

Mexico still has the problems of raising living standards for millions of peasants, reducing illiteracy, and making democracy still more effective by the development of opposition political forces to contest with the Party of Revolutionary Institutions (PRI), which has run the country ever since the 1920's. In her record of political and economic progress from the end of World War II to date, however, Mexico has set an example which many another Latin American nation would do well to follow.

NICARAGUA

There has been little political change or development in Nicaragua since 1936. In that year, Gen. Anastasio Somoza, the head of the national guard, seized the presidency and ruled as a dictator for the next generation. Like his counterpart, General Trujillo, in the Dominican Republic, Somoza's monopoly on the means of violence was used to promote the selfish ends of the family. Systematic graft and the accumulation of vast commercial and agricultural holdings through use of political power made the Somozas one of the wealthiest families in the Americas.

Following the assassination of the dictator in 1956, his two sons have tried to carry on. Luis Somoza is now President, and his younger brother, "Tachito," heads the national guard. During the past year, there have been indications—notably popular demonstrations and an attempted invasion by exiles—that the Somoza family may not be able to continue to dominate and exploit Nicaragua in the manner they have so long become accustomed to.

PANAMA

Panama, at the end of World War II, was still being ruled by the small group of "first families" that had controlled the politics of this tiny Republic for most of its independent history. In the immediate postwar period, however, the growing social tensions and the political awakening of the lower and middle income groups, neither of which seemed to possess cohesion, responsible leadership, or positive national programs, provided an increasingly larger political power vacuum into which the national police steadily moved. By 1947, Police Chief Col. José Antonio Remón had become the arbiter of Panamanian politics. This he demonstrated by making and breaking five civilian Presidents in the 4 years preceding his assumption of presidential power in late 1952.

Remón was a genuine reformer. He insisted upon integrity in the hitherto corrupt bureaucracy, thoroughly reorganized the country's finances, promoted agricultural and industrial development, and conducted a reasonably responsible foreign policy vis-a-vis the United States. Also, he sought to make the Government the servant of all social classes rather than only the privileged. He introduced social welfare and labor legislation, and he catered to the mass vote, even to the hitherto ignored Negroes. Broad material benefits to the national police helped protect him against the opposition of the oligarchy.

The 1955 assassination of Remón brought the brief reform movement to a halt; for the first families, under the presidency of Ernesto de la Guardia, Jr., resumed power again and control Panama today.