

Because of the role played by North America in our independence, and by her defense of this independence against the Colombian interests, (1) because of the coming of thousands of North Americans to work on the Canal, and because of the contractual compromise which gave the Canal Zone to the United States, the destiny of Panama became even more closely bound to the northern nation.

The North American protection, as expressed in the original Treaty of the Canal and in the Constitution of 1904, was necessary for the defense of the recently won independence.

The political agreements established ties between the two countries and influenced the relations among the two peoples. But these relationships were, unfortunately, imposed by circumstances and had not grown spontaneously. They rapidly acquired disagreeable and undesirable aspects.

2.—*Interventions and Supervisions.* Among these political relations we have attached a special importance to the so-called «interventions,» whose transcription appears in the already mentioned Article 136 of the Panamanian Constitution of 1904. A difference can be established between «supervision» and «armed intervention». However, both these terms do have in common the fact that both actions put in the hands of a foreign power the final decision in the settling of questions which should have remained strictly for the Panamanians to solve.

Possibly the Panamanian does not remember the dates when those supervisions and interventions took place. Perhaps he does not remember that Pablo Arosemena, Belisario Porras, Francisco Filós, Eusebio A. Morales and General Domingo A. Díaz as early as 1906 asked the United States to intervene in our elections. But perhaps he remembers the trips to the United States made for political purposes by Jephtha B. Duncan and Papi Aispuru and Jorge E. Boyd. However, the important fact is not so much that the dates be forgotten, but that the journeys abroad of our politicians about election time are considered as visits to the White House to secure the Washington stamp of approval on a presidential candidate.

As can be expected, the «supervisions» were always an irritating thorn in the side of the opposition parties. They were some-

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(1) Art. 136 of the Panamanian Constitution of 1904: «The government of the United States of America will be entitled to intervene in any part of the Republic of Panama to restore public peace and constitutional order if these should have become endangered, in the case that, by reason of public treaty, that nation assumes, or will have assumed, the obligation of guaranteeing the independence and sovereignty of this Republic. (This provision is now superseded by the treaty of 1936 and new constitutional developments in Panama).

what like the sword of Damocle hanging over the heads of the different political groups.

Perhaps we have forgotten the supervision of the presidential elections of 1908, asked for by Ricardo A. Arias, who was then Secretary of Foreign Relations; the supervision of 1912, during the Díaz-Porrás campaign; the supervision of 1918 in connection with the decree No. 80 which postponed the presidential elections. But the effect of all those acts has been deep and lasting — and is still continuing. Loyal supporters of law and order were made to suffer the shame of seeing their country trampled upon and degraded by those who, fired by illusions of partisan political interests, sacrificed national honor by handing over to a foreign power the key to the control of national civic questions. Those people made us appear, before the Americans living in the Canal Zone and the high officials of the State Department in Washington, which has so much to do with the formation of North American public opinion in regard to international affairs, like children, incapable of managing a democratic government or of enjoying the benefits derived from such.

This state of affairs afforded the politicians who lost out the ready excuse that the United States had given the victory to the party of its choice, as happened in 1912 in the case of the «Patriotic Union», a party composed chiefly by conservatives backing Pedro A. Díaz. <sup>(1)</sup>

These supervisions did not solve any problem; they simply fomented more problems and made them even more undesirable. The fact that they affected the very existence of the political parties explains why these supervisions are remembered so bitterly. The children of those times, those who today hold important posts in public life, heard their fathers talk heatedly in political discussions about the fraudulent elections of Panamanian congressmen in Balboa Treaty of the Canal and in the Constitution of 1904, was necessary then asserted — the political juggling of President Valdés, when he tried to revise Article 70 of the Constitution and land Eusebio A. Morales in Congress, was opposed by Guillermo Andreve and Ricardo J. Alfaro.

Politics being basically emotional, thrives upon irrational actions and prejudice and is accentuated by restlessness and passion.

As the old saying of «to the victor belong the spoils» is eminently applicable to the winners of political campaigns, we also find in it one of the reasons why these «supervisions», with their direct

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(1) See William D. McCain, *The United States and the Republic of Panama*, op. cit., pp. 71-73.

political effects, have been so severely criticized. The members of the losing political party which did not pull the right string, always blamed the North American supervision for their unemployment which followed their defeat at the polls.

The first armed intervention of North American troops in Panamanian territory occurred in Chiriquí in July of 1918 under the pretense of protecting the lives and properties of North Americans there. (1) This was carried on for two years during which continuous conflicts occurred. The second intervention took place in Panama City in 1921, under the administration of Dr. Belisario Porra's, when the violent protests of the Panamanians over the boundary dispute with Costa Rica were making themselves heard right to the very doors of the presidential palace.

We must not forget the armed intervention of 1925, which had its origin in the Indian rebellion in the San Blas islands provoked by a North American adventurer, Richard O. Marsh, in 1925. The affair finally ended with the signing of a peace pact on board the U. S. Navy cruiser «Cleveland» in which Marsh had sought refuge, under the pretext that the Panamanian government was not capable of protecting him. It was thought that Marsh was in danger of being lynched.

The reason that the Panamanian people became so indignant over the episode was because the blame for the death of many Panamanian policemen and various Indians, and the placing of Panama on the verge of war was traced directly to this North American adventurer. A very important contributing factor was of course the fact that the United States came rushing to the aid of her guilty citizen and wished him away from Panamanian jurisdiction solely «because he was a gringo».

But perhaps the most hateful, most atrocious of all the armed interventions was that of 1925, when the rental problem of the tenement houses was running rampant in Panama. It is doubtful if any of the inhabitants of the city of Panama have been able to forget this intervention. The demonstration, by a very large part of the city's inhabitants, who still are suffering while waiting for a solution of the problem, was led by a group of intellectuals (the activist nucleus) who provided a great deal of dramatic spice to the scene. Blood, shots, soap box orations, a flag; frenzied groups standing up before the furious charge of the cavalry; sabers swinging to right and left, without regard as to where the blows fell; the hoses of the fire department turned on full blast to dampen the spirits and to

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(1) Cf. Arce and Castillero, *Guía histórica de Panamá*, Panamá, 1942, p. 180.

break up the demonstration. And next day, the historical park of Santa Ana converted into a camp for North American troops. Then these troops in action — breaking up all groups in the streets; showing their bayonet points at the breast of little children, men, women and old people. The city seemed to be in the hands of an invader — a paid invader — paid by the Panamanian treasury.

Never before was an intervention so deeply hated in Panama as was this one. And never were the repercussions so profound. The national sovereignty, the government treasury, along with the interests of political parties, had always been the target of the interventions. But this time the Panamanian people themselves had been hurt. They had personally been insulted — and in the crudest and most impressive manner imaginable. From the smallest school child to the oldest park sitter of Santa Ana, it touched everyone.

There was another form of supervision which should be mentioned. The Health Department, inspired by the desire to improve health conditions in Panama, sent inspectors into the private homes of the city. This developed into campaigns against rats and mosquitos, wholesale fumigation, the ejection of tenants from houses considered infested, the signs condemning certain quarters. Personal articles and cooking utensils considered sources of infection were ordered destroyed.

These sanitary measures, absolutely correct from the scientific viewpoint and justified, to some extent, by the Treaty of 1903, were imposed with little tact and therefore caused constant frictions.

3.—*General Effects of Political Relations.* We should not forget to mention certain happenings which, if they did not affect the average man directly, from his individual and egotistic point of view, nevertheless had serious repercussions in certain groups and occasionally in the entire nation. These may be briefly outlined as follows:

(a) The protests of the Republic of Panama in regard to the establishment of the commissaries in the Canal Zone which were originally established for the service of the «gold roll» employees.

(b) The much discussed question of sovereignty, arbitrarily exercised by the United States Government with the establishment of ports, customs services, a tariff system, post offices and stamps in the Canal Zone. All these measures caused very serious friction and today, now that the Panamanians have become more nationally consolidated, they are considered outstanding and unfortunate proofs of might ruling over right.

(c) The confusing meaning of the term «sovereignty», which leaves the layman wondering just what is the difference between

«sovereignty» and «dominion». The layman sees sovereignty exercised by two distinct political states, and yet, according to treaty, the rights of the Republic of Panama remain «unalterable and complete».

(d) The insistence of the United States authorities that foreign consuls accredited to Panama must also secure the United States exequatur in order to discharge their duties in the Canal Zone.

(e) The role assumed by Philippe Buneau-Varilla and his preoccupation for the interests of the New Canal Company (amounting to \$40,000,000), at the disadvantage of the Republic of Panama which he was supposed to represent when negotiating the treaty of 1903 with the State Department in Washington.

The common version in Panama is that the treaties between the United States and Panama, which have been in effect for some time now and which are thought of as partly imposed and partly arrived at through discussions and recommendations by both parties, have not been entirely adhered to by the United States; and that the Panamanian interests have not been adequately defended by the Panamanian administrations. (1) This complaint is heard most often and most heatedly when the discussion deals with the «status» of the Panamanian worker in the Canal Zone.

4.—*The Good Neighbor Policy.* It is necessary to say that the good neighbor policy has not satisfied the Panamanian people. Perhaps this is because the people are not now as easily satisfied as they used to be. Perhaps it is because the nationalistic movements, such as those demonstrated by the various Panamanian youth organizations, demand something more than promises and gestures. At any rate, the Panamanian people ask themselves if perhaps the Good Neighbor Policy is not merely an essay in diplomatic terminology. They wonder if perhaps the good neighbor policy represents only the personal convictions of President Roosevelt, and something which cannot mold the mentality and attitude of each and every North American citizen and, particularly, official.

It is quite true that Panama has benefitted considerably as a result of the Good Neighbor Policy. This is shown by the various concessions made in the new Treaty, the construction of the transisthmian and the Rio Hato highways, the presentation to Panama of the railroad company's lots and also the aqueduct. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that these achievements to date have not been influential in improving the attitude of the typical public opinion of Panama toward the United States.

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(1) It should be recalled that we are trying here to present the typical popular viewpoint even though it may not reflect the strictly historical truth.

The everyday actions and attitudes of the Canal Zone authorities and local representatives of the United States in the Canal Zone are in direct conflict with the sum and substance of the Good Neighbor Policy. Thus, the publicly professed policy does not inspire confidence because those who are supposed to represent it commit acts which are so contradictory to the official statements that these latter have come to be interpreted as rather meaningless discourses.

If, along side of the good neighbor policy, one places the Shepard Act, the rules governing vacations, rules regarding sick leave, the regulations regarding the gold and silver rolls, the lengthy series of discriminatory regulations and acts of the Canal Zone, how can the average man be expected to feel satisfied with a policy which he feels is the same old thing in a different make-up? We must remember that the average man is not a diplomat nor is he a public office holder. Rather, he is the typical representative of the people, and it is his opinions which are heard every evening in the park and around the dinner table, in every friendly gathering. It is his ideas which, after all, form the opinion of the country.

