

MEXICAN OPPOSITION GROUPS FIGHT THE PARTY IN POWER

July Election, Observers Believe, Will Be Carried Out Without Use of Force

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MEXICO CITY, April 19 — A slow ferment, impossible to measure and difficult to assess exactly, has become apparent on the Mexican political scene in recent months. It is still too early to hazard a guess as to its final outcome, but the coming months of the slowly heating campaign for the Presidential election on July 6 may indicate a definite trend.

Three apparently unconnected events have left many observers with the impression that the first radical change in the country's political structure since the end of the revolution in 1928 is on the way. The base of the existing structure has been the twenty-three-year political monopoly held by the governing Party of Revolutionary Institutions (P. R. I.).

The signs of changing currents have come in two recent major strikes in Mexico City, in a general strike by the people of Oaxaca City against the State Governor and in the agreement of three opposition parties to contest the July elections with a single candidate, Gen. Miguel Henriquez Guzman, for the Presidency and a single list for Congress.

There are, in the opinion of observers, two underlying causes of the political ferment now evident in the country. One, greatly to the credit of the P. R. I., is its insistence on bringing an ever-increasing percentage of the people into the country's political life.

People Urged to Vote

By every propaganda means at its disposal the Government, which is synonymous with the P. R. I., has advised the people to register for the July elections. With the deadline still a month away, registration is already well over 4,000,000. The total vote in the 1946 election that brought President Miguel Alemán to power was less than 3,000,000.

But an increasing number of politically conscious people has meant an increasingly critical examination of the Government. This examination for many has led to a desire for change, often based only on the premise that twenty-three successive years of power is too much for any party.

The P. R. I. is held responsible for the other cause, too, and this one does not redound to its credit.

The discontent of the masses has been stirred by a growing conviction that a few are getting too rich and many are staying much

too poor. This is particularly true in Mexico City, where great contrasts of wealth and poverty are to be seen side by side.

The question remains whether the political changes most people believe are bound to occur will come by evolution or revolution. The opposition parties' fusion has inevitably led to renewed but still loose talk of revolution. Even President Alemán has joined in warnings to the opposition that a revolt could not succeed.

In the end the question whether Mexico will go through still another revolution will probably lie with the army. The army has played a lessening role in the country's politics through the last two administrations, those of Presidents Alemán and Avila Camacho, but recent events have pointed to a serious split among the generals which could have disastrous results.

General Arrested

The army this week arrested General Octavio Vezar Vazquez, provisional president of the Popular party, on the formal charge that he disobeyed a military order to take up an assignment in Tamiapico. The opposition acted as if it welcomed his arrest. It immediately forced the Government on the defensive by citing the arrest as proof that it was all right for a general to be in politics so long as the politics favored the Government.

At the moment there seems little doubt that President Alemán's administration has control of the military, and the consensus among neutral observers is that changes undoubtedly pending in Mexican political structure will come about peacefully.

These observers believe that the P. R. I. itself will take note of the discontent in the country by allowing the opposition considerably increased congressional representation. (All but four of the 211 seats in Congress now are held by representatives of the P. R. I.).

This, in turn, should lead to a closer scrutiny of Administration policies and of individuals' practices in public office, a necessary function in parliamentary democracy entirely lacking in Mexico.

If the changes are brought about without resort to arms, it may be that the present uneasiness will have been the necessary leaven to end single-party rule and pave the way for the introduction of truly democratic processes in Mexico.