

JAPANESE 'MENACE' SEEN BY A PERUVIAN

Worker's Letter Describes the Effect on His Village, Where Immigrants Are 'in Control'

NATIVES HELD ONLY SERFS

Plantations Reported in Hands of Japanese, Who Are Called Proprietors and Capitalists

By T. R. YBARRA

By Air Mail to THE NEW YORK TIMES.
LIMA, Peru, Jan. 16.—I have just been shown a remarkable document.

It is a letter, written by a Peruvian, a humble worker, to a prominent American here, describing Japanese infiltration in the provincial town where he lives and in the rich agricultural district surrounding it.

The author of this letter naively hoped that it would be brought to the attention of the American delegation to the Pan-American Conference held in this city last month. The United States, he felt, ought to protect its interests by taking some sort of action against the rising tide of Japanese penetration of Peru, where the Emperor's subjects are, in numbers and standing, more important than anywhere else in South America, with the exception of Southern Brazil.

No "Japanese Peril" Seen

From his letter two things emerge with distinctness: the astounding capacity of the Japanese to prosper in a foreign land, and the helplessness and defeatism, in the face of Japanese competition, of Peruvians of the working class, descended from those subjects of the Incas who, four centuries ago, allowed their native land to be conquered by Spaniards as alien to them as are the Japanese to their descendants of today.

Before quoting from this letter, one thing must be made clear: there is no imminent Japanese peril in Peru. The total number of residents here who were born in Japan is only about 11,000; the total of those living in the country whose parentage is Japanese, about twice as many again—say a grand total of 35,000 at the most.

The great majority of these are

humble folk—shopkeepers, barbers,

small farmers, plumbers, gardeners,

etc. Only a few have risen to affluence. Practically none mix in politics. They garrison no submarine or air bases along Peru's coast.

They are not regimented, militarily, awaiting a clarion call to arms from their Emperor. They are just frugal, thrifty, hard-working people.

Nevertheless, they have prospered, multiplied and asserted

themselves to such an extent in cer-

tain regions that the Peruvian Gov-

ernment has recently taken steps

to hold their influence in check,

notably by denying citizenship to

children born in Peru of Japanese

parents and imposing quota restrictions on goods imported from

Japan.

The underlying reasons for these

measures leap vividly to the eye

when one peruses the letter of the

above-mentioned Peruvian working-

man.

Translation of the Letter

Here is a translation, somewhat condensed, of that letter, in which the writer tried to express, in often misspelled and ungrammatical Spanish, the animosity and forebodings aroused by the settlers from far-away Japan besetting him and his fellow-Peruvians on all sides—in the pathetic hope that what he said might come to the attention of Secretary of State Cordell Hull and the rest of our delegation to the Eighth Pan American Conference and make them do something about it:

"With all due respect, I am taking the liberty of telling you, from a workingman's standpoint, how Japanese activities are developing along the Peruvian coast. There is a saying that nobody feels anything as much as one who suffers; and, in this case, it is we, the workers of Peru, who suffer most from the misery and unemployment forced upon us by the Japanese monster, the wild beast that most seriously menaces South America.

"The Japanese are multiplying here in the most astonishing way. Every one of them came first to this country as a youth, alone, having studied at least eight years in school, already qualified for some calling or profession. After a while each brought out a wife from Japan, and, at the end of ten years, each had at least six children.

"Peruvian politicians do not realize that the Japanese employ tactics different from those of Fascists or Nazis. They keep perfectly silent, pretend to be stupid, yet they are the cleverest of all; they don't mix in politics before they have thoroughly overrun commerce and agriculture. After that they assert themselves politically under some sort of pretext, as they did at Shanghai.

Fascists Betray Intentions

"When South Americans finally want to oppose them, it will be too late; they will find the Japanese well-based, fully militarized, served by numerous spies, in control of business and agriculture, in possession of the most valuable strategic points in the country. On the other hand, Fascists and Nazis soon betray their intentions, because they try to win political predominance before they have dominated commerce and agriculture.