Moreover, the good neighbor policy is something very new. We can only say that we hardly believe that, after so many years of an imperialistic policy, the entire attitude of the United States can be changed over night. However, there can be no doubt that the Good Neighbor Policy implies a more attractive, because more enlightened, form of self-interest by relegating narrowmindedness in favor of wider political and economic issues, a spirit of cooperation, and good will. The fruits of this policy can be found in various fields of endeavor and they have exercised a healthy influence which opens vistas of a future world somewhat more favored by mutual understanding and cooperation.

## II

### *Effects of the Relations of Discrimination in the Canal Zone.*

1.—«Gold» and «Silver» Roll. To understand the discrimination and differences in salaries, rights to vacation with pay, compensation for work accidents, commissary and hospital privileges among the different groups («gold» and «silver» roll) working in the Canal Zone, we must make a quick review of certain episodes which occurred during the construction of the Canal.

For the realization of such a great project, it was necessary to provide cheap labor and the West Indian Negro filled this need. This cheap labor also worked on road paving and sanitation work. They served in docks, store houses and construction projects of any kind.

In general, they worked anywhere and everywhere; and everywhere they stayed (as explained by a known opinion, «on account of the landlords»). (1)

The opinion which the ordinary North American has of the Negro is generally well known though oftentimes the attitude of scorn and contempt is erroneously attributed not only to the Southerner but to all North Americans. It is well known how the former reduce to neglect and mistreatment the colored people who for many generations were slaves of the cotton fields, who were considered beasts of burden, upon whom the white imposed rules of conduct and in regard to whom the white took a strange paternalistic attitude.

The West Indian Negro, accustomed to the tropical sun, with a certain resistance to malaria, speaking enough English to understand the North American and having lived already within certain fixed patterns of relationships with the white man, was an indispensable element for the Canal project.

To the ordinary Panamanian of those times, so many Negroes, machines, slides and so much movement was something picturesque. Under a scalding sun, with an exhausting chore, the Negro sang and joked.

The Panamanian did not have the North American concept of the Negro. To the former, his Negroes were «liberals», his whites «conservatives». There was a difference between them but no acute problem was felt. The «racial» problem still lay dormant.

«Bacalao con papas jolin yu  
que comen los chombos como tu»—

thus, sang the Panamanians of those days. With reference to the diet, the people attributed to the West Indian cod fish and potatoes only. And the Negro would mingle among Panamanians who saw him come without much ado or worry. But the man from the North was astonished that the Panamanian considered the Negro equal to himself, since to North Americans, associating with Negroes signified being equal to a Negro and to have one drop of Negro blood meant to be a Negro subject to the same treatment.

Thus the exclusivistic attitude towards the Negro was extended to the Panamanians and the considerations (or lack of them) that were given the Negroes were extended to the natives of the Isthmus.

(1) This saying refers to a petition by some Panamanian landlords who were opposed to the repatriation of the West Indians because these represented the great majority of their tenants.

The policy of salaries that the North Americans follow in the Canal is to give inferior pay to the natives. (1) It is also true that some governments of Latin American countries with weaker economies, where northern interests have worked recently, have insisted that the same differential standards be adopted in regard to wages paid to North Americans and natives.

But the classification of «gold» and «silver» in the Canal Zone has lost its original meaning of payroll differentiation and has acquired a social significance with a discriminatory tendency: the white superior, the Negro inferior; the Anglo-American superior, the native inferior.

The Panamanians were clasified as halfbreed and under the opinion held of people who did not reject the association with Negroes, they were branded as inferior. And the «silver roll» employees, for their inferior character, were given less comfortable homes, hospitals without private rooms, commissaries with restricted sales, and vacation regulations, compensation for work accidents and retirement marked with the seal of a gracious concession of the sovereign and not with the objective mark of justice. Signs were posted on urinals and toilets, on water fountains, in post offices, in working places, everywhere, to differentiate between blacks and whites.

We must not forget the attitudes and conditions prevalent in the day of Teddy Roosevelt (2) and Taft who represented the policy of the «Big Stick», so different from the ideals proclaimed by the «Good Neighbor Policy».

Under the Teddv Roosevelt and Taft administrations discrimi-



that makes impossible friendly relations between the North Americans and any other people that work in the Canal Zone. Popular opinion, which we shall not attempt to analyze here, understands that the «Metal Trade Council» (the «Central Labor Union» since 1941) has done more harm between these two peoples than a whole army of «fifth columnists». To it are attributed, with veritable delight, all the maladies, frictions, problems and misunderstandings that affect Panamanians who work in the Canal Zone. The «Metal Trades Council» is so strong that it has been able to exert a very strong pressure to exclude Panamanians from certain jobs, such as docks, storehouses and locks. (1)

Among the agencies that operate in the Canal Zone (District Engineers or D. E., the Army, the Navy, the Signal Corps, the Panama Air Depot or P. A. D., the Public Road Administration or P. R. A., the Panama Railroad Company, and The Panama Canal), none has as much influence as The Panama Canal, recognized as such by all others, in regard to the relations between the people of these two nations.

The Panama Canal is second in importance only to the Panama Railroad whose President is the Governor of the Canal Zone — a dangerous duality which concentrates in one person extraordinary powers both as a private citizen attempting to secure advantages for his company and as a public servant. The Panama Canal is the strongest and oldest operating organization of a permanent character, the one employing the greatest number of men in normal times. It is the strongest bureaucratic body in the Zone and the one where the differences between North Americans and others are most noticeable and where these differences are established in the most rigid institutional manner.

However, in all agencies operating in the Canal Zone, government or private, the position of the Panamanian is subordinate to the American, with the latter as the boss. We discount, of course, the very few exceptions in which Panamanians are pointed out to us in positions of authority. What we wish to declare emphatically is that very few Panamanians occupy important jobs. Generally speaking, the highest positions that Panamanians can occupy are circumscribed

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(1) Even without resorting to the help, more or less useful and accurate, of public opinion, it be considered an obvious fact that the «M. T. C.» affiliated with the «A. F. of L.» which represents a large number of influential North American workers in the Canal Zone, has to take up the defense of the interests of those workers. And as the Canal Zone is a profitable but limited labor market for its members, naturally the M. T. C. has to interest itself in the elimination of that competition that can be offered Zone workers and their children by the various other groups working in the Canal Zone. In that defense of the bureaucratic heritage is found without a doubt a clue to this struggle.

to foremen, architects, engineers, and pharmacists. But even then, there is a North American superintendent, chief architect or chief engineer set over the Panamanian. Academic credits or experience do not matter. This is the current situation. We must repeat that we deal here primarily with The Panama Canal, because of its immense importance on the Isthmus and because that agency, on account of its permanent character, supersedes all other agencies. The transitory nature of these others makes their particular problems less important.

3.—*Human Relations.* We must underline a fact that characterizes the relations between Panamanians and North Americans. These relations are molded by the working relations between the two groups, by contacts in pleasure spots in Panama and by the visits North Americans make to our stores.

In the relationship of work, the Panamanian is on an inferior plane and this economic inferiority forms a secure foundation for social differences. We do not wish to state by this that if the economic differences were eliminated, social differences would be eliminated also. To eliminate social differences of a discriminatory character it is necessary to do away with prejudice, demand a rational analysis and consideration of all ideas and apply reasoned logic and common sense to current attitudes. This would be to enter into the realm of pure ideals, unfortunately impractical. But we adduce that economic difference is a true foundation for social differences for obvious practical reasons. Persons that for economic reasons cannot do things that others with a greater purchasing power can, form a separate group, prone to believe that the economically stronger groups are their antagonists and are not like themselves. Thus, we understand in part why Panamanians in the Canal Zone consider themselves different from the North Americans and why the latter cannot identify themselves with Panamanians.

Another reason is that the relationship between boss and employee does not create a close and sincere friendship. The contrary is true. Between the boss and the subaltern, a certain social distance is created by the impact of the institution which the former represents. The relationship with the boss has a certain formal character which does not occur among companions. A class difference is established that, even if it is not often expressed in words, is observed in facts. And, what is more important, it is felt.

4.—*The Language Problem.* We must not deviate from the fact that almost all persons, being human beings, are prejudiced against certain other persons or groups. Such prejudices are more likely to result in cases of language differences. The fact that two

people cannot properly understand each other because they speak different languages indicates the probability of negative relations between them since it is almost impossible for one to explain himself to the other.

A carpenter that cannot execute a chore assigned to him because he does not understand the specifications the foreman has tried to explain to him in another language will not be a very efficient employee in the organization even though he may be a very competent artisan and good natured as an individual. The person that can understand the same language and follow instructions for the job that is wanted will naturally be preferred.

The overwhelming majority of Panamanians, who have not bothered to learn English, find themselves, because they do not know this language, in a position that does not favor them in keeping their jobs or in attaining promotions.

Neither have the North Americans bothered to learn Spanish. It is curious to find this situation particularly marked on the Isthmus of Panama where one can find North Americans who have lived here for many years and in some cases have spent here the greater part of their life without showing any concrete interest in establishing direct contact with the large majority of their neighbors — whose language is of course Spanish — by the only possible means, that is, a command of their language.

On the other hand, it is also odd to find a nation that depends to such a high degree on another, as Panama does on the United States, that does not try to learn a language whose command repre-

sents an important advantage.

This explains to a certain extent why private schools such as the Panama School and the «Instituto Pan-Americano» are filled to capacity having to deny enrollment to some newcomers because of limited space.

The Canal Zone schools on their part have carried out a certain policy of rapprochement, based on a very small number of persons of good will. Arduous and intense as this work has been, the results for practical purposes have been nil because the number of people involved is so very small.

The work of the schools demonstrates once more that it has been the economic opportunities (a labor market with relatively advantageous jobs for people that speak English) which has stimulated the learning of English in the last few years. But it is necessary to say that the language does not presuppose nor does it guarantee cordial relations even though a common language can facilitate this.

As far as we have been able to find out, there do not exist formal relations between school teachers in the Canal Zone and their colleagues in Panamá nor among intellectuals of both sides. In the Canal Zone Junior College, projects for the study of Latin America are being advanced but we have not been able to ascertain if a Panamanian teacher or professor with a good deal of first-hand knowledge of Latin problems has been invited to participate. Under such circumstances it is hardly surprising that the great mass of individuals do not take advantage of the different mediums that are daily offered them to better understand each other: bi-lingual newspapers, radio programs, the cinema, magazines, and personal contact with the individuals of the other language group.

If the intellectuals do not make any apparent endeavor of rapprochement, they fail to live up to their responsibilities, in regard to this as to many other mutually important problems.

The fact that the West Indians can understand the North Americans is one reason for the bad disposition the Panamanians have toward the «chombos» in whom they see their most dangerous competitors because they speak English.

Though knowledge of the other's language is of course not the only prerequisite for the establishment of friendly relations between members of different cultural groups, it is necessary to consider that two people who cannot even exchange a good-morning, who cannot sustain a conversation with any degree of success or understand details of a job common to both or kill time at a table of games, or comment on current events or exchange views, cannot hope to know each other.

