

A Word About Mexico, Mr. President (December 10, 1910)

President Taft, I mean. Isn't it time for you to take another trip to the Rio Grande? Things are looking very squally for your friend Díaz. You, and Roosevelt before you, did everything possible on this side to keep the bloody clutches of your friend Díaz at the throats of the ten million peons worked in Mexico and owned and robbed on Wall Street. You had your secret service thugs and assassins turned into the bloodhounds of Díaz and you had every patriotic Mexican soul who was fighting for his countrymen, and sought refuge here, thrown into United States dungeons, buried alive, and devoured by vermin, to entrench and prolong the reign of the decorated cannibal who masquerades as the president of Mexico, and whose bloody claws you grasped in fell and hearty fellowship as you assured him of your profound respect and the absolute confidence of your mutual masters on Wall Street.

Do you remember this occasion, Mr. President, when your own people were shut out and one of your most ardent admirers was murdered by a guard in his eagerness to witness the ceremony?¹ Do you remember the soldiers that surrounded you, with shotted guns in their hands, and pressed in closely upon you to guard you against your own chosen people while you, with ashen, cowardly lips, delivered the message of your masters?

Lest you have forgotten your speech on that occasion, I will here quote from it as it appeared in the newspapers at that time:

...it gives me the greatest pleasure and I esteem it a special honor to assure your excellency that the American people regard you with the highest respect as an illustrious ruler who has always been profoundly concerned in the prosperity of his country and the happiness of his people, and the beneficiaries of whose reign will be recorded in the pages of history.²

Oh, what a a lie! What a wicked, ghastly, damnable lie! That lie should have stuck in your throat and strangled you until you were as black in the face as the administration you were glorifying. No wonder you and your Archibald Butt³ had to shut out the people and have yourselves walled in

with mailed murderers as the only fit witnesses to such an immoral and debasing exhibition.

There are two occasions in your life, Mr. President, that you ought not to forget: the one when you embraced the tsar of Russia, and the other when you grasped the hand of the tsar of Mexico. The countless ghosts of the victims of these bloody monsters do not envy you the presidency of the United States at the price you paid for it.

The Mexican people are not rising against the people of the United States; they are rising against Díaz and his Wall Street administration of assassination in Mexico and they are going to overthrow the bloody despotism, based upon the robbery of the people and maintained by force and murder, in spite of the aid and comfort and connivance of your administration in the United States.

Oscar Lawler⁴ may be in official clover and Flores Magón may rot in an American prison cell, but the eternal forces that unmake kings and tyrants, destroy thrones, crush iniquity, and triumphantly vindicate the right are at work, and when the hour strikes the revolution in Mexico will drive out its dictator and your friend Díaz will be lucky if he escapes with the head on his shoulders.

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¹ The *El Paso Times* reported that during the morning of Saturday, October 16, 1909 there was a stabbing of 15-year old Lawrence Wimber, an El Paso boy who had come to see President Taft by another in the crowd gathered at San Jacinto Square. Noel Morgan, a 14-year old classmate apprehended while fleeing the scene, was charged for the crime, reportedly the result of a petty dispute over an American flag. Morgan was tried as an adult and acquitted by a six-member jury on May 17, 1910. Debs's assertion that a Taft body-guard was responsible appears to be deeply misinformed.

² William Howard Taft and Mexican ruler Porfirio Díaz met in El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico on October 16, 1909. The pair first met one-on-one for 20 minutes at the chamber of commerce building in El Paso with no interpreters or other officials present. The precise subject of this conversation by the two bilingual leaders never revealed. A somewhat longer conversation followed later in the day at the Mexican customhouse at Ciudad Juárez, followed in the evening by an opulent banquet. The exact quotation cited here by Debs has not been successfully located in the contemporary press.

³ Captain Archibald Butt (1865-1912) was a military advisor to President William Taft who traveled with him to the October 1909 summit meeting with Mexican strongman Porfirio Díaz. Butt would later be among the victims of the April 1912 sinking of the *RMS Titanic*.

⁴ Oscar Lawler was a United States district attorney who handled prosecutions of the Magonistas.