class and the dominance of a revolutionary party, which really isn't very revolutionary. Yet, one cannot help but wonder if the one-party system will be flexible enough and expansive enough to accomodate the different interest groups and strains that rapid economic development is bringing about.

The State has assumed many new and important functions, but it still operates with a creaking, underpaid bureaucracy. The dominant political party, PRI (Party of Revolutionary Institutions), is made up of many conflicting pressure groups. Government funnels public funds into labor organizations, into the hands of high ranking and politically important bureaucrats, and, on a minor scale, into the treasuries of some of the farmer organizations. To quite an extent, those "people's organizations" which have anything to do with politics are likely to get a little money from the government to keep their officers in jobs and on the right side of the fence. These are not the characteristics of a healthy democracy.

No one should be misled into the belief that the Revolution has eliminated poverty or created a democratic paradise. But it has brought both political stability and economic growth while at the same time it has made some inroads on the injustices suffered by the masses. Under Díaz there was political stability and economic progress, but the underdog was forgotten, or overtly suppressed. The revolutionary governments have not made this fatal mistake; they have a heart and a soul, and an embryonic program for improving the lot of the common man. This is something new in Mexico, and policies for redistributing wealth without destroying production incentives and abilities are complex to design and manipulate. One cannot but wish the Mexicans God-speed and success in their efforts.