We must also consider that translations of job orders and measurements are often made by individuals who do not command sufficiently both languages. There are cases on record that can be considered as truly impressive, wherein orders badly translated have naturally given very poor results with the also inevitable effect that the workers (who did not speak English to defend themselves from the pseudo translator that instructed them) were considered incompetent, ignorant or lazy. These are cases that occur daily, well-known facts, without apparent importance and which, because they occur so often, do not receive any serious attention. (1)

5.—*Discrimination in Employment.* To obtain employment in the Canal Zone, it is necessary to have an «eligibility card» (2) from the Central Labor Office in Balboa.

It seems to us that the strongest reasons for resentments which originate at this office are derived from the definition of the word «color», according to the subjective concept of the clerk issuing the eligibility cards. The annotation of «black» or «brown» on these cards has come to signify automatically that the bearer is classified as «Silver Roll», that is to say, it means the impossibility of enjoying the more desirable conditions of the «Gold Roll».

Another resentment held against the Central Labor Office is that no Panamanian is ever classified there as journeyman, but as journeyman's helper, being left in a helper's category, limited to inferior positions. He is eligible, yes, but not as a mechanic (even though he is one) but as helper, even if his experience, competence or schooling makes him deserving of better positions. The phrase,

(1) The importance of knowing how to speak Spanish is indicated in *A Pocket Guide to Panama*, published by the Army's Special Service Division in Washington, D. C., which says: «The common people may appear suspicious of foreigners at first but a friendly word or two will bridge the difficulty, especially if the word is in Spanish».

Commenting on this quotation, Brodie Burnham writes in the English language section of *The Panama American* for March 28, 1944: «Never were truer words written».

(2) Some non-North American employees believe they are on the «old Roll» because they have commissary authority cards for the «Gold Roll», because they earn better salaries than the usual «Silver Roll» employee, and enjoy certain conditions unknown to the «Silver Roll». However, these same individuals soliciting employment and complying with all regulations of the Central Labor Office have been issued an eligibility card (Section 2 A states: «The persons that are employed on the «Gold Roll» will not be issued eligibility cards»); their identification cards will be of pale blue or white color. (Section 6 states: «Types of Identification Cards are: Orange card, for employees of the Gold Roll; white cards, for employees of the Silver Roll, with a heading: Identification Card of the Panama Canal; blue cards, temporary cards for Silver Roll employees, which may be used during emergencies».)—Notes taken from the Panama Canal Executive Department, *Timekeeping Rules*, revised May 7, 1940. The Panama Canal Press, Mount Hope, Canal Zone, p. 475.

«I would never work with the Panama Canal», heard from Panamanians, can thus be understood, perhaps, given the circumstances that surround the Panamanian employee that works in the Canal Zone.

On the other hand, there is a lack of strictness on the part of the Central Labor Office in soliciting from applicants diplomas, credits, recommendations from other work agencies that would attest to the classification the applicant claims to be specialized in. This office is only interested in knowing if the applicant has previously worked for the Canal Zone and a few other generalities. It seems as if there had been established once for ever the fact that the Panamanian will be a helper, that it to say, that he will have to clean the mechanic's tools, watch the mechanic try to solve problems that are familiar to himself, while he will do chores that he considers as pertaining to a status of servitude and which only the absolute necessity of earning a living can make him perform.

The effects on these discriminations have made the Panamanian feel a stranger in his own country. He knows that the Chinese, the West Indians, the North Americans, the Costa Ricans, Colombians, etc., all have diplomatic and consular agents in Panama but the Republic of Panama does not represent him in the Canal Zone. <sup>(1)</sup> He thinks that he will not find an authority of his country which he can approach in case of conflict when the line between his rights and his duties are confused, when he thinks that he has been treated unjustly.

We have heard said many times, «Our Government does not take an interest in us.» We have interviewed Panamanian laborers in the Canal Zone about national problems and they have answered that they do not bother with national problems since no one bothers about them.

Such comments — quite apart from the question of their objective justification or lack of it — are immensely significant. Interest is lost for national problems. The Panamanian feels he is the «Jew of America». He says, «With all my country has given for the Panama Canal to the United States, my situation here is that of a serf and not of master. As an employee of the Canal I have lost my friends in Panama for they never come to see me there. They grow distant from me and I from them». And Washington's birthday is a holiday but the 28th of November <sup>(2)</sup> is a work day. He worries about new work regulations in the Canal Zone but is not up to date on dispositions that govern his life in Panama.

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(1) Recently, however, there has been added to the Ministry of Foreign Relations of Panama a Section charged with attending the claims and complaints of Panamanians employed in the Canal Zone and to clear them with the North American authorities.

(2) Date of Panama's independence from Spain and a national holiday.

Furthermore, if the North American government is the employer and its citizens the bosses that can keep the Panamanian on the job and recommend him for raises in pay, he must pay his respects to these North American citizens even though privately he complains bitterly about the whole situation which to him is irritating and troublesome.

These relations of discrimination that establish differences among groups produce a phenomenon very much commented on in certain circles. This is due to the Gold and Silver Roll classification among Panamanians. Very passionate rumors have it that the majority of the relatively few Panamanians that work on the Gold Roll consider themselves superior to their compatriots just because they enjoy a Gold Roll classification. At times this conceit is indeed very obvious. The terms Gold and Silver that we use so frequently in this respect have an extensive application and their mention among certain groups is frankly displeasing. Bits of news and one-sided rumors and comments are widely spread. It is important to note that these «bits of news» originate from the effects of a discriminatory policy. But is also very important to know that we have heard these commentaries in the Canal Zone as well as in the Republic of Panama.

We are sure that many complaints occur from Panamanian employees working in the Canal Zone. On the other hand, it is also interesting to know that many of these complaints are not lodged through established offices to be brought to the attention of competent authorities. In the Administration Building in Balboa Heights, there exists a Complaint Office, designed exclusively to receive and process complaints from employees. But we have been informed by some North Americans that the majority of complaints Panamanians have to make are expressed solely among themselves during lunch hour and not before the Complaint Office. We have been informed that the Claims Office in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Panama has not received enough complaints to make it clear that a real situation of friction exists.

This fact reflects one of the typical habits of our laborer. Not having felt the need to organize; not having felt the restlessness of his class; and more yet, not having realized that he belongs to a social class whose members have certain urgent problems and necessities in common, he tries to set things right in an unsystematic effort. And as he is not vocationally well educated, since he does not enjoy the advantages of a well-organized union, his individual effort is nil before organized forces of much greater power than the complaint of one individual.

On the other hand, if he unites himself with his companions, the only apparent thing he is doing is comparing notes on personal deficiencies instead of forming a union and seeing to it that this union bears good fruit. He needs first of all to educate himself vocationally. He also needs at present an established power, the State precisely, to take issue on his behalf.

Then his problem can be solved if the functionaries that represent the State, the ones that are in charge of public service, the ones that make real that abstract idea that we know by the term State, are capable to solve his problems, that is to say, if they have been adequately trained themselves and if they have a will to serve. Without these prerequisites, discussions are held, resolutions signed, beautiful speeches made; but the problem remains basically as it has always been: unsolved.

6.—*Employment Policy of Some Foreign Companies on the Isthmus.* As a matter of contrast we should like to call attention to the policy which certain private North American companies have followed on the Isthmus.

To be as brief as possible, we shall mention only three companies which we consider typical in this respect: the United Fruit Company in Chiriquí, the West Indian Oil Company, and the *Compañía Panameña de Fuerza y Luz* (Power and Light Company, subsidiary of the American Bond and Share Company), in Panama City.

The United Fruit Company to which a popular legend attributes the faculty to exercise decisive influence on presidential elections in the Central American republics, operates rather successfully in Chiriquí (through its subsidiary, the Chiriquí Land Company) and Bocas del Toro. For the management of its plantations it very often employs Panamanian foremen for whom it provides houses, servants, and all necessary conveniences. It also employs Panamanians as attorneys and in other functions. Most of these people are prominent figures in the social and political life of Panama. It grants vacations with pay, medical assistance in its hospitals, and indemnizations for labor accidents. We do not want to cause the impression that this company is a paradise or some other idyllic spot. But at any rate, the United Fruit Company, which was represented in Panama for many years, until his death, by the Panamanian Tomás Jácome, is not looked upon by Panama's public opinion with that disgust that is attached to The Panama Canal.

The West Indian Oil Company (a subsidiary of Standard Oil), being a commercial enterprise, employs principally more or less specialized personnel. It pays relatively good salaries by local standards and, like the other companies operating in territory under



the jurisdiction of the Republic, complies with the Panamanian labor laws. It favors its employees with invitations to the so-called exclusive clubs which enjoy a certain prestige in our environment, thus promoting closer understanding among its staff members and pleasing that desire for social recognition which is so general among human beings. There are of course positions which are not reserved to Panamanians, but often technical requirements of special skill and experience are responsible for such exceptions. However, perhaps due to the recent legislation relating to the nationalization of commerce, the executives of the company's local branch are popular young Panamanians with a certain social prestige.

The *Compañía Panameña de Fuerza y Luz* is constituted by a great number of Panamanian employees and North American capital. This enterprise is so well-established that many people who pass through our Central Avenue have never thought of it as not genuinely Panamanian. All the complaints caused by deficiencies in the service and high light and gas bills are made to the Panamanian employees who represent the interests of the Company. The fact that the Company encourages the purchase of its shares by Panamanians of limited means has undoubtedly also contributed to this state of affairs.

These three private enterprises, all controlled by North American capital, are attempting to practice a policy of assimilation and compromise. They have largely succeeded in drawing the public opinion of Panama away from the fact that they are foreign corporations. To a certain extent they are locked upon as home products.

### III

#### *Individuals Contacts with North Americans in Panama*

1.—*Some Types of Individual Contacts.* In the interior of Panama there are perhaps groups of people who have never had any dealings or contacts whatsoever with North Americans. But in the city of Panama the situation is different. For a long time now we have had «tourists», soldiers and sailors, marriages, divorces, friendships, fights, all kinds of encounters of more or less intensity. We had a great influx of North Americans during the gold rush days of California; during the construction days of the Panama Railroad and the Panama Canal, and ever since we have been in close contact with thousands of North American sailors and soldiers. Our most heavily populated districts are adjoining the «limits» of the Canal Zone.

In the early days when the backs of the natives were the only half-way efficient means of transport across the Isthmus, the pay

that they received from the North Americans was soothing salve after the long hard journey under a heavy load. It seems, and this is pure supposition which we could not verify through historical sources, that the relationships between he who paid and he who carried were reduced to a simple business transaction. But we do not believe to give way to our imagination if we suppose that the state of relations between Panamanians and North Americans in those times were not exactly those of intimate friendship, or even friendly in any way. The occupation of human pack mule, from a certain point of view, was not considered to be very high ranking, but on the other hand, the foreign adventurers, the floaters, ordinarily did not rank so very high either.

