

The Editor Writes Home From---

SOUTH AMERICA

(Number Eight)

Enroute to Valparaiso, Chile, Friday, Feb. 24, 1939

It may surprise the folks at home to know that it was so hot in my stateroom, when I wrote my last letters that I broke out with the heat. We were not far from the equator and the cooling influence of the Humboldt current had not yet brought us relief.

We sailed from Callao, Peru, last night at seven and it is now comfortable, both on deck and in our stateroom. We are still wearing hot weather clothes, but the ladies have donned light wraps.

Last Sunday, February 19 was uneventful on our boat, but things were popping in Lima. Another self styled liberator, who wished to be dictator, was mown down by a machine gun, and from forty to sixty of his henchmen went down with him. No one knows exactly what happened, because those who talk are interested parties, and all on the side of the government. Had we had free access to the penitentiary and had been accompanied by a good interpreter, we might have a different story to tell, for there is where the unsuccessful leaders now are.

The story as we get it is that President Oscar Benavides, the benevolent dictator of Peru, left Saturday to inspect some ports that are being built down the coast. He was accompanied to his ship by his associates including General Rodriguez, minister of army and police, who altho an Indian, had been a trusted friend of the last two presidents.

The men under arms in Peru are the police and the army, about equally divided in number, some twenty thousand each. Generally speaking they are a good looking, well equipped body of men. They say that Rodriguez counted upon the support of the police, believing they would stand by him. Sunday morning at 5 o'clock he was at the palace telephoning heads of various military units to report to him at once, as the minister of war was plotting a revolt.

The president had instructed one of the faithful to call the palace every hour for reports, and when his call came in, but one word was heard: "Danger." Further calls were unanswered, so he gathered a number of trusted men and went to the palace. It was said that during the conversation which followed Rodriguez reached for his gun, but a man with a machine gun beat him to the draw, and later twenty-seven bullet holes were counted in the body of "The Man who would be King."

As there was no one left to speak for the revolutionists, the story may be colored. There are some who believe that it was a trap. The President nullified the last election and instead of stuffing the ballot boxes to make a big count, when he saw the vote was

going against him he stopped the count, alleging—whatever came to his mind—and the count has not been resumed. Altho assuming and acting under dictatorial powers, it is said that the President wishes to restore democratic government and hopes to arrange matters so there will be a clear and unclouded majority next year. As Rodriguez was talked of as a candidate, it may have simplified matters somewhat, to have him spring an abortive uprising. It is said that he represented the Fascist group and the success of his coupe would have been considered advantageous to the totalitarian states.

In the United States a Communist is believed to represent an extremely leftist position, but in Peru there is one, and perhaps more than one faction more radical than the Communists. These radicals have a strong hold among the illiterate Indians of the mountains, who represent about six-sevenths of the population.

One promise that has been successfully used with the Indians is that if they will vote with the radicals they can have cake on their tables every day. The Peruvian Indians, while not cake eaters in appearance, have nursed an appetite for better things and most anything is better than what they have. If and when the radicals take over the government it will be goodbye to the property of foreign capitalists, as Cardenas of Mexico, is now a popular idol in these parts.

A man who has been in Peru but two days, can hardly speak with authority, but the opinions offered here are the result of previous reading, and first hand information from such sources as were available.

We have been treated kindly and believe there may be great possibilities for the future of this country, but revolution and destruction will hinder, rather than advance, the interests of the people and of the nation. What Peru and the world as a whole need today is security, of a different variety from that which has been dished up to humanity in the past few years. It needs security for freedom of action, of thought, of belief, of a right to work; freedom for initiative, and protection in the ownership of property, little or big. The world needs honesty, sobriety, economy, and unselfish leadership. Without these attributes we believe no nation can long survive.

W.C.S.