

## GERMANY'S MEXICAN INTRIGUE AND ITS POLITICAL MEANING

(By Mary Austin in New York Times Magazine.)

Europe has come to America. Worse; Europe has beckoned Asia to come and help her partition America to their own satisfaction. What America will be able to do about it depends first on the ability of the Americans to forego at once their love of the obvious and sentimental, and very largely on whether or not the things that Rasputin stood for were put under the ice with him.

The connection between a dead Russian fanatic and the political future of America is one of those less obvious things of which Americans must begin to think. For nothing is so certain as that Europe and Asia have been let in on us by our shallow optimism about Germany, our shallow ignorance of Japan, and shallow prejudice in Mexico.

Americans as a people have been accused of being too fond of candy. In particular we are devoted to that form of consolation known as the All-Day-Sucker, which has for its trade-mark the immortal phrase of Mr. Bryan: "I prefer to think." The longer we cling to this dear delusion of immaturity, the severer will be the inevitable colic Rasputin's death is one of the symptoms.

Rasputin was the confidant of the Czarina and of that wing of Russian autocracy which leaned most toward Germany. All autocratic Russia is a little pro-German; as things are, all autocracies have to lean against one another in order to stand up. The war has liberalized Russia to an unrealized degree; not so much directly as by the sheer weight of blundering and stupidity which autocracy has piled up.

It has become liberalized to a degree that permitted Minkov to deliver a speech in the Duma openly accusing the Premier of treachery and to refer very pointedly to the "dark forces," as represented by Rasputin and the Czarina.

Censorship has prevented the details of this denunciation from reaching the American press, but this is known for certain, that Sturmer was forced to resign, and about a week afterward Rasputin died suddenly of pistol wounds in the presence of several of the representatives of Young Russia.

Rasputin was believed to be the chief agent of the "underground" that leads from Petrograd to Berlin, and the success of liberalism in Russia depends very largely on whether by his death the connection was effectively cut. What liberalism fears in Russia is a separate treaty with Germany, negotiations for which were declared by Minkov to have gone further than was thought to be to the advantage of the Russian people.

This is the outermost coil of the net that is being drawn around the United States today, for Russian autocracy, if it stands, will carry Japan with it in a coalition with Germany. This contingency is nearer than may be generally thought, for just the reason that autocracy in both Germany and Russia is on its last legs. Coalition may be its last resort.

Japan for her part finds Russia indispensable. Japan is an ambitious expanding nation, also a very astute one. She wishes to expand in the long.

ical geographic and ethnic direction in China. To do this she must have the backing of at least one great power. A liberalized Russia would not help her, and both England and the United States, on account of their policy of the open door, will not. But with Russia and Germany combined there is nothing Japan could not do.

As for Germany, it goes without saying that she would welcome an arrangement which would open to her the incredibly rich field of commercial exploitation in Russia and Central Asia. Whether or not Japan has thought of these things—and it is only fair to say that she has—yet no evidence that she has the murder of Rasputin as evidence that Russia, has thought of it. The financing of Villa, the revolution in the islands, Carranza's suggestion of an all-American embargo are so many stages of Germany's thinking. Confirming all this is China's receptive attitude toward the invitation to join the Allies. China knows that her one hope is in the defeat of Germany and the success of Russian liberalism.

Fortunately for her, at this juncture the career of Japan among the nations has been a gentleman's progress. Japan's denial of complicity in the German plot is as good as the word of any nation in the world, and the fact that Germany tried to reach her through an American republic rather than through Russia is the best evidence that the determining half of Russia is still unaffected by pro-Germanism. The significant item for the United States in all this is not that Japan had to be reached through a non-European nation. It is a question: Why did Germany suppose, and was she warranted in her supposition, that Japan could be reached through Mexico?

Americans should not let the absurdity of the idea of Carranza's poor little army wresting the "lost province" of Texas from the States blind them to the plain fact that one of the most powerful nations of Europe thought that there was a clear way through Mexico to Japan. If there is such a clear way, then it is the severest criticism of our internationalism that has ever been made.

Mexico was our job; ours by every right and obligation to understand and sustain her through her most trying period; if our neutrality was anything more than a womanish avoidance of war, if our neutrality was anything larger than a mere Chinese Wall drawn about our own security, we might have bound Mexico to us past even Germany's power to alienate. Perhaps our ideals were right enough, but for what of the plain brass tactics of knowledge they have fallen in an ineffectual heap.

Public opinion about all Latin America is founded on the reports of a few miners and planters who have interests there, a few newspaper men paid to report only what they see, a few magazine writers carefully warned to avoid being either profound or original, not one in seven of whom speaks the Latin tongue.

Yet in Mexico we have one of the most interesting political contacts in the world, ultra-modern radicalism in touch with the most ancient tribal organization. Its government is in the hands of a small Latinized group, fairly representative of the much

larger contingent of mixed breeds and half tribes, and in the midst of these three self-sustaining, homogeneous centres of national vitality going on quite independently of one another and of the central government.

Of these three, Yucatan is friendly to Carranza, the Zapatists more or less at war with him, and Sonora and the north wholly disaffected. Some where in the interior, living on monkeys and wild fruit, wanders the not absolutely insignificant band of Zeledias, keeping the white and his toric knowledge which would explain why these things are so and why it is better for Mexico at present that they should be so, our close-up American view gives us an impression of rabble and disorder. We are inclined to think contemptuously of the rabble, and to find the disorder synonymous with incompetence. Therefore, as a people, we have failed to see that Mexico has an ethnic identity. That is not a very good phrase, perhaps, but it means just a little more than saying that Mexico has a soul. It means that, although we really fail to find the thread of consistency in Mexican modes of thought, some other nation which has a similar ethnic identity might find it and make use of it to our disadvantage.

