

# A New Stage of the Mexican Revolution

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THE events of March and April in Mexico have emphasized the fact that the Mexican revolution has passed to a new stage of its development. The uprising of the reactionary landlord-clerical forces, which began on March 3rd with the mutiny of the troops of General Aguirre at Vera Cruz, disclosed the changing alignment of class forces within Mexico, their relations internationally, and the greater maturity of all the class forces engaged in armed struggle. Precisely what are the changes in the relation of class forces becomes a life and death question for the Mexican workers and peasants, for upon the estimation, correct or false, of these forces depends the direction in which guns are turned.

## THE PASSING STAGE OF THE REVOLUTION

That stage of the revolution out of which Mexico is now passing was given its characteristic features in the Calles-Obregon regime, which emerged as a petty-bourgeois government, basing itself upon mass support of workers and peasants while engaging in struggle against foreign imperialism (United States and Great Britain) and against native landlord-clerical reaction, at the same time making compromises and concessions to its enemies and putting off the workers and peasants largely with promises.

Torn between conflicting forces and tendencies within itself, the Mexican revolutionary government pursued a zigzag path. But its course, on the whole, was directed against imperialism and feudal-clerical reaction until 1928. During this period the inner contradictions, the antagonistic class interests, were maturing and accumulating. In 1928 they broke through the old policies and alignments, and ended that phase of the Mexican revolution in which the leadership lay with the petty bourgeoisie.

The anti-imperialist policy of the Mexican petty bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie, in its earlier stage of development, required that it rally the support of the worker and peasant masses. This was accomplished under the slogan of "Land and Liberty," which signified for the peasantry the demand for distribution of the land and breaking up of the great estates, and for the workers freedom of organization, right to strike, etc., with the reclamation of national resources from foreign imperialism.

The government had purchased the support of the masses by means of promises which it could only carry out by making uncompromising war against the native landowners and foreign imperialism. But it felt itself too weak for such a struggle, especially because its own special class foundation is weak. Its economic basis is undeveloped and its strength is sapped by its inter-penetration with the feudal elements. It was fearful of the growing organization, consciousness, power and aggressiveness of the workers and peasants. It searched feverishly for formulae of compromise, for "some way out" other than that of uncompromising struggle. Therefore the peasantry was cheated of the promised distribution of land; the confiscation from foreign imperialism of Mexican natural resources was abandoned; the rising organizations of the workers were systematically corrupted through the Morones-Labor Party-CROM leadership. And finally, in the same series of developments, inevitably came in 1928, the complete surrender of the Mexican government of Calles-Obregon to Dwight L. Morrow, Ambassador from Wall Street for the U. S. Government.

During the past period, when the Mexican petty-bourgeois government was conducting a struggle against American imperialism, and when it was serving as a rallying center for the national revolutionary movements of all Latin America, it received the support of the masses of workers and peasants, including the conditional support of the Mexican Communist Party. This policy was correct so long as there existed its foundation; namely, the anti-imperialist struggle of the government. But with the surrender to Wall Street by Calles-Obregon, together with the decisive sections of the petty bourgeoisie and all the commercial, banking, and small "modern" capitalists, such a policy of support, even though conditional and modified by sharp criticism, was no longer a revolutionary policy.

The government of Portes Gil, successor to Calles and Obregon, which openly depends for its existence upon the favors of American imperialism, is definitely a government of counter-revolution. It reflects in its transformed role the changing role of the petty bourgeoisie, which abandons its attempts at an independent line and accepts the leadership of the native bourgeoisie and foreign imperialism. Where the passing period of the Mexican revolution was under the leadership of the petty bourgeoisie, the new period now opening finds that class deserted to the enemy, on the other side of the firing line. The only forces now capable of carrying forward the revolution are those of the workers and peasants.

#### THE ANGLO-AMERICAN RIVALRY IN MEXICO

Undoubtedly the hastily consummated surrender of the Mexican government to the United States was motivated by a double fear:

first, of the threatening feudal-clerical reaction which grew bold with the secret but effective aid of Great Britain, and second, of the workers and peasants who were beginning to press more and more their demands.

