

EDITORIAL

TAFT'S FIRST MESSAGE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

“WAR!” is the dominant note in the President’s message to Congress —“War against Nicaragua!”

Though the passage referring to Zelaya is comparatively short its setting is extensive. The setting is made up of a lengthy argument against a sugar fraud inquiry; of scores upon scores of lines in opposition to further tariff revision; of paragraphs galore that talk all around the Trust Question but never into it; of extensive argumentation in favor of paternalism to shipowners, banks and civil service pets; of bonds past, present and to come. In short, the setting may be summed up in few words—the clash at home of mammoth Interests threatens intestine shock; congested wealth is raising a large brood of needy, whose clamor must be satisfied; popular suspicion, whetted by popular want, is breeding inquisitive questions; luxury, on the one hand, penury, on the other, incites Idleness to deeds of crime. The edge of war, like an ill-sheathed knife, threatens to cut its master. There is but one recourse—the time-tried recourse—a foreign war which, by keeping all contending elements in false gaze, will satisfy, will silence all.

Such was the problem that faced McKinley at his first election. The “Advance Agent of Prosperity” found the “solution” in the war with Spain. The opening of new avenues for congested capital, the staving in of the barrel of the Treasury in behalf of thousands of new officials in Cuba and the Philippines, the setting of the wheels of industry in motion to equip armies and navies—all that brought relief.

The “solution” tested by McKinley is now to be tested by Taft, in all appearances. Central America offers a field for wild flights of finance, with quite a shower of gold upon camp followers of all degrees. Zelaya offers the opportunity. It seems the opportunity is to be seized.

If seized, the issue will be as in McKinley’s instance. The so-called solution will

prove, in fact, only a deferring. Upon the “relief” of the McKinley war followed the era of wildest speculation, bringing in its wake the worst crisis yet experienced.

The solution of a foreign war partakes of the solution offered by drunkenness to present troubles. The troubles are not removed by the liquor. Only the body is thrown into an ecstasy that renders it oblivious, for the moment, to the troubles that beset it, but only to awake and find the identical troubles only in increased magnitude. He who resorts to drunkenness in order to escape troubles finds himself driven with increasing frequency to repeat the dose. Moving from drunken fit to drunken fit, the ill-advised wretch dies of delirium tremens.

As with individuals, so with Ruling Classes. The Ruling Class that knows no escape from domestic distress other than the drunk of a foreign war, will be driven with increasing frequency to repeat the measure. A Ruling Class's final delirium tremens calls for the Caesar—unless, in our particular case, the Socialist or Industrial forces have reached sufficient maturity to “take and hold,” and thereby end the economic conditions that beget National Ruin—or National Reaction.

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