"To sum up, my dear sir, Peru belongs to the Japanese and not to the Peruvians. All the glory, in this world, goes to those who have money, and become, thereby, fortunate in love, and prosperous; and that same world is hellish for the poor, who cannot find happiness in love nor prosperity, the two most important things in life.

"Here the Japanese are living in glory and the Peruvians in hell. The former are gobbling up nearly all the plantations in this valley. First, they get hold of a 'hacienda' and then they chase out all the Peruvian workers by trickery or actual force, since the local authorities side with them.

"In the principal town of this valley nearly all the stores, restaurants, barber shops and such-like are run by Japanese. Other

Japanese raise vegetables, such as yucca and corn, also fruit; and all support wives and children and send the latter to school in automobiles.

Military Manoeuvres Staged

"They stage military manoeuvres on land that is carefully enclosed and far from the town, where Peruvians cannot see their goings-on. And, whenever they deal with Peruvians, they close their mouths tight, show overweening pride and despotic manners, and when asked a question they pretend to be deaf.

If they finally answer they tell a lie or say something malicious, and just as soon as they can they get away from the Peruvian with whom they have been talking.

Sometimes they insult us by saying 'Peruvians are good-for-nothing; they're donkeys and dumb brutes.'

"All the Japanese around here are proprietors and capitalists, and they employ Peruvian girls as servants.

"Among all the foreigners who come to Peru only they come without capital, and take everything in sight, and, instead of showing gratitude, they act outrageously,

behaving well only toward the government but showing brutality toward the Peruvian people. Only in a country like Peru, where most people cannot read or write, would such folk be tolerated; in Germany they would not be able even to get seed enough for planting crops.

Live in Best Houses

"The Japanese here are contributing toward the extermination of the Peruvian people, since they help to bring economic ruin and unemployment and misery. That is why they settle in the most backward countries. Some old Japanese here, who came as workers or servants, are today solid business men or planters. One of them owns six haciendas. They live in the center of the town, in the best houses, which they own; they put in modern plumbing, spend the Summers at the seashore. On the other hand, Americans in Peru, despite the fact that they come here with capital, suffer from the icy cold of the mountains and risk their lives in the mines.

"Meanwhile, the Peruvian is just a 'peón.' He earns barely enough to buy food. Economically he is enslaved, badly fed, held in low esteem; and lastly, he is despised by women, because they heed only

those who have money or a good job. If a Peruvian worker gets ill he has no money with which to stay abed, buy medicines, or summon a doctor. And, all the while, the Japanese multiply, because not

one of them is sunk in misery, not one is a 'peón.' All are employers,

and hire Peruvian girls to take care of their children.

"And the Peruvians are humiliated and close their mouths because they are ignorant, and an ignoramus must keep silent not because he agrees with others but because he does not know how to express himself.

Japanese Boycott Country

"The Japanese, though they earn lots of money here, boycott the country, keep away from moving picture houses and theatres and buy only Japanese wares. When they need help, they hire Japanese while

the Peruvian must wander about like a gypsy, trying to find work.

"Peruvian owners of plantations are a lazy lot, who want nothing but life in the big cities, where they just loaf and amuse themselves. They sell or lease their plantations to the Japanese.

"People in this neighborhood endure all this injustice in silence; there have never been strikes

around here of any sort. One Japanese planter must earn one million soles a year (a sol is worth about twenty cents) from his six plantations alone, to say nothing of what he gets from his shops, etc.

He lives in a little palace and does nothing but run around in a motor car overseeing his plantations. And if anybody asks even a couple of cents raise he is called an agitator, a Communist, and he is sent off to prison.

The government thinks that, if it makes a road or puts up a few buildings in Lima, it is bringing happiness and prosperity to the people!

"I think that it behooves the United States, more than any other nation, to take action in Peru. It would not be to the advantage of the United States to have Peru invaded by some other power or to have a puppet government here."

This is the fifteenth in a series of articles by Mr. Ybarra, who is touring Latin America.