In the last resolution, nations came together, not on obvious items of trade and materiality, but in their deep-seated likenesses. Across the Pacific, occupying a place among Asiatic nations similar to that of the United States on this side, is a people in whose soul lurks the identical mystery. Go up to the Museum of Natural History, to the Mexican Room and look long at a colossal head of diorite there, which is the jewel of ancient Mexico. It stands out from all the rest of her past as the Venus of Milo stands out of Greek art and betrays as much of innermost Mexico as the Venus does of Greek spirit and outlook. You cannot look at it very long without realizing that it will be natural for Mexico and Japan to understand one another better than we understand either of them.

But China is closer to Japan than Mexico, and if the United States would stand away from China the Mikado would have no political interest in this side of the Pacific. All Japan would need to seek here would be friendly commercial advantages and equal treatment for her citizens along with other citizens of the world. If the United States denies her these she will inevitably seek them further down the coast. If she has already sought and obtained them, then it does not imply hostility to us on the part of Japan, but stupidity and shortsightedness on our part toward her.

How far has Japan sought a footing in Mexico? Well, far enough for Germany to feel sure of finding her there. And blind as Germany has been to world opinion, she has not shown any particular blindness as to the location of munition plants and coaling stations.

It must be remembered in this connection that the Mexico of every South American republic is very like that of Mexico. Temperamentally they would be just as susceptible to tampering by influences hostile to the United States as Mexico has proved to be. For, without casting any reflection on Mr. Carranza, it must be borne in mind that the first chief is not Mexico. He is the buckle on the belt of national sovereignty which binds the incongruous elements of Mexico together. He is probably the best buckle that could be provided; but Germany might "get" Mr. Carranza or we might get him and still not have Mexico. And yet the fact that he is there is enough whoever

gets him, to check that pretty notion of some Americans that we can just go into Mexico and settle things by establishing such a benevolent protectorate as we had in Cuba. We overlook this fact of national sovereignty very much as we might overlook the policeman's badge on a shabby civilian suit, forgetting that it is a badge potent to summon the nations of the earth to conquest or alliance. By virtue of that sovereignty Mexico could call England or Germany or Japan to aid her, and every one of them would be largely influenced by the fear that if they failed to respond the other would come and also by the great resources of Mexico in the very commodities of which every European country at the end of the war will be utterly depleted.

Wise as the administration appears to have managed our official Latin-American relations, in view of the general lack of appreciation of the importance of those relations, it is impossible to escape the conviction that all through those countries, influences hostile to the United States have been beforehand. At present the world's two great centres of profitable commercial exploitation are Russia and Latin America. In the period of commercial desperation at the end of the war, Germany cut off from Russia by the success of liberalism, will turn to Latin America. Japan, restrained from Central Asia by the joint policies of England and the United States, will turn to Latin America. England, frantic to regain her supremacy of trade—where will she turn but to the fields in which her competitors operate, in America del Sud? Latin America will make what she can from it for herself.

Mr. Wilson knew his United States well when he reserved his announcement of German machinations in Mexico for this dramatic moment. It is the only way American attention can be caught by it, and we are arrested by it largely because it is clumsy and obvious; here is a veritable document with a name signed to it and specific plans outlined. Nobody knows how long the President has had this document, but very likely his principal reason for holding it back is that he knows very well it is of no real importance in deciding whether or not we shall enter the present war. We have plenty to fight about without that, if we wish to fight, and as a reason for not fighting it is more easily extenuated than many other things. The best service this announcement can do us now is to turn our attention toward more subtle and more menacing indications. The United States, in the beginning of the war deferred to as the leading neutral nation, makes a move at last, and not one of the American republics follows. Our invitation to join action is ignored. Columbia draws out. Costa Rica notifies us she can do without our support. Mexico proposes an embargo. Argentina calls a conference in which the United States is not invited. Clearly we have lost our ascendancy among the republics of the New World; we are in the position of having to demand sharply whether or not our nearest neighbors are with us.

German propaganda is not all responsible for this. There is an allied propaganda going on which is not directed against us, but is even more injurious because it ignores us. While we stand old-fashionedly agast at the horrors of military war England and France have recovered from their shock, seen beyond their battles, and are planning new commercial combinations from which we are automatically excluded as we have deliberately excluded ourselves from their military affairs. Still, we could make that up to them easily by getting in shoulder to shoulder now. The thing that we cannot make up on short notice is the substitute for shoulder-to-shoulder fellowship which should go with our non-military ideals.

**ENTERTAINMENT**  
In aid of Major Birks' Fund for Y. M. C. A. given by 177th Overseas Battalion, through the kindness of Lieut. Colonel J. B. McPhee (under the auspices of Loyalist Chapter, I.O.D.E.) on Friday evening, Imperial Theatre, 10 to 11 o'clock. The band is under the leadership of Bandmaster Andrews. The programme,  
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3. Dance, Military Stamp  
4. Dance (?) M. W. Plunkett  
5. Band Selections, Southern Melodies, Hayes  
6. Male Quartette, "The Farmer," Sergeant Plunkett, Henry, Leatherdale and Nixon.  
7. Vocal Solo, "An Irish Lullaby" Sergt. F. R. Plunkett.  
8. Dance, M. K. Sturdee, Mr. J. P. Winston.  
9. Vocal Solo, "A Little Irish Girl" Bandsman Ferguson.  
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