Many interesting and vexing incidents found their way into the records of our government offices, even before the famous episode of the «melon cut» of 1856 which caused the death of several Panamanians and North Americans. Street brawls of major and minor intensity, usually in the red light district of Coconut Grove, involving claims by North American citizens on account of damages, wounds and death called for the paying of thousands of dollars by the Panamanian treasury.

In some cases, in order to reestablish order in certain zones of friction, it has been necessary to utilize the services of both the Canal Zone and the Panamanian police. Such joint action was brought into play, for example, when a railroad strike threatened in 1904; on April 27, 1905 in order to force some 200 Negroes back to work when they had struck in protest at the inferior quality of their food; in October, 1905, to calm an entire boatload of Negroes from Martinique who had become horror stricken upon finding out that they were to be vaccinated and otherwise exposed to health treatments. (1)

At present, the Canal Zone police take care of the Canal and the Panamanian police of the area under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Panama. There exists a sort of cooperation which, however, does not take the same concrete form which was sometimes necessary in the early period when the Canal Zone police force had only recently been established.

There does exist a more material form of cooperation between the two police systems: the one developed between the Military Police and Shore Patrol (from the Army posts and the Navy ships) on the one hand, and the Panamanian police on the other hand. Sometimes friction occurs between these two groups of police but

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(1) Data taken from McCain, *The United States and the Republic of Panama*, *op. cit.*

then too, there are many examples of contacts which definitely lean toward the friendly side. These police forces have been confronted at times by some very serious situations, the outstanding of which perhaps would be the well known «*marinadas*» (the pouring of great numbers of sailors into Panama when the United States Fleet visits the Canal Zone ports).

2.—*Occasional Contacts.* Panamanian residents have never been able to erase these «*marinadas*» from their memories. Those sailors were turned loose upon Panama City in veritable hordes. They occasioned scandalous spectacles accompanied by unlimited «*free for alls*», incidents with the Panamanian police, with women, with the casual passerbys, the drivers of coaches, taxi cabs, and busses. Street fights, drunken gangs, riots, all were common occurrences in the 1920's. The engulfing sailors filled the streets with their uniforms and covered the sidewalks with peanuts and banana skins. The city had been looking forward to their arrival but soon it was praying for their departure. In a popular song, one of our local musicians described for us the anticipation the city experienced before the arrival of the «*marinada*»: «*Pobre Pancho que está en la esquina, ya se prepara con su cantina, dile a Mateo, dile a Mateo, que se prepare con los guineos*».

The «*Hindus*» were in their glory and sold enormous amounts of Manila veils and a thousand different gadgets, of marbel, jade, and cristal. Parrots, parrakeets, monkeys, and birds of all descriptions could be seen riding around town on the shoulders of the sailors. Some of the merchants with an eye for business sold «*talking iguanas*» to the more gullible and ignorant sailors who bought them at magnificent prices. In nearly every «*cantina*» there were two or three musicians, usually Jamaicans, who tried to squeeze, blow, or hammer with as much noise as possible from their musical instruments. Women who happened to be downtown shopping exposed themselves to a variety of unsolicited dangers and any man, no matter how peaceful he might have been, was apt to become involved in some kind of unprovoked fight. Disorder and violence were the style of the day, and all kinds of crimes took place.

The man who suffered (and still suffers) as a result of having witnessed a bloody street fight or as a result of the blows he received without having had anything to do with starting the fight, the parents of the little girl who was brutally manhandled by some drunk, the man who witnessed (and still witnesses) the sufferings of the poor old horse drawing a coach on which had piled ten or twelve hilarious sailors, the city dwellers who were interfered with in their peaceful daily chores—none of these people were able to form a very adequate and exact opinion of the North American people. The

contacts they had made were with persons who, fortunately, were not typical of the civilization of the United States. Nevertheless, they remained under the effects of the prejudice formed under the impact of those contacts and the impressions derived therefrom. To them the North American was an example of foolishness, of lack of respect, of abuse, of childishness, ignorance, and bullying. The Panamanians interpreted the attitude of the sailors as an intentioned insult by North Americans to Panama. They believed the sailors behaved the way they did in order to show their contempt for such a weak, such a small nation. And they thought that the North American authorities were not in the least concerned about the situation and made no attempt whatsoever to control it. And so we saw three or four Panamanians gang up on some hapless sailor, and youngsters little children running after some North American who perhaps had not done anything bad.

Even today, in a completely North American environment, similar occurrences have taken place. The law has been broken by a series of crimes which reached the extreme of murder. Many North American citizens have complained about the actions of their own countrymen. While the phrase «no admittance to sailors and dogs» was coined during the fervor of the «marinadas», it has grown constantly until now it lacks very little of appearing in actual billboard writing. Scenes like those already mentioned have occurred not only here, but also recently in the United States, in the city of Norfolk, which is one of the largest bases of the United States Navy. (1)

More or less disgusting scenes also occurred here with soldiers as the protagonists. Our paper considers only certain aspects of the relations between Panamanians and North Americans on the Isthmus and therefore does not permit us to present a detailed account. However, it should be noted that disagreeable experiences between the two groups are not limited only to the city. For instance, in Cabobré, in the Pacora mountains, the caretaker of a farm was violated in his manhood by the beastly fury of a group of maddened soldiers. In La Chorrera, the victim of a raping was an old woman. A group of soldiers, on another occasion, violated the body of a young woman in La Chorrera. Moreover, in Panama City the newspapers are continually informing us of abuses, fights, robberies, and other crimes.

It is difficult to keep the man of the streets from losing sight of the fact that the ordinary individual is apt to lose his normal

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(1) See the February 21, 1944 edition of *Time* magazine.

sense of responsibility when his personality is drowned under the impact of group action; that such an individual only obeys his emotional impulses, the imitative tendency and the «herd instincts». The average man forms his opinions according to a subjective point of view. And so, for him, the sailors and the soldiers are all a bunch of drunks and roughnecks.

This popular opinion is now undergoing a certain change for the better because of the difference in the conduct of the troops and shore parties of the Navy. This better conduct is a result of considerations and discussions on the part of both governments.

3.—*Effects of These Contacts on the Isthmus.* Moreover, the average man is also impressed by newspaper stories which concern the actions of North American civilians. He is impressed by such happenings as the Lux Theater murder case, which took place not so long ago in Panama City and in which North Americans were involved; the murder of a popular employee of the West Indian Oil Company at the very doors of the Union Club by a young North American woman, married to a North American.

Moreover, at work in the Canal Zone, he hears expressions which he thinks are insults directed expressly at him, and he thinks that this is due partly to the fact that the West Indian Negroes are letting themselves be insulted without thinking anything of it. As he does not speak English, he takes any temperamental mouthings of his boss as being indicative of uncouthness, bad breeding, and lack of good will.

Sometimes North Americans who do not work in the Canal Zone are employed in Panama by private companies. Some have worked for the Panamanian government. Usually one is surprised to find a person with commercial interests in a foreign country who does not speak the native language. But here in Panama, this is nothing strange. We know of many North Americans who speak very little Spanish and who have to fall back upon their English almost immediately after having begun a conversation. But we know many more North Americans who speak no Spanish at all. And yet they work in private companies or in their own business, in the Republic of Panama.

Then they get salesmen who speak both languages, and for a small sum, and place classified advertisements in the local newspapers for employees who speak fluently both Spanish and English. Sometimes they specify that the applicants must be white. On the other hand, many North American firms have never bothered about Spanish and in all their correspondence with Latin America use strictly English. This habit became so generalized that almost all

foreign North American firms currently used English only in their commercial relations and their accounting systems, in Panama, until the law prohibited it.

The North Americans who work in Panama generally live in exclusive residential districts or at least in apartment houses commanding a very high rent. Their servants usually are West Indian Negroes. They never live in the middle class districts where contact with the real native people is unavoidable. In this manner they remain quite aloof from the native people, their language and their customs. They visit among themselves, attend their own churches and lodges. Their social contacts are principally with their fellow citizens of the Canal Zone.

Perhaps this isolationism is not due to any real dislike of contacts with the Panamanian but simply to the fact that the business relations of these North Americans can be carried on through agents and employees who speak both languages, that it is easier and more comfortable for them to visit those with whom they can speak English, that they usually prefer to spend their weekends in their own bungalows in such recreational spots as El Valle de Antón, Nueva Gorgona and Santa Clara, and finally, that they can satisfy all their social needs very nicely without stepping outside their own group.

So dominating is the Anglo-American in regard to his language and his customs that North American women married to Panamanians are prone to impose English as the language of the home, and thus also their own customs, and that they prefer social relations with persons of their own nationality while disdaining contacts with Panamanians.

Of the modern Canal Zone workers not all follow the pattern set by the «old timers» of resorting to the «cantina» to drown their homesickness and boredom. To be homesick seems to be considered a quite valid excuse for burrying oneself in a «cantina» and thus «knowing» the country by means of chats with the Jamaican bartender, buying lottery tickets from some vendor who has come to be one of the few regular contacts of Zone residents with Panamanians, and talking with some other homesick friend and thereby bolstering the morale of both, or, when failing in this last attempt, to drown the sorrows in scotch or beer. Possibly the owner of the «cantina» has worked in the Zone and is therefore a drawing card for other old timers who like to chew over the old days. They never get past that place and whatever other personal contacts happen, come purely by accident. At times the policeman of the beat knows the «gringo's» nickname and he knows the policeman as «Blackie». They have seen and said «adiós» a thousand times to each other. But outside of

the lottery vendor, the bartender, and the policeman and perhaps a few red light women, he knows no one in Panama. He does not even know the streets.

We have noticed in some of the newcomers to the Canal Zone the desire for a closer understanding of the people of the country to which they have come to work. There can be noticed among them a feeling of sincere interest and friendship which is not detected even among the young generation of the Canal Zone, those born here, in Ancon or Balboa, for example.

Some of these North Americans have had to come to Panama City to live because they could not secure living quarters in the Canal Zone. They have left the atmosphere of lazy comfort provided in Ancon and Balboa where the tropical houses are nice in every sense of the word; where the conveniences of the commissaries, restaurants, clubhouses, picture shows, swimming pools, libraries and play fields are close at hand; and where everybody speaks their own language, belongs to the same nation, thinks practically along the same lines and is affected by almost the same traditions, laws, habits, and daily events.

It is interesting to note that in Colón, where more English is spoken than in Panama and where the entire city is more strongly influenced by the inevitably cosmopolitan atmosphere which is characteristic of centers of world traffic, North Americans and Panamanians treat each other in a manner which we cannot say is over-bearing or antagonistic as is often the case in Panama City.

Also, in recent times many North Americans and Panamanians with high school education have come to work together on certain projects along the Canal.