In order to defeat the reactionary rising, the government had to find support—*either* by mobilizing and arming the masses, *or* by coming to terms with Wall Street. It chose the latter. Thus the civil war alignment in Mexico fitted itself into the pattern of the world struggle between Britain and America. And there can be no doubt that, while the civil war has its specific Mexican roots and causes which cannot be explained by international forces, the rivalry of the two giants of imperialism has played and is still playing a tremendous role in stimulating events and determining their forms. The civil war in Mexico, just as the civil war also in China, becomes one of the preludes to the world war.

This fact is overlooked by our comrades in Mexico, an oversight which contains the possibility of serious mistakes in the future. Thus the Thesis of the Mexican Communist Party says in its first paragraph:

“ . . . American investment ousts and subordinates to its interests the rest of the invested capital, attaining thus a united front of bankers and foreign exploiters, under the direction of American government.”

It is true that American imperialism is strengthening greatly its hold over Mexico, and gaining new positions against its rival, Britain. But this fact sharpens, rather than eliminates, the imperialist rivalry. The very aggressiveness and growing domination of Yankee imperialism are precisely factors which, all over the world, sharpen the resistance of British imperialism and bring ever closer the inevitable armed conflict between them. Properly to understand this basic fact, and concretely to study in all detail the resulting effects in Mexican political development, is necessary in order to fortify the revolutionary perspective, to guard against falling into subjection to either group of imperialist agents, and to strengthen the independent policy of the worker-peasant mass movement. The Mexican revolutionists must open their eyes to the role being played within their country by world forces, in order to correctly evaluate the internal situation.

#### AN INDEPENDENT WORKER-PEASANT POLICY

The present new period of the Mexican revolution is characterized by the emergence of the workers and peasants as an independent force, carrying through the revolution no longer *with* but *against* the

petty bourgeoisie which has surrendered to the bourgeoisie and imperialism.

This essential feature of the new period is recognized by the Mexican Communist Party in its Thesis (paragraph 11) when it says:

“The first task of the Party must consist in separating the working and agrarian masses from the leadership of the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie. The second, to organize these masses within one organization which will unify them for action. This task the Party must undertake with all energy. The Comintern at our April conference has fixed the method and the organization. The method is a class program which should mark clearly the difference of the objectives between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and peasant class. The organization is the workers’ and peasants’ bloc.”

The project of a workers’ and peasants’ bloc was materialized in the great January conference in Mexico City, which demonstrated a high degree of consciousness and fighting spirit among the masses. The conference adopted a program to develop the independent role of the workers and peasants against feudal-clerical reaction and against the Mexican bourgeois lackeys of U. S. imperialism, the Portes Gil government. This program included the arming of the masses, nationalization of the land, confiscation of the industries with workers’ control, and the setting up of workers’ and peasants’ councils, etc. This program is clearly based upon a perspective of a sharply revolutionary situation in which the leadership must be assumed by the working class.

Within a few weeks (on March 3rd) this perspective had been confirmed by the outbreak of the reactionary rising. And the course of the Gil government fully confirmed the judgment of its counter-revolutionary nature. Turning away still more definitely from the masses, the Gil government relied entirely upon the aid, in arms, munitions, and political support, of the United States. Toward the workers and peasants, the government intensified its already sharply hostile policy, using the war mobilization in order to proceed to the violent liquidation of the organizations of the masses.

During the events of March and April there is no doubt that the mass movement of workers and peasants, under the leadership of the Mexican Communist Party, has made progress towards its necessary independent role. It has made some successes in breaking the masses from the petty bourgeoisie and directing them toward an independent policy. But at the same time it is also evident that some confusion of a serious nature exists on this question. Thus the heroic peasant detachment which defeated the rebels at Vera Cruz, found the fruits of their victory calmly appropriated by the government forces which did none of the fighting, while they them-

selves were dispersed and disarmed as their reward. The independent policy had not been adequately prepared, the leadership of the struggle against the rebellion had been again resigned to the petty bourgeoisie as in the past.

That this was not entirely the mistake of the leaders in the field, but represented (at least partially) some continued confusion in the very center of the Party, is shown by the Manifesto of the Party published in *El Machete* on March 9th, in which is to be found the following:

“Demand from the executive federal power, and from all local powers, that all available arms and military equipment be turned over immediately to the worker and peasant organizations which together with the federal forces remaining loyal to the government shall insure protection to the territories and cities attacked by the reactionary troops.”

