

Intervention in Mexico and the Class Struggle

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THERE is practical unanimity among Communists, Socialists and Radicals of all descriptions, in opposing intervention in Mexico.

It is naturally assumed that intervention would mean war or at least a certain amount of fighting and Radicals know that, as always, it would be the workers who would fight, suffer and be killed—not the capitalists.

But would intervention be as strongly opposed by Radicals if it did not involve bloodshed—if for instance, it were “economic intervention” instead of military intervention and if Wall Street succeeded in making Mexico an American colony by means of financial and commercial pressure?

My answer is unhesitatingly, Yes.

And would the effect of “economic intervention” necessarily be bad—would the eventual winning of the class struggle by the Mexican working class necessarily be delayed or made more difficult?

Again my answer is emphatically, Yes.

The Mexican working class has nothing to gain and much to lose by intervention in any form. It makes no difference what form intervention may take. It will be intervention just the same. And the results will be equally baneful to the Mexican proletariat whether it be accomplished by actual military conquest and annexation or by the more insidious scheme of establishing a “protectorate” as in Cuba.

The easiest way for the Mexican masses to attain Industrial Democracy is to keep the Mexican government in Mexico.

The easiest way to keep the Mexican masses from Industrial Democracy is to rob their country of its own government, transfer the reins of power from Mexico City to Washington, and station soldiers throughout the land to strangle any outcry for self-determination as the English soldiers do in India, Ireland and Egypt.

This is not conjecture. It is assertion based on facts borne out by the history of practically every subjugated people and by happenings in the last few years right here in Mexico. A local government is certainly always more responsive to the wishes of the people than alien rule. The Mexican constitution is genuinely liberal and the administration of Carranza has probably been as liberal, all things considered, as was humanly possible in view of the difficulties, opposition and treachery under which it has labored. With all

its faults, it has certainly been more liberal than would have been the supervision of a governor appointed from the White House and independent of everybody except the American President who named him. And when the time comes for the Mexican workers to actually own and operate industry communistically, their task will be far less difficult if they are dealing with a government of their own people than if they were ground down by the agents of a foreign imperialism.

Some there are who maintain that Mexico must become a highly developed capitalistic country more or less like the United States before she can enter into the larger freedom of Communism. Their assumption is unsupported either by logic or evidence. Marx's theory of “increasing misery” does not necessarily mean that all peoples must experience the finality of wretchedness before they will discover what is the trouble. Some, undoubtedly, must suffer to the full the horrors of capitalism in its worst shape, before sufficient class-consciousness will dawn in the minds of the workers to cause them to break their chains, but there is no reason why this should be true of all nations. Mexico does not need to pass through all the varying stages of capitalism nor does she need to have her resources drained by exploiters before she is ready for the Cooperative Commonwealth. It is perfectly possible for her to retain her national individuality and to remain only partially developed, until there is enough solidarity among her workers and they are well-informed enough to establish a Soviet government. This would mean a longer period of industrial undevelopment, of what the Napoleons of finance would call ignorance and lethargy, but it would also mean less of cut-throat competition, frenzied money-making and heartless brutalities to the workers. Material progress, measured in dollars and cents, would be a little slower than some would wish, but the country would also be spared some of the nerve-racking, body-breaking and soul-killing that characterize the “business efficiency” of other nations. And when the workers came into their own, there would be vaster springs of wealth to be tapped for the benefit of all the people. More would be left for the proletariat because the capitalists had used less.

Mexico is in the making. She will not become a powerful capitalistic and imperialistic nation

for a variety of reasons which will suggest themselves to the reader. She has not a chance in the world of winning at the great international game of dollars and diplomacy even if she tried—and she won't try! She has too much sense to imagine that she would stand a ghost of a show with the big finance-empires of the world even if she waited hundreds of years. Nevertheless, she is in the making and she will do one of these two things—either become a helpless pawn in the grip of one or more of the huge imperialist nations or remain a nation independent politically but backward commercially and industrially. If she becomes the former, the day of her salvation will be put off still farther and the grip of international capitalism on the world will be even more vise-like than now. If she remains the latter, her workers will have an opportunity to study, organize and prepare for the time when they will do the governing. The period of waiting will enable them to better fit themselves for their coming responsibilities. Nationalism as a means to an end, will be a boon to the Mexican proletariat, hastening the time when the workers of the country can join hands with the workers of other countries in Proletarian Internationalism.