4.—*Social Distance.* There are two other factors, perhaps not of such great frequency, but of considerable importance, to be considered while dealing with the social distance in which the average North American on the Isthmus remains in regard to the native population. Besides finding in the Canal Zone at least a minimum of the essentials which he requires to feel socially satisfied (restaurants, clubhouses, sports facilities, swimming pools, libraries, etc.) he has the opportunity of breaking into the upper crust, the so-called «Country-Club» society into which he perhaps could never venture in the States. He may visit the «Union Club» which is patronized by the so-called aristocracy of Panama and the high officials of the Canal Zone, or any of the fashionable beer gardens, according to his taste. Or he may become a racing fan and enter into the betting or even buy racing horses and take an active part in that picturesque and complicated life of the racing people.

The other factor stems from the economic impossibility which faces the Panamanians when they consider entertaining their North American friends in their own dingy, over-crowded rented apartments. The Panamanians realize that their houses are not any too clean and presentable and that they are unable to entertain their guests in accordance with the Latin conception of «throwing the house out through the window». Perhaps this experience does not commonly occur, but it does happen, and with discouraging effects on both parties concerned.

One of the most common complaints voiced by the North American has to do with the way the Panamanian police handle traffic, and with the fines imposed upon traffic violators. We have heard many North Americans say that they never take their cars into Panama, and if they do, that they never park them on the streets of Panama. According to the North American, if a car must be parked, leave it near the limits. Among the breathtaking swoops of the chiva and taxi drivers who seriously try to keep Panama abreast of the exaggerated rhythm of the large cities of today, he who carefully and slowly drives our streets is quite likely to find himself sandwiched between two opposing participants of a crash.

But there is a more serious reason which explains, in great part, the little respect shown the Panamanian police by most motorists. Traffic laws change so fast in Panama that one is never sure as to whether he is in the right or in the wrong. Police officers obtain the rank of «defenders of the public order» without any sound knowledge of their basic duties. Quite often policemen have not even received an elementary education.

When the North American hears stories about such a type of police, or when he finds himself a victim of their discourtesy and inefficiency, he has some tall yarns to spin when he gets back to the relative safety of the Canal Zone.

5.—*Relations Between Persons of Different Sexes from the Two Groups.* In this section which deals with contacts between individuals, it seems only right that we should consider the inter-marrying which occasionally takes place between Panamanians and North Americans.

The few unions which occur between Panamanian men and North American women have practically all happened in the United States where the man was enrolled as a student in some university and, as a result, established social contacts with co-ed classmates.

The sexual relations which exist here on the Isthmus between Panamanian men and North American women are never of a permanent nature; they are taken simply as an adventure by both parties.



The Panamanian does not consider the North American woman as being exactly his ideal of a homemaker, owing to rational considerations, emotional factors, and traditional prejudices. Moreover, the most frequent and most intimate contacts of the Panamanian man take place in an environment where the Panamanian woman predominates with whom he naturally feels more at ease. As a result, when the time for marriage comes, he turns to a union with one of his own kind and background.

More frequent are marriages between North American men and Panamanian women, for reasons very obvious in an environment where many single men find themselves in a foreign land.

Without considering war marriages, which occur in alarming figures in all countries where there are soldiers and women, let us look for a moment at the unions which occur between North American civilians and Panamanian girls.

Twenty years or more ago, these marriages were few and far between although, in reality, we did have even then a few Panamanian families of partly North American descent. The great majority of marriages between Panamanian men and North American women have resulted in failures and had to be dissolved. The North American wife who goes to the United States to visit her family usually wants to stay there and to take her husband there. If he refuses, discord and divorce result, if they do not result from the great liberty which the North American women are accustomed to enjoy and of which the Panamanian husbands do not approve.

With the increase of work in the Canal Zone, in recent years, the rate of marriages between North American men and Panamanian women has advanced considerably. The results of these unions are still in the process of being studied. Some of the wives are living in the States, sharing the family life of their husbands. Some are enjoying normal married happiness here in Panama. Some have lost the affection of their husbands for one reason or another and are living the sorrowful life of the grass widow.

Apparently, none of the usual barriers extremely difficult to cross such as language, differences in customs and philosophy of life, not even «racial» differences, have impeded these marriages. True, the Church has made some attempt to prevent hasty war marriages of Panamanian women with members of the United States armed forces, on the assumption that quite often these marriages cannot be expected to have a serious and permanent character, according to a statement by the late Archbishop of Panama, the Most Reverend Juan José Maiztegui.

Nevertheless, in spite of the religious differences, many marriages have occurred between the two groups.

6.—*Conclusions.* In general, we can say that the attitude is changing among the North Americans who have been arriving lately on the Isthmus to carry on the work program of the Panama Canal. Some are trying to learn Spanish and acquire at least an understanding of Panamanian customs; some are mixing socially with Panamanians of both sexes — and without prejudice. Unfortunately, this cannot be said of the majority of North Americans, but at least there is a notable tendency in this direction.

This group of North Americans differ decidedly from those who do not even know the geographic position of the Isthmus; who do not have even a rough idea of the political constitution of this country or of the people who live in it; who confuse Panamanians with Filipinos or Hawaiians or African Negroes or Indians; who think the true Panamanian dresses with pigtailed or Mexican sombreros and is always crooning some romantic piece of music and spends his days dancing the conga; who think that every good thing in Panama is due to the United States.

But perhaps the most resented attitude fostered by outright ignorance on the part of many North Americans is that which pictures Panama as a territory, or at least as a protectorate of the United States. This attitude is nothing new. The Panamanians cherish their sovereignty, and to hear it spoken of in such a contemptuous manner, even while not in serious conversation, produces deep and harmful resentments.

«Independence is but a name to save the Panamanians from having unhappy dreams... Panama belongs as much to the United States as Egypt does to Great Britain... Panamanians with whom I spoke sometimes referred to American «oppression». I saw no oppression, except that the Americans will not stand any nonsense. Panama is enormously benefited by the coming of America. But the Panamanian wants to have his cake and to eat it at the same time... Panamanians can talk as much as they like about being an independent Republic so long as it keeps its independence passive. The United States government is acting strictly to the letter of the agreement with Panama. But I saw plenty of evidence that individual Americans in the Isthmus regard the Panamanians with contempt as a lazy, slouching, intriguing lot. The ill-feeling is returned by the people of Panama looking upon Americans as noisy, grabbing bullies. It is unfortunate that this spirit should prevail». (1)

These words, written many years ago, are still symbolic of a mental attitude which guides the actions of many individuals. In

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(1) John Foster Fraser, *Panama and What it Means*, London, 1913, p. 184 f.

the minds of both groups exists a long series of misinformation, ignorance, prejudices, and emotions, passions which go from bad to worse by not knowing the other group or by knowing only the prejudiced part of that other group. The situation is aggravated by many words carelessly spoken that stem from the emotions but not from the brain, emotional outbursts which so bewilder those who supposed that the state of friction was due only to economic reasons (the heirship of lucrative positions in the Zone, the fear of open competition, etc.), and who forgot the important part played by irrational factors in all such cases of intercultural and interracial relations.

Even quite recently, the North American Congressman Harness, member of the House Committee of Military Affairs, described the Panamanians as «mercenary highway robbers to such an extent that they repeatedly place heavy charges on the American utilities in the Canal Zone». Speaking of the Panamanian worker, he expresses himself in this manner: «Unskilled labor in the Canal offers a good example. Army officials and executives of private contractors engaged in the construction industry in the Canal Zone usually comply with the demands of the government that they employ native laborers whenever possible. The average native, however, is so completely incompetent and shiftless that he has proven himself to be of no material value in any type of work». (1)

#### IV

#### *The North American Influence on Panamanian Customs.*

1.—*Influence of the Movies, Fashions, Technological Progress, Sports, etc.* Perhaps we have had at least some success in describing the existing state of friction between the Panamanian and the North American; the social aloofness from each other which can be explained by motives both material and psychological, by reasons both political and emotional; the difficulties in trying to bridge such striking differences between these groups; the happenings, big and small, of the daily life and the surroundings in which they occur; and the very certain fact that many people are not in the least aware of the existence of such a problem (groups outside the contact zone, such as the inhabitants of the Interior, and people who do not take any interest in problems of this nature).

We will now try to describe the North American influences which tend to change the Panamanian customs; to understand a little better a social phenomenon which could cause extreme bewilderment to the average man who, as so often happens, complains

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(1) Statement made in August, 1939 and reported by *The Panama American*.

vigorously of the North Americans and at the same time tries to imitate them to such a degree that many of his customs and habits have undergone changes—even to the extent of creating social conflicts within his own environment, due to that influence.

In this part we shall see the influence of the motion picture, of the technological appliances, of style of dress and general customs, of sports, the influence of the language and music, of dancing, of literature, and all those factors which conflict greatly with the traditional way of living of the Panamanians.

As to the rôle of the movie pictures in this respect, we are particularly thinking of that frivolity, that tricky little agent of the human mind that makes us pattern our actions after those of others and forms for us our likes and dislikes even to the point where we will sacrifice and do battle for the cause of a second-hand idea that was never our own to start with. Those who gain by the rich monetary rewards of the motion picture industry know well how to use this frivolous trait of ours to their advantage. Generally, this same idea would apply to the fashion business. Can anyone doubt that the actions of people of both sexes in Panama (or almost any other place in the world) have been considerably influenced by imitation of the actions of the screen stars?

It does seem foolish that so many people waste their time reading about the lives of screen stars, about their clothes, their love affairs, marriages and divorces, the cosmetics they use, the diet they follow and the exercises they use to guard their «figure», collecting pictures and buying magazines dedicated to Hollywood.

Who can deny that motion pictures have a marked influence on the passions? That the torrid love scenes are imitated in real life? That gangs of hoodlums have been formed to rob and follow in the footsteps of the gangsters of the silver screen? That there are women who cover up their true selves under the influence of the «glamour girls»? Some people arrange their homes according to the tastes of their «star» of the moment. Young bloods believe in treating their associates according to the pattern established by the young actor of the day. Not so long ago our younger set thought of themselves as «Tyrone Power», used trousers «à la George Raft» and went about calling each other «Rudolph Valentino».

North American commercial propaganda which has had special success in mass psychology proclaims the excellency of the tooth-paste which gives «the Hollywood smile»; the best after-shave lotion which is used by the movie stars; face cream which is the height of perfection—«according to your favorite star».

The influence of the motion pictures and the clothing styles, which are closely related, should be considered as very powerful factors as regards the relationship between Panamanian and North American civilization. Although these influences affect a great many people, they find their most eager recipients in the younger generation which is the true lifeblood of our people, which represents the hopes for all the future development of the country, all the hopes of maintaining true Panamanian traditions, in the defense of our customs, our language, our interests, of all those characteristics which make us Panamanians.

Because of this influence, we now often notice in our midst «zoot-suits» (zut-zut to those Panamanians who dare risk the pronunciation of the word); we watch our girls become patrons of the beauty parlors (the «buiti parlor», they say); high heels are now being worn with our national «pollera»; the dignified chaperon for mixed parties has passed on; the popular interest has shifted from bull fighting to boxing, baseball, basketball, softball; and old timers mournfully regret that the gentle, delicate, very feminine type of young ladies of yesterday has been replaced by the rather loose freedom of the modern chick who knows how to kiss good-bye and who practices flirting and necking.

