

Land To the Peons

(By Linn A. E. Gale.)

The Peons of Mexico want land and some day they are going to have it. There is a limit to the patience of even this patient, good-natured people.

While most of the banditry in Mexico is financed by American capitalists, not a little of it is due to the eternal land problem. These hungry, half-naked Indians who live in the distant mountains and whose land was sold for two and three cents an acre by Porfirio Diaz to pet exploiters, vent their rage at times on travelers and foreigners. Is it surprising? If each had a parcel of land to work and live on and was, therefore, assured of a living if he raised his corn, beans and rice, there would be few such outbreaks. Today the peon slaves on the rich fertile soil that should be his own, see all the profit go to rich land-owners, mostly foreigners. After years and years of ceaseless toil at the end of which he is as destitute and wretched as ever, he organizes a band of brigands and robs a train or burglarizes a house or abducts a wealthy American. Sometimes he gets considerable plunder or money out of it. Frequently, he is subsidized by alien capitalists who furnish him with guns and gold so he can commit depredations on a bigger scale and jeopardize the dominance of the Carranza government. In the latter case, although the capitalists foment the disorder, they would seldom be able to if it were not for the economic injustice and suffering that makes the peon glad to take their bribes. If the peon could make a living honestly, he would in most cases do so in preference to robbing and killing as an occupation.

The Mexican Revolution's chief objective was the nationalization of land. In a dim way the people felt that they were fighting for Communist ownership of the resources and industries of the country.

The fruits of the Revolution have never been enjoyed. A principal cause has been the menacing attitude of the American government which has held a blackjack in front of the Mexican government even when it tried merely to make oil and mineral deposits the property of the nation so that, while use-rights could be leased, title could not be given to the resources themselves. What little Carranza has tried to do to fulfill the promises of the Revolution, has been negated by interference from without. Not being a Communist, he would never have attempted to put into effect a really Radical program, but he has not been able to even carry out a mild one of state Socialism.

Some day the Mexican peons will seize the land, make it common property and give everybody the use of no more acres than they can properly cultivate.

The capitalists and politicians who have impeded the realization of this ideal of the masses of Mexico, will yet pay dearly.