

“..Mexico..”

Yesterday—Today—Tomorrow



An Address Delivered By

Mrs. Rebecca Gonzalez

Before the

Santa Paula Rotary Club

Monday, June 7, 1926

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MEXICO

YESTERDAY - TODAY - TOMORROW

Mexico has generally been misunderstood and frequently misjudged by the people of America. True, America has seen nothing but tumult, revolt and restlessness and has mistaken it for a love for war and revolution on the part of the Mexican people. But behind all this confusion there has always been the same cause. Mexico has not been fighting because she loves tumult and strife as America believes, but she has been fighting for land, water, freedom, education and social equality. For the last four hundred years there has been that constant struggle for land and liberty.

We cannot understand her struggles unless we go back and consider her past history. Before the Spaniard came Mexico was peopled by a highly civilized race of Indians - the Aztecs. She had architectural works, great monuments, paintings and cultural arts. When the Spanish conquerors came they did not exterminate the Indian but destroyed his civilization, blighted his high ideals and aspirations and held him as a slave. They compelled him to give up his civilization, took his land - everything - and gave him in return little of their civilization and a life of toil in digging the gold for the Spaniard.

In 1810 Hidalgo and his army of Indians rose up in rebellion and at length defeated the Spaniard but Hidalgo did not accomplish all he wanted for he was killed. Because Hidalgo was

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the father of his country and as we all know Washington was the father of his, Hidalgo is often called the Washington of Mexico.

When Juarez became president he also made an attempt to help his people but was also killed. However, he did succeed in saving his country from many tyrannies. Because of this he is often called the Lincoln of Mexico for Lincoln saved his country from slavery.

With the coming of Diaz into the presidency there was a long era of peace and prosperity. But Diaz grew to be the friend of a few and there was more oppression of the poor and unequality in the distributing of the lands.

In 1910 Madero revolted against this oppression and made Diaz's men, the Cientificos, flee to the United States.

When Carranza became president he did not understand his people and so was overthrown.

The only man who really understood Mexico and who finally succeeded in stopping revolution, oppression, and banditry was Obregon, former president and the greatest statesman of Mexico.

Obregon discovered that those so called bandits were not really bandits but men fighting for a great cause. Some of those men whom we have called bandits have been among the greatest men of Mexico. Zapata, for example has done a great deal for his people. He was one of the greatest Agrarian leaders of Mexico.

President Obregon made an end of revolution five months after he came into power. He did it in this way. He sent a man to one of the rebels to tell him that the revolution was over and

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to ask him what he wanted. The rebel answered, "I want land, and I want water, and I want schools, good roads and theaters." This answer was typical of the others. What Diaz had given to one third of the people, the other two thirds desired. Obregon gave them land, water, money, tools, and seed to raise the first crop. Villa and Cedilla became farmers and rode on American tractors.

After banditry was over he went to the soldiers and set them to work to improve the roads. He planted military colonies, and they also stopped fighting and were disarmed.

The only continent that fully understands Mexico is South America, for she is inhabited by the same kind of people. She has to deal with the same problems and traditions and so she knows what Mexico has had to endure. She alone can sympathize with Mexico. About two years ago she sent for some of Mexico's leading men to come and lecture to her people concerning what was going on in Mexico at that time.

The United States cannot understand Mexico because she has not had to go through those struggles. She has had a different beginning and there is a vast difference in the kinds of sources. Those who first settled in America came with their families to establish homes and colonies. They came for religious freedom and in general, to build up. Those who settled in Mexico went with a far different purpose. They went to rob and gain riches or better said, to tear down. So throughout the past years America has seen nothing but revolution and oppression.

Obregon and other great men whom I will mention have

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done much and are still doing much to regain the old standards, traditions and possessions of which the Spaniard robbed the Indian.

I will tell a little of what some of the great leaders have done in order to show you how the old cultural arts are being revived.

Felipe Carillo, the great Maya leader of Yucatan, although executed by De La Huerta, did wonders in Yucatan before his death. He established the Leagues of Resistance which revolutionized the lives of the Indians giving them schools, good roads, and farming.

Gamio, a Scientist, and the ranking anthropologist of Latin America, has for his theme: racial resuscitation, and he has done much to help uplift his nation and race.

Rivera is the ranking artist of Latin America and the leader of a new guild of artists.

Miss Landazuri is a Y.W.C.A. worker and writer of cultural arts south of the Rio Grande.

All of these leaders, together with Obregon and President Calles are gradually uplifting their nation and race. I say gradually, because land for centuries owned by a few cannot be distributed to the many and intelligently cultivated in a few years. Nor can a people become educated in the same time when they have centuries of ignorance behind them and furthermore when they are now depending upon a government which came into existence financially handicapped on every hand.

Obregon not only established public schools as those here in America but he sent educational missionaries to go and

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teach the far districts. These missionary teachers would take their books or little library and go off and have classes in the tiny villages back of the mountains. The book most used is the bible. Every school has a bible. Of course for its spiritual power but more so for its literary value.

President Calles who succeeded Obregon has wonderful possibilities and it is to be hoped that he can and will fulfill Mexico's dreams and hopes. He has already taken steps to enforce prohibition throughout the states of Mexico. The rich state of San Luis Potosi is already dry and other states show indications of following its example.

As soon as President Calles came into office he discharged useless employees, abolished sinecures, reduced the army, enforced tax collectors and re-established honesty everywhere. Like Obregon he let agitators and extremists know that he would not tolerate any attack upon the government or insult to the army.

We appreciate the fact that it is very difficult if not utterly impossible to judge accurately those things which are done many miles away in another country yet we fear that in attempting to rigidly enforce the Constitution and statutes of Mexico, an injustice has been done to the churches in some instances. However, we feel confident that if the injustice is due to either bad laws or to wrong interpretation of existing laws the matter will soon be remedied by the administration. We have faith that the Mexicans' sense of fair play will assert itself in such a manner as to compel a full and complete redress of any wrongs committed even though they may have been committed

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in the name of law or religion.

President Calles is opposed to new loans and he believes that Mexico can and must live within its resources and that no loan is needed to rehabilitate the country's finances.

Here are his own words on "Mexico Today:" "In Mexico, the Mexico emerged from the turmoil of revolution, we are confronted with the problems of making heard and felt, and of answering, the long inaudible cry of a submerged people, a people which throughout centuries was enslaved mentally and physically, politically and economically. The devastating effect of their long serfdom is still visible and it is to the task of completely emancipating them, of making them happy, healthful, hopeful men, women and children, citizens of the republic in the fullest sense of the word, conscious of both their rights and their duties, that the present government is dedicating its every effort.....The Mexican worker; whatever his mistakes may have been and may be, is in an extraordinary and gratifying way rising to his new opportunities."

If President Calles will only continue to be a man of wisdom and strength, kindly yet firm, above all a man for works who will aid in the real and lasting progress of the Mexican people; I feel sure that Mexico will become the nation that she should be.

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