This formulation of the demand for arms is quite clearly not directed toward independent action; in fact, it is a pledge of “loyalty” to the Gil government and an acceptance of its leadership. The “demand” was not of course agreed to by the government, which instead proceeded (as in Jalisco) to the arrest and deportation of worker leaders, breaking up their organizations, and even violating the Parliamentary immunity of a communist Deputy. If the workers and peasants still have illusions about “cooperation” with the petty bourgeoisie, the Portes Gil government does not suffer in the same way.

#### IS THERE A MEXICAN BOURGEOISIE?

One of the sources of difficulty in developing the independent policy of workers and peasants in Mexico, lies in the failure of the revolutionary leadership to properly appraise the role and influence of the bourgeoisie. Indeed, it is even questioned that there exists a bourgeoisie in Mexico, the formula being put forth that “the U. S. imperialists are the bourgeoisie of Mexico,” and that “in Mexico we have only a petty bourgeoisie with a tendency to become a bourgeoisie.”

This is a confusion of size (the Mexican capitalist is certainly small—therefore “petty”—compared with U. S. capitalists) with social and economic function and class interests (from which angle it is wrong to class these elements as “petty” bourgeois). The fact is, that out of the revolution itself in its first phase there has emerged a “modern” bourgeoisie, whose influence and power has been continually growing, and which is precisely the power which today has hegemony in the government.

It is the supreme task of the revolutionists in Mexico at this time to separate the masses (and to some extent also part of the petty bourgeoisie) from the leadership of the bourgeoisie. But how can this task be effectively carried out when the very existence of the bourgeoisie is brought into question? It is evident that the denial of the existence of the bourgeoisie is not a method of struggle against it.

The same mistake was made by revolutionists in China during 1925-1927. Under the formula "There is no native bourgeoisie," there took place in reality a dragging at the tail of the bourgeoisie on the part of the revolutionary forces. The underestimation of the influence of the bourgeoisie, the classification of the bourgeois elements as "petty bourgeois" and, by that fact, a part of the anti-imperialist forces even if wavering and unreliable—these are dangerous errors, whether made in China, India, or Mexico.

"The Mexican revolution . . . led to the formation of a government of the petty bourgeoisie. . . ."

"The national emancipatory struggle against American imperialism which has begun in Latin America is taking place for the most part under the leadership of the petty bourgeoisie." Thesis, Sixth World Congress).

These quotations, placed opposite the statement that "The Portes Gil government of Mexico is a petty bourgeois government," may lend an appearance of justification to continued conditional support of the Gil government by the revolutionary forces. This is a great danger.

The Mexican government originated as a petty-bourgeois government engaged in struggle against imperialism; *but it has transformed itself into an instrument of U. S. imperialist rule.* Inside of Mexico it bases itself upon the bourgeoisie and those sections of the petty bourgeoisie and landed interests which have subordinated themselves to the bourgeoisie and to American imperialism. It is therefore no longer correct to speak of this government as "petty bourgeois" in the sense of "national emancipatory," as terms in opposition to "bourgeois" and "national reformist." The Mexican government is incorporated into the forces of counter-revolution.

#### TOWARDS A WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' GOVERNMENT

It is not the slightest ground for pessimism that the workers and peasants stumble a bit, and make a few mistakes, in their first steps toward their independent struggle for power. Mistakes are not fatal, provided they are recognized and corrected. And as against these mistakes, there must be recorded the successful and highly important steps of the January conferences and the actions since then.

The formation of the workers' and peasants' bloc, by its very existence, forces the masses on to the field of independent action, and raises the question of a workers' and peasants' government. And the establishment of the Unitary Confederation of Labor of Mexico, with a large affiliated membership, weakening thereby to that extent the treacherous CROM leadership of Morones and Co., and the imperialistic Pan-American Federation of Labor, is an enormous gain for the Mexican workers.

While the Mexican workers and peasants are thus entering upon the road of the struggle for power, for a workers' and peasants' government, the revolutionary workers of the United States must more sharply than before realize their own special tasks in this regard. We in the U. S. must really begin the agitation and mobilization of the Mexican immigrant workers in the U. S. for practical help to the Mexican revolutionary organizations. These are among the first duties of the Communist Party of the U. S. A., as the most conscious representative of the American working class as a whole.

