

The *New York Times*' 125-year political vendetta against Mexico

by Anton Chaitkin and Roger Maduro

New York Times reporter Alan Riding has written a book, *Distant Neighbors*, that constitutes his contribution to the *Times*' much broader campaign of journalistic terrorism directed at Mexico. Riding's book is a blueprint for civil war and the overthrow of the Mexican government. The *Times* prints articles day after day on "tyrannical" and "unstable" Mexican leaders, demanding that Mexico admit the neo-Nazi PAN party to power or suffer dire consequences. This thunderous rhetoric and slander reflects a desire that the banking cartel led by the International Monetary Fund should be given free rein to starve Mexicans and to seize raw materials in order to collect debts.

This is not a new campaign. From the first months of the paper's existence in the early 1850s, the *Times* began calling for the conquest of Latin America for the extension of the plantation slavery system. With the *Times*' loud support, New York-based military adventurers John A. Quitman and James Bulloch attempted to seize Cuba; they went on to lead the creation of the Southern secessionist movement against the American Union.

But the destruction and looting of Mexico in particular has been an obsession with the *New York Times* now for at least 125 years.

We will let the *Times* speak for itself; the quotes presented here are available to readers in the *New York Times*' micro-filmed records in major public libraries throughout the United States.

On Dec. 20, 1860, following the election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency, a rump convention in South Carolina declared that that state had seceded from the United States. Six days later, Dec. 26, 1860, the *New York Times* lead editorial responded:

Shall We Have Mexico!

... There are many obstacles to the adoption of the policy of a protectorate over Mexico, which the dissolution of the Union would remove. . . . Ignorant and degraded as they are, the Mexicans cherish a wholesome prejudice against an institution which would reduce them to the level of slaves. . . . A strong repugnance exists among the masses to the Southern

portion of this Union. But they would regard the people of the free North as benefactors and deliverers from anarchy and revolution. . . .

A protectorate will be the initiatory measure, accompanied with free trade, and a right of Colonization. . . . After a few years of pupilage the Mexican states would be incorporated into the Union. . . .

The trade of that most misgoverned country is even now valuable to the commercial nations of the world, and especially England. . . . But this trade, under the reign of anarchy which has lasted for forty years past [since Mexico's independence], is as nothing when compared with what it may become when Anglo-Saxon energy, intelligence and freedom shall have brought order out of chaos, and have converted the Guerrilla bands . . . into industrious laborers.

When Mexico belonged to Spain . . . for three centuries . . . she derived fabulous wealth. The Mexican silver and gold mines for ages yielded millions. . . . Her mines have ceased to turn out untold millions, because the hand of industry has been paralyzed by anarchy. . . .

The secession of the Southern States would still leave the Federal Government intact. . . . The Slave States could do nothing to resist the Northern protectorate over Mexico. England and France, and all the commercial nations would thank us for the service we should do the cause of civilization and commerce. . . . [The takeover of Mexico] opens up a limitless field of enterprise . . . much as disunion is to be deprecated on grounds of patriotism and national honor, it would not essentially and permanently injure the commercial and industrial prosperity of the North.

The *New York Times* management, incredibly enough, belonged to the same political party (Republican) as did President-elect Lincoln, who refused to sanction the destruction of either the United States or the Mexican republic. But the principal owner of the *Times*, Leonard Jerome, belonged to what may be termed the "Austrian" wing of the party. Having previously luxuriated in Europe as an American consul to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Jerome and

his family had become intimate with the Hapsburg Emperor and with Archduke Maximilian. Emulating the Hapsburgs and revelling in the court life, Jerome had moved on to Paris, attaining the same intimacy with French Emperor Louis Napoleon, his court, and his officers.

While the U.S.A. was tied up fighting the Southern Confederacy in the Civil War, the British, French, Spanish, and Austrian armies invaded Mexico and installed the Hapsburg Archduke Maximilian as "Emperor." During this insane adventure, Maximilian signed a decree for the death penalty for anyone who opposed his rule. The pretext for the invasion was the refusal of Mexico to pay debts to Swiss and other bankers. As war raged on both sides of the border simultaneously, President Lincoln allied himself and America with the cause of President Benito Juárez, leader of the Mexican patriots against the colonial invaders.

Following the victory of the American Union, the Mexicans also defeated their enemies, with the help of pressure on the invaders from the American government. Maximilian was executed. The *New York Times* responded in its lead editorial of July 2, 1867:

The Murder of Maximilian

. . . Maximilian has been shot by the Republican government of Mexico which first bribed one of his officers to betray him. The Austrian embassy at Washington seems to have received official advices to this effect.

There is not a man anywhere, with a spark of honorable feeling in his nature, who will bear this news . . . without sympathy for this noble and gallant young prince, and detestation for the monsters who have glutted their vengeance in his blood. . . . Nothing could be more manly or more honorable than the conduct of Maximilian through the whole of this most unhappy adventure. His personal bearing has been beyond reproach. . . .

Those who remember only the political mission of the Austrian Prince, should in justice also recall the circumstances under which he entered upon it. He did not come unasked—he was invited by Mexicans, who, he was told, represented the real sentiment of the nation, to aid in its deliverance from anarchy and ruin. He sought, not the conquest, but the regeneration of the country to which he had been invited. . . . He believed, sincerely and truly, that foreign intervention was absolutely essential to the redemption and regeneration of the Mexican nation.