This is the influence of North American ways and customs which evidence themselves tremendously even in the bulk of reading material of certain Panamanians. Because, seeing day after day in the newspapers and magazines a continuous leg show and muscle display, watching the customs of the public bathing beaches and swimming pools, it becomes a very natural thing to conclude that such an exhibition of nakedness is the accepted, proper thing. It is a perfectly natural thing that one imitates that which is continuously brought to his attention by the power of suggestion. Frivolity is being aided by human predisposition.

Continuing the examination of influential customs, we must include the manners of living, typical characteristics of diet, dancing, and general diversion centers, and, perhaps most influential of all—the atmosphere of surroundings in which these customs are revealed.

2.—*Some Concepts of Social Psychology of the Two Peoples.* The Panamanian mores and outlook on life differ a great deal from those of the North Americans.

That which for us is no reason for wonderment, such as the balconies of our colonial houses, is for them something to be wondered at. Our horse-drawn vehicles, the public market, our courtships, our ideas about divorce, about virginity, about flirting, are objects

of comment on the part of the North Americans. They are surprised that a Panamanian does not wish to marry a girl simply because she is not «señorita», as we say. They wonder at our contention that divorce must not become an easy means of solving the matrimonial question whenever those involved find it difficult to suitably arrange their intimate life. They also think that our courtships are quite often lengthy affairs.

Some of these things are not taken very seriously, while others receive severe criticism. It is then that they regard us as different and we tend to draw away as a result of this distinction.

If the North American is a Southerner, he cannot understand how we can live in the same house where a Negro lives unless we consider ourselves on an equal plane with him; or that we sit in our autobusses and theatres by the side of Negroes; how we can accept them in our schools, as our companions and as companions for our children.

The food that we eat, so different from that of the North American, is considered by him as being insufficient and greasy and separates us, or at least has an influence in this separation into different culture groups, because it certainly is not conducive to promoting closer relations. This, of course, applies to the group as a whole, not to the exceptions. We have heard many Panamanians say, «I don't like American food — it is flat — just about like eating a bunch of hay»; and we have also heard North Americans say, «I can't stomach Panamanian food — it is too greasy».

The fact that the Panamanian cannot offer his North American friend a meal which would be appreciated, supplemented by the feeling that he should not invite him to a squalid, uncomfortable apartment in Panama, which cannot be compared to the comfortable, yet cheap, houses in the Canal Zone, certainly has a great deal to do with relations between the two groups. Moreover, the North Americans sometimes are made to forget, because of their comfortable surroundings in the Canal Zone, that the large cities of the United States also have slum sections which compare with the poor sections of Panama. And in forgetting, the North American feels a reluctance about coming into our city to see a friend, especially if he has to enter a community where he sees society at its worst, surrounded by ruined, rickety houses which are so typical of our poorer districts; where the people live with little or no accommodations; where the chances are few of meeting with hygienic conditions and a clean way of life.

Yet it is interesting to observe that here one can find popularized the vulgar portrayals of the motion pictures, of the magazines and «funnies», of the risqué literature, all of the nonsense poured

out by a foreign civilization that truly is capable of offering something on a much higher plane, something that would definitely advance our culture.

The old customs are vanishing. Rare indeed is the Panamanian who knows how to dance the «tamborito», and when the orchestra dares play such a piece, the couples handle it as though it were a «blue» or a «conga». On the other hand, the «foxtrot» is danced with untiring enthusiasm. Now the latest song hits of Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby have replaced the «pasillos» and the «bambucos» which were so dear to our Colombian traditions.

Girls who can afford it meet their boy friends in their private cars; they make dates by telephone to meet in some shady place which might jeopardize their honor; they go unaccompanied to places of entertainment in search of adventure.

We know that these women will form the future Panamanian homes and that on their shoulders will fall the responsibility of rearing clean, healthy children, to bring them up to respect their homes, to be the root of that great family which is the Nation. But we also know that many of our women have come to fear motherhood because «they might lose their figure».

With a certain amount of scepticism, we eye the young blade who throws good manners to the winds in what he thinks is an imitation of some movie hero who has caught his fancy and upon whom the women rain attention.

It is important also to note the excitement with which the masses of peoples attend the recently introduced sports. When we watch the crude gestures and listen to the rude and noisy shouts of approval or disapproval, with their alien terminology, we wonder—is this our language?

3.—*Anglo-American Influence Upon Our Language.* The closeness of the Canal Zone and the powerful North American market has manifested itself even in the games our children play. Children's dolls are «quintuplets» or «Betty Boops». Little boys have their «Mickey Mouses» and their «Popeyes.» Some Panamanians even refer to «la Cenicienta» as «Cinderella».

Little boys play «bandido» and «muchacho» or «indios» and «el cowboy» like they see it portrayed in the moving picture. As they play, they shout, «estikemop», «jansop», «help», while little girls play «yax» and sing out as they play with the ball, «uan, tu, tri, elerin-for, faif, six, elerin-seven, eit, nai, elerin-ten».

When they marry, the girls prefer not to have any more of the traditional plain gold wedding rings. They want nothing short of

the diamond-studded platinum ring. The friends have given the gentleman a royal sendoff with a great abundance of «highballs». The bride has been given a «miscellaneous» party. They have a short honeymoon, which in times past used to last many days, and then the recently married bride returns to her daily life. Our grandmothers and aunts would have guarded against this because of the bad impression it would have created. The black dress no longer is a mourning dress, but one of luxury. Sometimes the passing of one's parents is «mourned» by brown or even white clothes, if at all, and mostly the period of mourning is quite brief.

But it is the language that has become most notably marked. One is «supuesto» to go to live in a chalet, to have a car that the wife can use to go «shopping». While the maid takes care of the «beibe», they go to play «brich» or to play «poker» or talk about Hollywood styles and intrigues while seated on the «caucher» which is on the «porch».

These changes are most noted in the so-called «middle class» and also in the so-called «high society». However, the working class, the poor people, also feel the imprint of the English language, particularly in regard to the language of sports. The jargon of the play field, the amusement park, and of the street corners, has completely changed our manner of expression: «El 'gufy' ese dejó pasar el 'roling' y el 'buay' llegó 'seif' a la 'beis'»; «dale un 'kic' a la bola». «Ese 'man' quedó 'ponch-dronk' de los 'yabs' que le disparó el 'kid'». And when speaking about a very lovely girl, they say she «ta champia».

A better description of the degeneration of our language is given us by the very capable pen of Dr. Octavio Méndez Pereira, Rector of our University, on making a criticism of certain current trends in journalism, in the Panamanian Academy of the Language: (1)

«...On other occasions I have noted a series of those words which are being adopted in our environment such as tiquete, chef, bos, blofear, chingongo, guachiman, chequear, quinapear, trique, dain, entreviuar, suichar, reporter, chopear, and many others. There are people who say and write without any qualms things such as 'yo no estaba supuesto a esperarlo', 'tengo mucho pul con Fulano', 'he conseguido un buen yob', 'tengo un deit con mi amiga', 'te voy a dar un tip para las carreras', 'esta mujer tiene mucho pep', 'no me ha dado chance de entrar'. And many elegant ladies and women columnists who have lived in the United States speak of the biutiparlo, ask for a champu, give themselves a maniquiur, buy a lipstick or a vaniti-

(1) *Boletín de la Academia Panameña de la Lengua*, 2ª época, N° 1, 1944, pp. 39-40.



queis, accept a diner dans, meet a person who is very nais or quiet, and bath in the suimimpul and flirtean with everyone in the restaurants, in the lobi of the hotels, at the cocteilpartis or at the muvies. Also there is many a gentleman who, in order to demonstrate his command of the English language, loncha on joddogs, sandwiches, pais, queiks, aiscriam, and drinks jaibols, coctails, yinyereils, etc. And if he has an automobile parquea when poncha a tire or he has a bloaut, and he applies the crank or brequea, or the bompor strikes something; or the sicover gets dirty, or something injures the moffler. And if he is a sports fan he speaks of futbol, basquetbol, beisbol, golf, boxeo, volibol, pitcher, catcher, couch, referi, quic, jit, foul, escor, doping, estarter, noquear, yoquei, etc.—a terrible linguistic mixture which some day will make our Spanish unintelligible».

Generally speaking, the advancements made by the North American civilization have not been accepted here. By this we mean to say that the better things, the positive things that the United States has to offer have been allowed to slip by while the negative aspects of that civilization have been imitated and quite largely accepted.

4.—*Criticism of These Influences.* And now let us try to determine whether the fact that the Panamanians imitate the North Americans is due to admiration on the part of the former for the latter and, if so, whether this has served or is serving to improve the relations between the two peoples.

These questions really are not very difficult to answer. When two distinct cultural groups come in contact, they will adopt certain characteristics from each other. This development has occurred many times in the course of civilization. Moreover, it is not only the larger and stronger group which influences the other, but also the weaker group passes some of its customs and patterns of living to the more advanced civilization. A few words implanted in the other's language, some little styles of dress or mannerisms, some domestic articles, etc. (A well-known example is the Negro influence in the North American music).

We all know that some aspects of modern civilization no longer belong exclusively to the country which originated them but that they have become universal traits. In the line of cookery, we have beefsteak, chile con carne, macaroons. With drinks, ron and coc, coca cola, cocktails, highballs. In the field of fashions we find the Mexican huarachas, the Basque boina, the Cuban guayaberas, perfumes of French origin, and certain well-known names of style «creators».

We must not forget that the individual is at least partly a product of the social atmosphere in which he lives and that his actions and thoughts are quite largely molded by the people with whom he

associates. Thus, it is not strange that an entire generation, an entire people imitate almost unknowingly the customs of other peoples. Because of the advancements made by modern science and technology, these processes of imitation take place even between peoples separated by great geographic or social distances.

Therefore, if the Panamanians imitate some of the negative aspects of the North American civilization, it is done in the same way in which certain superficial traits and habits of one people or group are adopted by other ones. Adopted styles, customs, foreign words used in the native language, are very often products of irrational behaviour (and snobbishness is of course irrational) and not of serious, applied considerations. But on the other hand, there do exist adaptations which were deliberately carried out in order to satisfy an urgent need, such as technical, sanitary, cultural advancements, more efficient economic methods, the spirit of progress.

So we can say definitely that there are being formed close human relations between the two peoples under discussion. However, in order to convert these relations, as far as that is humanly possible, into positive ones instead of negative ones, we need a more intelligently guided education by means of a better understanding of the traits of each other, in a rational, unprejudiced manner.

5.—*Influence of the North American Race Idea and Attitude.* The most notable North American influence, and which represents a realistic problem worthy of the most serious study, is that which has sprung from that racial concept and discriminatory practice which prevail so decidedly in the Canal Zone.

