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Current Affairs

The Assault Upon Mexico

IN its issue of March 13, a few days after the expedition against Villa was decided upon, the New York *Annalist* had the following paragraph:

"Intervention by the United States in the troubled affairs of Mexico has long been regarded as a possibility which would ultimately redeem all the millions of American capital invested in various properties in the Northern States. When it was learned on Friday that the Administration had decided to order troops after Villa several issues by companies operating in Mexico at once enjoyed a spirited advance. American Smelting and Refining rallied 2⅝ from the low of the day, Mexican Petroleum 5½, Southern Pacific 2⅛, and Greene-Cananea 2⅛. Southern Pacific has a $50,000,000 investment in Mexico which has been more of a liability than an asset since the natives took to shooting up one another. There was a wild cheer on the floor of the Exchange when a rumor was received that Villa had been captured and Carranza assassinated."

A more frank and brutal explanation of the motives of the interests demanding intervention in Mexico could not be imagined.

And that these interests believe the punitive expedition will ultimately resolve itself into an army of invasion is attested by innumerable facts. President Wilson has been compelled to denounce the "unscrupulous interests" responsible for the vicious campaign of misrepresentation waged in the American press to force intervention.

There is no mystery about the motives of the advocates of intervention, but there is a good deal of mystery about the motives behind the Villa raid into New Mexico. It has been clear for some time that foreign financial interests, particularly American investors, were placing hope in Villa as the only alternative to Carranza. The hatred of Carranza is intense, and Carranza has merited this hatred by compelling foreign interests in Mexico to abide by the decisions of the Mexican government instead of controlling the government. Indeed, Carranza has gone so far as to threaten confiscation of the property of some of these interests that were intentionally embarrassing the government and seeking to hold up the restoration of normal conditions.

The least that should be done is an investigation of the raid, and the punishment of the forces *on the American side of the border* that evidence seems to indicate were implicated in the raid.

Villa is playing the game of Huerta. When his power was crumbling, Huerta tried desperately to precipitate intervention as a means of uniting the Mexicans under his banner to resist invasion. Villa's recent action was undoubtedly partly inspired by a similar motive.

The raid into New Mexico could have been avoided, as John Lind, President Wilson's former personal envoy to Mexico has indicated, had a neutral zone been established on both sides of the border and the border adequately policed. For more than a year a raid such as that of Villa's has been feared, and yet no adequate means were adopted to prevent it. Why? Was there corruption? Was there malice aforethought?

Should the punitive expedition develop into intervention, as it may, the guilt lies upon the head of President Wilson and his administration. And this guilt involves not alone the failure to adopt preventive action, but for ordering the punitive expedition at a time when conditions in Mexico are such as to make it very difficult to prevent such an expedition from turning aside from its original purpose.

The citing of precedents for this action are beside the mark. Previous expeditions of this character were undertaken at a time when Mexico was not seething with revolution, and when there were no interests in Mexico that would profit by turning the expedition into an army of invasion. There has been a great deal of friction between the United States and Mexico lately, and this, together with the almost universal demand in our press for intervention, would justify the Mexican people in resisting. Under the present conditions, this punitive expedition assumes the form of a policy of irritating Mexico into overt acts leading to war, a policy so successful in precipitating the Mexican War in 1846 and the seizure of a large slice of Mexican territory by the United States.

Whether the expedition leads to intervention or no, it will assist mightily in fastening militarism on

this country. The interests behind preparedness are vociferously using the present situation in their militaristic propaganda, and are succeeding in their endeavors.

What are the Socialists doing in this crisis? Meyer London is raising his voice in protest; the New York *Call* is vigorously denouncing the expedition, but vitiates its propaganda by silly talk of Socialist generals in Mexico and how Socialistic Mexico is; but on the whole the Socialist and Labor movements are apathetic. There is no concerted and vigorous protest, the organized protest that alone could hold the Imperialists in check. Indeed, there is an under-current in the Socialist party that favors the action of the administration. The Milwaukee *Leader* editorially says, under the caption, "No Alternative":

"The invasion of the United States by Mexican bandits under the leadership of Francisco Villa, with the subsequent massacre of American citizens, left no alternative to the government at Washington excepting to use the military forces of the United States to pursue the murderers with a view to their capture or destruction.

"President Wilson, even if he had been disposed to continue his policy of placing upon Carranza the responsibility of dealing with the assassins of American citizens, could not have avoided a punitive expedition. The patience of congress has reached an end. The murder of American citizens on American territory by raiding bands of Mexicans must stop.

"It is unthinkable that the government of the United States will ever cease to protect its own citizens on its own soil from foreign invasion. Even in their voluntary associations, American citizens are not denied support of those who have joined with them. The labor union stands by its members when they are attacked by gunmen and thugs. Fraternal associations and church organizations do not hesitate to defend their members when they feel that they have been unjustly accused.

"When citizens of the American union are murdered and their homes menaced by enemies without it is the duty of the American government and of the American people to defend them. A government that should refuse to resent invasion of its territory by an armed force bent on murder and pillage could not long endure."

Views substantially identical were expressed by Victor L. Berger in a public interview. Not even the New York *Times* could be as emphatically nationalistic as the *Leader*,—a complete abandonment of an independent Socialist standpoint, an advocacy of all that Socialists hold in contempt.

The issue is clear: Where do the Socialists stand on national policy? Are they an independent revolutionary factor, or are they simply a part of the national liberal movement? The issue must be decided—we must know where we stand.—*L. C. F.*