Fakers paid by capitalists to stir up dissension will try to arouse antagonism against all who seek to save Mexico from intervention and invasion. Louis N. Morones, agent of Samuel Gompers in the recent Mexican Socialist Congress, used these very tactics, accusing me of aiding a bourgeois government because I prefer a Carranza government (or any other kind of a Mexican government, for that matter) to American control here. That this sort of talk has its effect on superficial thinkers, unscientific Socialists and short-sighted souls may be seen from the fact that the Socialist Congress, which was a heterogeneous mass of differing doctrines of social amelioration, took no action whatever on the subject of intervention. The new Communist Party of Mexico, however, being composed of straight-seeing, clear-visioned Radicals, has vigorously denounced intervention.

Yet the point involved has been fully understood by all genuine authorities on Communism. Louis C. Fraina in "Revolutionary Socialism," page 145, says:

"Revolutionary Socialism adopts a policy of unrelenting antagonism toward nationalism in fully developed capitalist nations (only in pre-capitalistic nations that are the objectives of imperialism, such as Egypt, China and India, is nationalism progressive). The nation is a historical product and its significance and our attitude are de-

termined by the prevailing historical conditions. It is this circumstance that makes necessary our opposition to nationalism in highly developed imperialistic countries and our favoring nationalism in the revolutionary sense in the pre-capitalistic countries that are the objectives of imperialism."

In Mexico nationalism points the way to partial escape from international capitalism and affords an avenue leading to International Communism.

If Mexico were a great capitalistic nation with colonies all over the globe or if Mexico wanted to be such, it would be different. But Mexico is nothing of the kind and has no such aspirations. On the contrary, she is only a young, struggling nation composed mainly of people with little education and with no desire to dominate the markets of the world. The ambition of the average Mexican is to get a good living. He knows nothing of international trade balances and cares less. The Mexican psychology is not a commercialistic psychology. Peon and intellectual, laborer and aristocrat, despite the difference in their habits, notions of cleanliness and ideals of happiness, are essentially the same psychologically. Once in a long while you find a Mexican who thirsts for gold, but only once in a long while. Such a Mexican has probably lived in the United States or Europe or at least traveled there. If not, he has had to deal with tricksters and sharpers from the north long enough to acquire their greed and avarice. There are such Mexicans about the markets of Mexico City and some other cities where the "extranjeros" (foreigners) come. They are usually street vendors. A few have stores. But these are not the real Mexicans; alien customs have been grafted onto them. The native Mexican is a more hopeful potential convert to Communism than if he and several generations of ancestors had lived under capitalism and been saturated with the doctrine that private property, profit, rent and interest are sacred institutions and fundamental necessities.

This, then, is the particular reason why Communists ought to defend Mexico and help her retain her individuality. Mexico is not fertile soil for capitalism. The Mexicans have an inherent distrust of Big Business. And this distrust has grown into intense hatred in many cases because of the robbery, abuse and suffering that the Mexican masses have usually experienced at the hands of miners, oil men and other investors who have come to Mexico.

Capitalism has a keen appreciation of the situation—keener, in fact, than have some Radicals. It knows that Mexico is a potential harvest-meadow for Communism. Practically all the mines,

factories, oil wells and banks, and even most of the stores of the country are owned by foreigners. So when the class struggle begins to be felt, it is in 99 cases out of 100, a struggle between Mexican labor and foreign capital. Obviously a nation of working folk, a people almost entirely hewers of wood and drawers of water, is the stuff that Soviets and Communism can be made of.

The Mexican petroleum tax is only a very ordinary tax, after all. There is nothing particu-

larly menacing to property rights in a government title to sub-soils. Such a title is a fundamental of the laws of England, France, Spain and Germany. The oil men know this better than anybody else and they are only using the petroleum tax and the sub-soil title as an excuse. They want to seize Mexico, not because these statutes and taxes are disturbing them or hurting their profits greatly, but because they don't dare let the Mexicans govern themselves much longer.