

'Fifth Column' Holds High Positions In Cardenas Regime, Writer Reveals

This is the second article of a series on conditions in turbulent Mexico. The writer has spent five weeks in that country, traveling 5,000 miles by plane, train and automobile, to study the political situation, strategic industries and government projects.

By HAL BURTON

MEXICO CITY, May 24 (C.T. P. S.)—The fifth column is closing ranks in Mexico, facing north toward the American border. Germany has 200 busy agents at work—more than in World War days, when Carranza maintained a dubious "neutrality."

Russia, too, is busy behind the scenes. Native Communists and fellow travelers run many of her errands. Some of the anti-Franco refugees from Spain do the rest. Japan hovers on the sidelines, distributing discreet largesse in the form of "investments" that never will pan out.

Mexico Begins to Worry

Up to now, Mexico has been complaisant, because much of Mexico is pro-German, and some of Mexico is pro-Communist. Mexico, until now, has been quite happy to serve as a profitable base for operations against the United States, a clearing house where agents coming from South America get their marching orders.

Just this week, Mexico began to worry a little. This concern developed after Josephus Daniels, the American ambassador, observed in Washington that the fifth column was trying to worm its way into the government of President Cardenas.

Ambassador Daniels was mild. The fifth column is already there. It is there in the person of Garcia Tellez, secretary of gobicacion, who controls the flow of immigration. Many of its ideas are there in the person of Vasquez Vela, secretary of education, whose duty it is to implant the Socialist ideals in the schools. Its philosophy has affected Cardenas himself—as witness his recent statement that the war in Europe is a conflict "between two imperialistic groups," and his barter deals with Germany.

Directed From Legation

German espionage in Mexico, in South America, and indirectly in the United States is under the direction of Arthur Dietrich, press attache of the German Legation.

In all Mexico, there are 9,000 Germans—practically all of them willing or unwilling agents of their government. The unwilling ones do not need to be reminded that

they have relatives in the Fatherland.

Not all these people are completely absorbed into the Nazi doctrine, but all of them are afraid to do anything but pay up.

German Ships Bought

The Mexican government obligingly purchased the Tina Rasmussen, one of seven German ships trapped in Mexico on the outbreak of the war. The price was 65,000 pesos (\$10,800). This money has gone to support the crews of the other ships, perhaps 300 men. Before it was forthcoming, the Germans in Mexico were subject to special assessments to cover the cost. The crew of the Tina Rasmussen has had no difficulty finding employment in Mexico. Other Germans, who seem to appear from nowhere, have done as well.

I had dinner at a little town, some distance inland from Vera Cruz, where two Germans suddenly were added to the staff of waiters. All over Mexico, German salesmen are in evidence with their inevitable brief cases, in such isolated sections as Chiapas, where purchasing power is negligible, or in coastal towns where there is no sign of business activity.

Pro-Ally Newspapers

Excelsior and Universal, two of the principal daily newspapers, display a marked sympathy toward the Allies, and voluntarily.

Mexico actually possesses only one Fascist organization, the Vanguardia Nacionalists, which functions as a cover organization for the outlawed gold shirts, who boast they will exterminate the 30,000 Jews in Mexico. Its numerical strength is unimportant, but since November 1938 there has been a differential immigration quota that gives a thousand Gentile immigrants to each of the Fascist powers, but which limits the total Jewish entry to 100 a year.

The Communist party has virtually gone underground, so far as its leadership is concerned. Harlan Labarde, its former head, and Valentin Camp, his assistant, have ostensibly been deposed. The broad implication is that this represents a purge. They have been replaced by an obscure junta, and there have been no major Communist rallies since January 25, when a mass meeting was held in the Palace of Fine Arts. Meanwhile, refugee Communists carry on activities inimical to the United States.

The Japs have spent \$150,000 so far, drilling wells in locations

abandoned long since by the Americans and British.

Old leases, again abandoned by foreign drillers, were picked up on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Three wells were drilled. All turned out dry. Yet the Japs, mysteriously, have kept on pouring money in.

Every one in Mexico speaks of the Communists and the Nazis as "the Communazis." There is undoubtedly collaboration between the two groups, and an active sympathy between one and the other.

Off to one side, watching all this intrigue with an appreciative eye is a greying, bespectacled

little man who could give lessons in espionage to any foreign agent. He is Leon Trotsky, refugee from Stalin.

Trotsky-Rivera Split

Mexico once beat a path to Trotsky's door. Now he is Mexico's forgotten man. The Communists hate him. His best friend, Diego Rivera, the class-conscious artist, has broken with him. If he had any entree to President Cardenas' office, it has vanished.

A few Mexicans still cling to the theory that Trotsky is secretly advising Cardenas, plotting in advance the president's infinitely skillful moves.

(Another article in this series will appear in the Times-Herald soon.)