Never before was the average Panamanian so interested in the problem between the Negro and the white man. We do not say that the problem did not exist and that it was not felt formerly but we emphasize the fact that now under the influence of the North Americans, Panamanians have begun to put marks of color identification upon each other. In Panama there have lived Negroes ever since early colonial times. They were the descendants of African slaves; but in connection with them there never arose a specifically «racial» problem, as it did and does exist on the Isthmus in connection with the Negroes of North America and, particularly, those of the West Indies.

Now, a man, just because he happens to be black, is treated with a certain degree of inferiority. In Panama City those who can show a white skin are considered on the preferred list when it comes to employment. Quite often the «help wanted» advertisements in the newspapers specify that the applicants must be «white Panamanians». They want them to be white, blond even. Children now take note

of the different shades of color of their playmates. They refuse the invitations of the «morenitos». They hate the «criollos» (1) and treat them like «los chombos del diablo». (2)

Without this social discrimination, it would have been impossible to have installed the law of nationalization of commerce — so helpful to certain groups. These groups figured that in this manner they would exclude the West Indians from national life. However, there were not many West Indians engaged in commerce.

The principal reason for the success of one of our past administrations is found in this difference between whites and Negroes, so adroitly exploited that the average Panamanian did not remember the large percentages of Negroes (15%) and Mestizos (72%) which make up the bulk of the Panamanian people, (3) and that he forgot the once popular song which said that in every Panamanian family there could be found «a Negro behind the door». And the fact that the «Negroes», the West Indians, were restricted by law from getting their personal identification certificates as Panamanian citizens, was considered by some as a personal victory of certain elements over these people.

This new discriminatory attitude toward the Negro has become so acute that we have noticed a certain fear, on the part of some Panamanians, about engaging in friendship, more or less intimate, with Negroes for fear of being mistaken for Negroes themselves. And in spite of their hate for the North American because of his very definite attitude regarding Negroes, they, themselves, are blind to the fact that are following in his footsteps, in this respect.

However, the Panamanian would not admit this. Moreover, to tell it to his face would puzzle him and probably offend him. He who touches off the spark of passion in this extremely delicate problem will be responsible for one of the most bitter social struggles in our environment. Some of us remember a speech given in the National Gymnasium by the newspaperman Santiago McKay, in which he honored Delmira Pierce de Racine, a popular basketball player, and the hue and cry and near-riot which occurred when Mr. McKay said «...and Delmira Pierce, solely because she happens to be a ngress, she was...»

(1) Term used incorrectly in Panama to designate the children born in the Republic of West Indian parentage, popularized during the elections of 1932 and often used in the sport pages of the local newspapers.

(2) Literally, «mulattos of the Devils».

(3) According to the population census of 1940, of the 111,893 inhabitants of Panama City, 29,402, or 26.3% are «Negroes». Of the 44,398 inhabitants of the city of Colon, 23,532, or 53% are «Negroes». The racial structure of the entire population of the Republic was then given as follows: White, 12.2%, Negro, 14.6%, Mestizo, 71.8%, others, 1.4%.

We could not hear the rest, because of the resulting commotion, but we know that he wanted to say that because of her being black she had encountered difficulties in going to Colombia as a member of a visiting team of Panamanian girls. Emotion exploded that night in the National Gymnasium. The finger had been laid on the open sore, and the pain short forth in shouts, in anger. One more chapter had been written in the battle between the Blacks and Whites — in this our land of Blacks and Whites.

Apparently there are some Panamanians who do not realize that the strengthening of the Panamanian nationality and its prestige, the building of a pride in being a Panamanian, is a very necessary requirement for the advancement of the country. If to the natural weakness of our sparse population we add the weakness inherent in social heterogeneity among the various ethnic groups which make up our population, then we will inevitably make matters worse instead of better. The Negro problem is an emotional problem which we should approach and solve by rational means. We should deal with it in the same rational way as we ought to handle our problems of public administration, living standards, and internal political conflicts. Only through positive measures can we hope to achieve positive and permanent results.

This aspect of racial discrimination within Panama perhaps would not fit in a purely methodical treatment of our main topic. However, we have wished to call attention to it for fear that in such a short, cursory examination of existing conditions it might pass by unnoticed. This particular aspect is undoubtedly one of the most deeply felt North American influences in our environment.

We have also to mention, even though it is only in passing, because of its secondary importance, the influence which the environment of our «terminal cities» near the Canal and of the Canal Zone itself has exercised over part of our rural population, the «campesinos» who, in large numbers, left their homes and sold all their personal belongings to come to work for the Panama Canal.

These people, because of their very limited economic strength, were forced to live in the overcrowded tenement house districts. Here they came face to face for the first time with the «dog-eat-dog» kind of leaving. In the cramped, unsanitary conditions of the tenement houses the West Indian held sway with his wierd dialect, his strange mannerisms and customs, dress and food. How was the «campesino», defenseless and ignorant of these environmental conditions, to hold his own in the fight for existence against this competitor who was stronger and who was able to deal more easily with the North Americans? Quite often the «campesino» was forced to imitate the West Indians and to look to them for guidance.

We must not assume that everyone has become interested in these problems. While the information presented here has principally been gathered from individuals and groups in the field, it cannot be said that one encounters a great many people who are directly affected by the problems we have just discussed and who have done any constructive thinking on the subject. While many people come inevitably in direct contact with the North Americans and while many fall under the influence of these contacts, at times we have been surprised by the fact that we should not be able to get a valid answer to our questions, only because these people never have become interested in these problems. Moreover, it seems they even failed to realize there was a problem.

We have preferred to use this method of direct questioning so that we may be able to get to the source of information without the use of intermediaries, who might distort the picture to conform to their own personal criteria. The ideas presented here were obtained as answers to our questions directly from average people typical of the bulk of our population and who therefore hold the key to public opinion.

## V

### *Analysis of Principal Determining Factors.*

1.—*Historical Factors.* The brief historical summary which we tried to present in the preceding part of this paper brings us to an obvious conclusion: that a great deal of the past experiences in regard to inter-American relations on the Isthmus (interventions, «marinadas», conflicts with the Health Department, etc.) have been clearly remembered by the Panamanians and almost entirely forgotten by the North Americans. This same phenomenon seems to exist in all Latin American countries which have ever had any dealings with the United States. The experiences are remembered in Latin America and forgotten in the North.

But in these historical occurrences is found a large part of the foundation for the existing friction and resentment between the two peoples. In this sense, the Latin American people generally take an attitude which is a natural result when a strong power comes in contact with a weak one. The explanation is obvious. He who suffers remembers and resents longer than he who imposes his will, his strength, and his interests upon the weaker, although at the time he might not realize that he is taking an unfair advantage of his superior position.

The United States, with her inherent natural ability, which came as a result of the pooled cultural resources of all the great

nations of the world which contributed to the making of the typical North American, supplemented by the riches of her natural resources, has been able to develop and capitalize on many advantages. But the manifold and long efforts that went into the building up of the past and of the present are quite often forgotten by the average man. By him, historical development and the manner in which it was achieved, is looked upon as something to be taken for granted in the same manner that he overlooks all the complicated and coordinated efforts that are necessary for the production of the automobile he drives, or of the medicine the doctor writes a prescription for, or of the knowledge which the doctor had to acquire in order to be able to cure ailments. In other words, the average man of our times, who only too often is aware only of the present and of the factors which affect him directly and visibly, is apt to correspond to Ortega y Gasset's picture of the «modern barbarian».

The average man, although he may be conscious that he is an integral part of the political and social system of the State to which he belongs, usually does not realize the responsibility inherent in the fact of belonging to that particular State and social group. And, when by a stroke of fate he finds himself representing a powerful State in contact with another less powerful State, the situation often parallels that of the rich man who is strong because he has more—and the poor man who is weak because he has less. Immediately resentments arise which are forgotten or perhaps even ignored by the rich man—but not by the poor man. He felt them deeper; they struck home and hurt.

But we cannot be content with the explanation that the remembering and resenting of certain occurrences by the Panamanians and the forgetting of these things by the North Americans are entirely due to a superior attitude on the part of the United States. This explains perhaps the mental attitude of certain groups. Yet the Latins like to think of themselves as a people surrounded by cultural attributes which are not to be found in the North Americans, who are usually thought of as being very efficient in mechanical arts but very lacking in a background of music, painting, philosophy, literature, etc. When carried to exaggeration, this concept makes the North Americans seem to be strong-arm men who used and abuse their material strength while overlooking other, more beautiful, spiritual qualities.

The relations between both nations largely center around the highly emotional political field, which explains why the state of friction is constantly being revived. We have in our files a hand bill entitled «Juan Rivera Reyes, A Victim of His Patriotism», which was distributed among the people a short time ago, and which expos-

ed a very popular feeling: «The revival of all the rights which our country has had stripped from her and trampled under foot in her relations with the strongest power of the hemisphere». This pamphlet revealed the political ostracism which one encounters upon attempting to defend a just cause. It also contained a historical notation (of doubtful authenticity from the viewpoint stressed in the handbill) which pointed out that in 1918 Don Guillermo Andreve was dismissed as Secretary of Education for having declared a day of sorrow for the public schools on account of the occupation of the cities of Panamá, Colón and the Province of Chiriquí by United States troops

It is interesting to note that the Panamanian people never blame those influential Panamanians who ask for the interventions and who promptly dismiss whomever might raise a protesting voice against a state of affairs considered as being unjust and oppressing. The resentment always is directed against the United States and her citizens. It is forgotten that the dismissals were the results of the competition between aspiring political groups of Panama and the authority of the President of the Republic. It is forgotten that the party or group in power had to go outside the country to find a force strong enough to back them up because they were not popular enough at home, or because their landing in power was due to shady maneuvering and fantastic methods of counting the election votes, or because the party representatives stood only for certain vested interests instead of a true majority of the people. And so, throughout the history of our country we have heard repeated such beautiful words as «liberalism» and «democracy» used as political platforms because of the usefulness in disguising the interest of families, minority groups, and, at times, of mere individuals.

The North American intervention or influence in our politics has been understood and looked upon as a shocking imposition, like the one of the bully who writes his own invitation to someone else's dinner party. These foreign intrusions in our internal affairs have offended the national pride and, strangely enough, have contributed to strengthening it. Thus is explained why the bulk of the resentment is directed against the intruder, not against those who dared summon him in the first place.

We cannot overlook the fact that the Panama Canal is a project of such longevity that men will be working there in such a far-off future that it would appear to be eternal and, as in every social field, there will always be human relations, both positive and negative.

The thing that most people fail to consider is that they are actually protagonists in a history which is now being enacted and that the Panama Canal, being located in the heart of the Republic,

has a great and decisive bearing on the collective life in the entire national territory..

2.—*Basic Contrasts Between the Two Nations.* We find two civilizations come face to face within a very limited geographical area: one people with well established traditions and institutions and with a strong nationality; the other in which definite nationalistic tendencies have even yet scarcely begun to appear; whose institutions do not enjoy enough true prestige to have any real influence on the conduct of the people, and whose traditions are struggling almost hopelessly against the new and strange currents which affect our social life.