His death will convince more than half the world, before incredulous, that he was right. It is hard to believe that men capable of such a crime are capable of self-government, or to be entrusted with authority. . . . The brutal instincts—the thirst for blood—are uppermost in their natures. The hour of victory is with them . . . for insolent defiance of . . . the public

sentiment of the Christian world.

The murder of Maximilian . . . bodes ill for the Republican government of Mexico. It deprives it of all sympathy from other nations, and brings upon it the distrust, the scorn, and the hatred of them all. . . .

This breathtaking assault is then compounded by the concoction of the most audacious lie, putting words into the mouth of a Mexican general, in a second, July 4, 1867 editorial:

Gloating on the mangled corpses of his victims, Escovedo declares himself resolved upon an indiscriminate slaughter of the foreign residents [!]. "I have," says he, "by the execution of these master traitors made terror the order of the day everywhere. I have imposed large contributions upon the rich, and confiscated their property, and their all. . . . I hope, before closing my military career, to see the blood of every foreigner spilt that resides in my country."

In its lead editorial of July 9, 1867, the *Times* declared that the Austrians might declare war on Mexico, and that the United States must not interfere if they did. The *Times* then proposes how this may be avoided:

We want . . . a plan that will secure the permanent establishment of order and regular government in Mexico, and which at the same time will prevent her from becoming the prey of foreign powers. We believe Mexico is incapable of effecting this for herself, and we believe it can only be done through American influence or domination.

A month later, on Aug. 11, 1867, the *Times* carried the following editorial:

Mexican Petroleum

. . . In no part of the world are so many of the rarest productions of nature lavished upon so wretched and undeveloped a population and no where else is there so enterprising and ingenious a nation in close neighborhood to immense natural resources in the hands of incapable possessors. The wealth of the vegetable and the mineral kingdom is wasted upon guerrillas and peons within a few days sail of marts and manufacturing which it scantily reaches. If it was worth our while to go round the world to force open Japan, it will be far easier and more profitable to win our way into the barred treasurehouse that lies close at our doors. The nations of Europe have retreated from the task, giving up even the debts for the sake of which they professed to assume it, and they will thank us for either course we may take with their insolvent enemy—whether to extinguish her national existence by war or to regulate her internal affairs and create a commerce out of her splendid materials by peaceful aid.

The editorial goes on to discuss Mexico's huge deposits of petroleum, and the need to have them out of the ground.

From the *New York Times* editorial of April 28, 1868 on the subject of Northwestern Mexico:

. . . Fleeced by officials, plundered by robbers, and the prey of revolutionary leaders, in what is anarchy so much better than annexation? Chihuahua, Sonora, Sinaloa, and Lower California would find themselves far better off in the American Republic than in the Mexican Republic. . . .

But Mexico maintained its nationhood. For most of the next three decades, the United States continued Abraham Lincoln's economic and foreign policies. Then, the British international banking conglomerate known as the House of Morgan consolidated a vice-grip over the industries and over the policy of the United States. Morgan also took over the *New York Times*.

The *Times'* tradition of war to the death with Mexico continued. United States armed forces intervened in Mexico in 1914 under President Woodrow Wilson, over the nominal issue of an insult to an American national. When time came for the withdrawal of the troops, the *Times* demanded that the troops remain—to take care of other business.

From the *New York Times* editorial, Sept. 16, 1914:

No Time for Withdrawal

In view of the complications arising out of the seizure of the National Railways of Mexico by the temporary Constitutionalist Government, it seems that President Wilson's order for the removal of our troops from Vera Cruz is ill-timed. While [Mexican political leader Venustiano] Carranza can scarcely intend to repudiate the bonds of these railways . . . there will surely be difficulties to overcome in the readjustment of the finances which may lead to many serious disputes. . . . Our troops should remain until there is a clear prospect of settlement of the country's difficulties. Carranza cannot take the property of Americans [American banks serving European bondholders], Englishmen, Frenchmen, and Germans without paying for it.

From the *New York Times* editorial, Sept. 18, 1914:

New Danger in Mexico

. . . The so-called seizure of the National Railways system . . . an act that savors of repudiation of a huge debt held in Europe . . . cannot be countenanced by the United States Government. In the circumstances, while the [troop withdrawal] order of President Wilson will stand, of course, we hope there will be no undue haste in removing from Mexican soil the influence of our armed forces. . . .

The danger lies in the large holdings of the National Railways' securities in Europe. It will be bad

for Mexico and for us if the Europeans lose not only faith in Mexican promises, but in our ability to protect their interests, and, after their present troubles are over, [if the Europeans] take the course followed by France, Spain, and England when Juárez stopped paying interest on foreign debts [and attempted colonial reconquest]. It seems necessary for Washington to make Carranza understand that he cannot, with our consent, take any measures which will anger Europe, and thus lead to dangerous complications. . . .

From the *New York Times* lead editorial, Sept. 20, 1914:

Mexico's Just Debts

. . . We have practically given notice to Europe that we are willing and able to protect legitimate foreign interests in Mexico. The extent to which such interests may be fairly regarded as legitimate is an open question, but there is no doubt that money borrowed in Europe to finance the National Railways represent a debt which cannot be safely repudiated.

Given the evidence, in the plain words of the *New York Times*, decade after decade for more than a century, Mexico may well consider it a measure of national self-preservation that personnel of that newspaper be deported and barred from entry as dangerous individuals.

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