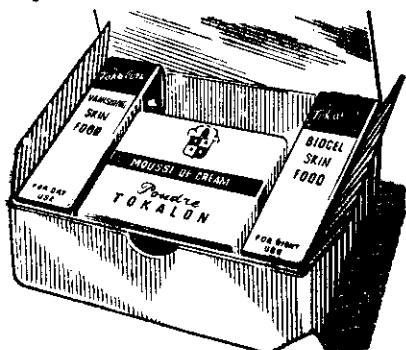


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SOUTH AMERICAN SET-UP A Continent Where Everything Is "Pro Tem"

NOT Africa now, but South America, is the Dark Continent. It is true that news flashes, mainly concerning revolutions, successful or abortive, keep coming from there off and on. But they are of the brief and separated sort that only accentuate obscurity. Generally they refer to generals (some, very strangely, with English names) who appear pro-Axis in one cable and pro-Ally in the next. Somehow, the United States comes in, too, "recognising" a Government in the morning and in the afternoon cutting it in the street. And all this is not normal local politics, we are told—though government by revolution sounds just ordinary South American to many of us—but involves Axis intrigues and fateful issues for the entire planet. So our contributor, A.M.R., provides a little background information to help to decode these cryptic cables.

A PLAIN, a mountain range, and a forest—that is South America reduced to its lowest terms. But the forest is the thickest, wettest, least inhabited and most extensive in the world—the entire Amazon basin, which, penetrable to-day only by mile-wide tributaries and the creek-tunnels up which the Indian rubber-prospector snakes his canoe, may possibly remain unconquered by mankind when Antarctica and the Sahara are already tamed. The range is also the world's greatest, being exceeded in height by only the Himalayas, and is 4000 miles long. In places it swells into wide plateaux: as that around Quito, where, dead on the Equator, perpetual spring reigns between the Avenue of Volcanoes: and as that in Bolivia where the copper inhabitants of a treasure-house of metals look down at the clouds instead of up at them, put coats on when entering their houses and take them off to go out, and navigate their 150-mile-long lake in boats built of rushes, since it is miles above the tree-line.

Culturally, South America is more homogeneous than any continent except Australia. Approximately half its area is taken by the United States of Brazil, Portuguese-speaking, but inhabited by representatives of every race on earth. What we call "America" the Brazilians call "The United States of North America," a reminder to us that their own country is larger than the U.S.A. and potentially more productive. The Spanish-speaking half of South America consists first of the Pampas countries of Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay centred round the Rio Grande de la Plata (Great River of the Plains), and second, the line of Indian-blooded republics that perch along the Andes, heads in the clouds, toes in the Pacific, and coat-tails dangling into the Amazonian stream. Everywhere South Americans tend to be poor, primitive, and chronically ill. Everywhere, except in the great modern cities at the one extreme and in the naked jungle villages at the other, they live as peons under landlords always proud and often wealthy. Everywhere idealistic military politicians rule with one eye on their rivals' intrigues inside the army and the other on foreign bankers. And everywhere underfoot, either in minerals or in the soil, slumbers great wealth.

Such a country is just made to be mine and market for imperial states. Naturally, therefore, the "have-not" governments sought here the colonial opportunities denied them elsewhere. With



air, press, and radio services they pioneered an entry. By organising their fellow-countrymen who were already settled, they created "bloca" large enough to be sought after by the local politicians. (There are more Italians in Buenos Aires than in Rome, while Brazil has five million Germans and the only extensive Japanese colony in the world.)

Trains and Trams for Food

However, they were far from being first in the field. Foreigners had already nine billion pesos invested in Argentina alone, five and a-half billion of these being British (say £25,000,000). All Argentine railways and trams were British-owned. The telephone system was American. The canning and freezing works—as essential to Argentine life as dairy factories are here—were British or American. These investments do not necessarily imply exploitation in the sinister sense, since without them South America's export industries would never have developed and Rio and Buenos Aires would still be villages without water or sewerage (let alone telephones and electric power) instead of two of the world's great cities. But they do mean that neither Britain nor America was prepared to see South American states become so much satellites of other Powers that they needed no further Anglo-American loans and could therefore with impunity default on those already

(continued on next page)