We see on the one hand of the leading world powers and on the other a nation considered to be a satellite, whose political independence is even doubted by some, whose sovereignty is sometimes the object of conflict, without any material force to back her arguments, without a population large enough to give weight to any viewpoint that the nation may present in international relations.

We see an economically strong nation in whose bosom science and technology have been intensely glorified and applied to the large field in industry, agriculture, commerce, etc., along side of an economically incipient nation which is still depending on empirical, pre-scientific practices for much of its development.

We see an efficient system of public administration, managed by a combination of politicians and experts, in comparison with a system managed most of the time by political figures of sometimes doubtful reputation, and mostly upstarts and out-and-out opportunists — heirs of that Spanish deficiency which has never created in these lands a competent organization for the administration of public affairs.

We have on one side the application, sometimes contradicted in actual practice, but always defended at least in theory, of true democratic principles. On the other side we see the effects of a heritage which has directly prevented the effective implantation of those principles, in the form of free and clean elections. Instead it left us with the outwardly impressive apparatus of a pseudo-democracy.

We see on one side certain well-defined mental attitudes such as that regarding «colored people», the idea of race superiority which forms the primary basis for social schematism; and on the other hand, facing that strong and prejudiced people, we find a people largely made up of mixed racial elements.



We see a system of well organized labor competing against workmen with little or no conception of how to work together for a common cause.

In the contacts between the elements which compose these so very distinct people there originate the unpleasant happenings which take place currently. It is quite logical to suppose that the relationships of dissociation will prevail and that the state of friction is inevitable under such circumstances.

In general terms, we may say that the fundamental differences between the North American and the Panamanian is based upon certain historical occurrences, emotional differences, and upon other very human and very natural tendencies.

There are a series of obstacles which stand in the way of positive human relations. They are: differences in language, the so-called «racial» differences, differences in customs, prejudices, religious differences, differences in the ways of living and the practical philosophy of life.

We have already noticed the important part played by the difference of language and how it influences the relations between men by preventing them from attaining close mutual understanding. This perhaps has been covered satisfactorily in foregoing parts of this paper.

But the racial concept is an even stronger factor in determining the mental attitude of those affected by it. We have seen the result which the discriminatory practices of the Canal Zone have had—even to the extent of subjecting the social life of Panama to the influence of the racial idea. This represents one of the principal factors which contribute to the strengthening of the socio-psychological complex of the superiority of one's own group and of the inferiority of the outside world, which in turn is at the basis of the system of social schematism. On the subject of race, especially as it has to do with the idea of superiority, we shall deal later when we discuss social schematism.

Differences in customs are really not to be considered in themselves as motives for friction. This is born out by the «fads» of every decade, the tendencies to imitate and adopt strange customs, the success which usually characterizes styles from other countries, the adoption of foreign dances and songs, the mixed marriages that have taken place.

But as to the relations between the two peoples under discussion, the differences in customs have had a definite influence and they have not always been conducive to the building of good will. The adaptation of North American customs does not always signify

to us an improvement of human relations between members of the two nations. We have already pointed out the curious fact that many Panamanians, even though they are influenced so greatly by North American customs, imitate screen stars, play North American games, dress «à la New York», use North American hairdos, learn North American dances and even know some Brooklyn slang, are at the same time the most fervent enemies of the North Americans.

Of capital importance among the obstacles in the path of mutual understanding are the prejudices. This is a form of emotion which is contrary to logical thought. Prejudice is the denial of objective truth, of intelligence as means for clearing up differences of opinion or interest. Prejudice is the fertilizer which makes frictions grow and bear fruit in the form of detrimental antagonisms. Prejudice contributes to forming discriminatory practices in that it classifies, without an adequate rational basis, some groups and their members as being superior, others as being inferior, without permitting orderly and logical reasoning to have any influence whatsoever. Prejudice justifies the use of emotion when dealing with human relations because it, in its entirety, is a product of human emotions. Prejudice, as practiced between the Panamanians and the North Americans, interrupts the effective labor of these two peoples, in that it prevents either group from attaining a real understanding and knowledge of the living conditions and problems of the other group.

Religious differences which have caused so many crimes, wars, and suffering in other countries, have not been strong enough to have any significant influence here on the Isthmus. The cosmopolitan attitude of Panama, and the great variety of religious beliefs and creeds represented in the United States have made this situation possible.

However, the practical side of life, which is governed by prejudice and emotions and reflects the prevailing social attitude, and which in turn is influenced by traditions, customs, and institutions, is doubtlessly the greatest influential factor in the relationship between people.

3.—*Social Distance.* All of those obstacles which we have briefly treated in this study go to make up what is known as social distance and contribute powerfully to the maintenance of «colonies», in the sociological meaning of the term, as social minority groups separated from the majority group by cultural, ethnic or psychological factors. These obstacles are not of a material nature, but belong more to that intangible world of emotions and abstract ideas. <sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) We recommend the article by Dr. Richard F. Behrendt, «De la Sociología y la Psicología del Extremismo Político» published in the journal *Universidad de Panamá*, Year I, N° 1, April, 1936, pp. 17-51.

North Americans live for many years on the Isthmus without becoming interested, or showing any interest, in acquainting themselves with our customs. They form a separate colony, associating only among themselves. They tell us this is because of the material advantages in the Canal Zone such as comfortable and cheap living conditions; the being able to buy their needs in the commissaries at favorable prices; the recreational facilities of the clubhouses where they can meet their friends in a bowling session or at the bingos or at supper or during a «pause that refreshes» and chat in their native tongue.

But if material motives could explain all the actions of man, then social and political revolutions, the desire for power and domination, the sacrifices made in order to adapt oneself to foolish fashions, the desire to look upon one's associates according to their «superior» or «inferior» niche in life, all this which is so generally known, would be impossible. There would be no wars nor revolutions, the relation of power-aspiring men to subordinate types would be less trying, emotional sacrifices would not exist. However, we are not interested in the Utopia we might have but in the havok reality of that which is.

Material motives certainly do influence the actions of men. But it is the mental attitude, highly emotional, which is the force that starts the motive on a definite course of action. The Crusades give us a good example of this. However, during this study that we have attempted in spite of our Neophytic condition, we have not been able to find one person so exempt from personal egotism, nor one egotist in search of followers who, motivated by the desire to promote positive inter-American relations on the Isthmus of Panama, had become an active standard bearer.

This social aloofness between both groups is explained in part by the types of relations which are the most frequent between them. These are their relationship at work, where the North American occupies the superior role and the Panamanian the inferior; the relationship of the tourist buyer (and in a certain aspect all the inhabitants of the Canal Zone belong to this type) to the man from whom he buys, and the relationship constituted by being a part of the same clientele of the diversion centers of Panama (saloons, beer gardens, Union Club, Golf Club, etc.). These are the three types of relations in which the two groups usually encounter each other. Other relations such as the ones provoked by the «marinadas» or armed interventions are only occasional and, of course, produce negative results.

Among all the explanations of this social aloofness we find that emotional motives rank very high. Carl Marx tells us in *The Capital* that «the system of production of the material life domi-

nates in general the entire political, social, and intellectual life». But, with all respect due to this master, we should consider the motives which basically influence the psychic life of the individual. Material things are necessary to man, but at the same time he is often ready to sacrifice himself and everything he has for entirely emotional reasons, and the social aloofness, which many attribute as derived very naturally from the economic status in which the various groups live, we believe finds its origin in emotional motives.

Are we to understand that social aloofness between two groups is a negative reaction, a reversal of progress?; or that it signifies an organic period from which a new type of relationship will be born? In assuming this latter, optimistically though it be, we consider the concessions that both groups are making (Panamanian on the «gold roll», permanent marriages between both peoples, a beginning interest in mutual problems; etc.). We also take into account the interesting form in which the universal law of the reciprocal imitation of two groups in contact finds expression in our environment. True, to imitate is not necessarily to become intimate, at least not intentionally. In the final analysis of these different concepts which we find around the term «social distance», we arrive at this question: is the economic principle of seeking the most advantageous result with the least necessary effort the reason why neither group has made much effort to become better acquainted with the other? If this is so the Panamanians should make a decided effort to draw closer to the North Americans. Or is it the emotional world, where unfounded passions hold sway, that which guides our actual state of being into following the logic of the law of inertia? We would like to take a realistic attitude by finding for this problem a solution which can only be attained by the localization of the basic causes. We believe that fear can be controlled only by a thorough knowledge of the cause which produces it.

This social distance is even more accentuated by the concepts of the «old timers» with their very limited understanding of the new problems and trends, their very strict social patterns, their ideas which have long since become outmoded, their lack of interest in learning the language of their immediate neighbors, their concepts of superiority of the group in which they live and of the inferiority of all other environments.

This social distance, moreover, is partly due to the lack of cooperation among individuals belonging to different groups. We have already mentioned how a relation of hierarchy exists in which the Panamanian finds himself as a subordinate while the North American is always placed in a position of command.

Earlier parts of this essay showed us how the United States helped us with our political independence, and how she was permitted to re-establish public law and order in our Republic by means of armed interventions. These historical happenings made very obvious the inequality between both nations—one a weak nation, the other strong—and as a result of this inequality we still have different social, political, and economic structures.

The mutual claims and accusations force us to the conclusion that in this social environment a process of dissociation has taken place. The emotional distrust of those who see in the Panamanians only a mongrel and Negro people, the accusations of the Panamanians against alleged Yankee imperialism and their opinion of the North Americans as bullies, all go to show us that the discord does not spring entirely from one group, but from both. When the Panamanian claims he is being exploited and when he turns to the Canal Zone only under immediate pressure of earning the necessities of life; when the North American feels he is holding up his end of the treaties between the two countries, and that the Panamanian sovereignty is not being perjured, but considers Panama at the same time as a satellite of the United States, friction is being accentuated and insults by one part are reciprocated by the other. The absence of a feeling of real solidarity and reciprocity cannot be overcome by formal declarations but only by effective daily labor united for a common cause.

But in all this analysis no formula appears to be as appropriate and explicative as that which refers to the attitude of superiority of one's own group and the tendency to treat individuals belonging to other groups in accordance with a schematized pattern.

4.—*Social Schematization.* This term refers to a well-known social phenomenon whose ultimate result is the elimination, in the minds of members of certain groups, of the individuals as such and his identification with the group to which he happens to belong, as if he, the individual, did not exist apart from his group and though the individual did not exist by virtue of his own personal characteristics and qualities, his own personal vices and virtues.

When the man in the street points out «Jews», or «chombos» (1) or «gringos» or «spiks» he is forgetting that very definitely differentiated individuals exist in each of these groups. For him, all the Jews are alike, all the «gringos» are alike, all the «spiks» are alike. All are one and the same thing, a uniform group, completely identified through their belonging to that group.

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(1) Negroes or mulattoes of West Indian descent, usually English speaking.