

THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION

--- By Linn A. E. Gale

Mexico City, April 29. (By mail). — Is the Sonora revolution a Proletarian Revolution or not? If it is not so far, can it be made one? Are the leaders of the revolt real friends of the working class who for reason of prudence, supposed or actual, have avoided telling their whole aims to the public?

These questions are being debated with much intensity by the labor organizations of Mexico and opinion is sharply divided.

It has been my belief all along that the northern outbreak is financed by American financial interests to pave the way, either for intervention or for annexation. The circumstances are suspicious. The revolutionists have made questionable bed-fellows in their efforts to overthrow Carranza. If they are not actually in the pay of Wall Street, it would seem they are but one set of politicians trying to oust another, and that they are doing precisely the thing that will deliver their country into the hands of the interventionists, even if that is farthest from their intentions. Several American warships have been dispatched to Mexican ports ostensibly to protect American citizens and large numbers of American troops are being massed on the border. No sane person questions that intervention will come if the revolution drags out for a long period.

The Communist Party of Mexico, the one really revolutionary body in the republic, has issued a manifesto warning all workers to keep out of the squabble and to take no sides. The party feels that one side is not essentially superior to the other and sees no use in jumping from the frying pan into the fire.

At the same time, the Communist Party's manifesto explicitly declares that if it becomes convinced that a different course of action will be more conducive to Communist ends, it would change its tactics accordingly.

To date, we Communists are "from Missouri". We know that there are some in the Sonora movement who are excellent Radicals. We know that there are others in the movement who are just the usual lot of scaly, smooth-tongued, office-and-money-seeking politicians. We believe that the aggregation is getting arms from the United States. We know that Villa and Pelaez, both bandits who have long been in American pay, are with the Obregonistas.

We want definite assurance backed by facts and proofs, before we endorse, either conditionally or wholly, any such movement.

Meanwhile, these facts are submitted for what they are worth to the reader.

Gen. Plutarco Elias Calles, head of military operations of the rebels, was until a few months ago, Secretary of Commerce and Industry under Carranza. Defenders of Sonora say that Carranza appointed Calles to kill his popularity; knowing that he would probably make enemies among the workers, if he acted in such capacity. They claim that Carranza did everything possible to put Calles "in wrong" with the unions and that although nominally an official, he really had almost no authority. He was not even allowed to name his own inspectors, it is said. In the big Orizaba strike he favored the strikers and succeeded in keeping Carranza from sending troops to break the strike. Finally, unable to accomplish anything for labor, he resigned rather than be misjudged by the workers. He is, I am told, a member of the Yucatan Socialist Party. An admirer of Calles said yesterday that "what Calles does not know about the international Socialist movement is not worth knowing," and described the large radical library that Calles has.

Governor Adolfo de la Huerta of Sonora, who has just been named "provisional President of Mexico" by the secessionists, is also reputed to be a member of the Yucatan Socialist Party and a real Radical. It is claimed that when the Bisbee miners were deported into the Arizona desert, de la Huerta provided refuge and protection for many of them who crossed the Mexico line. He also forced the Phelps-Dodge Corporation to pay decent wages and provide proper working surroundings for its employees in Sonora, and gave it such a scare that it went much farther than required and even built rest rooms, swimming pools, etc., for the workers!

Obregon, when Secretary of War under Carranza, initiated some radical measures, and at the time gained the reputation of a full-fledged Socialist. He commandeered coaches and horses in the street when needed during the revolution, imposed heavy taxes on merchants, provided a double tax when the regular payments were not met promptly, and punished some of the recalcitrant capitalists by imprisoning them in the penitentiary. A few were put to work at convict labor, cleaning streets in Mexico City. In his recent campaign, Obregon has made a principal appeal on his plank of restoration of land to the peons in small tracts, giving each family what it can properly cultivate and no more. Carranza promised land restoration to the masses but the promise has never been carried out except in isolated instances. Most of the cases of confiscation have simply resulted in transfer of the land from seigns of the Diaz regime to generals and politicians in the favor of the administration.

On the other hand, it is believed by many that Obregon has lost most of his early Radicalism. His transactions with the Allies during the war, when he sold thousands of dollars' worth of "garbanzas" to Hoover, have dulled the edge of much of the enthusiasm that Radicals formerly entertained for him.

A friend of Alvarado and supporter of Obregon, trying to convince me that the workers of Mexico would fare much better if Obregon ruled the country than if Carranza's man, Bonillas came into power, reminded me of Carranza's action in breaking the general strikes in Mexico City and Tampico a year ago and of his appointment to the governorship of Quintana Roo, of the army officer who was responsible for the outrages against the Socialist Party of Yucatan. I answered that despicable as were these acts, we had no assurance that Obregon would do differently. Even if Obregon's impulses were friendly to the workers, he would not be free to obey them if he owed his elevation to power to the aid of American business interests.

The rejoinder was that Obregon will be as radical as possible when he gains power but that he will not spoil things by attempting too much at once and that he has permitted special stress to be put on his alleged friendship for the United States so that he would be left unmolested in waging his revolution. My reply was that it was not necessary for him to say things he did not mean, for American big business hates Carranza so much that it would certainly do nothing to hinder any uprising against him. The mere public declaration by Obregon that he was trying to overthrow Carranza would have been enough to guarantee immunity from trouble with Yankee menied interests.

There are many American Radicals, to say nothing of Mexican Radicals at home, who would join Obregon's ranks if it were not for these positive assurances by Calles and de la Huerta that property owners will not be troubled. My friend answered that it was true that the Sonoras had compromised with American interests in order to have Uncle Sam keep hands off and that, as a result, it would be impossible to socialize American property, although other property would be socialized in short order. I could see little to be gained in that way. If American property is not socialized, what under the sun is there to socialize, anyway?

Presumably an authoritative statement of the aims of the Sonora insurgents is the "Plan of Agua Prieta", a manifesto issued in the city of that name April 23. The last article of the plan explicitly says:

"The supreme commander will afford all legal protection and enforcement of their legal rights to all citizens and foreigners and ESPECIALLY FAVOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ALL INDUSTRIES, BUSINESS AND COMMERCE IN GENERAL."

Nothing very Bolshevik about that, is there? If a Wall Street attorney had drafted the clause, he probably would not have used much different language than this very phraseology.

Nor is this all. We have the words of Governor de la Huerta of Sonora. The New York World telegraphed him for a statement as to the reasons for secession and the policies that the rebel government would pursue. In a telegram dated Hermosillo, April 13, de la Huerta closed by saying:

Under this principle, the entire public administration as well as ordinary commercial life, will be continued as before. The order of things remains unchanged and the entire state and government under my charge is firm in its purpose of continuing to accord, both to Mexicans and foreigners, all the guarantees conceded to them by the law of the land."

So impressed was the headline writer of the World with this declaration that he inserted in the head of the article, "Order Being Maintained; Business Life is Normal."

But let us now turn to the editorial pages of the San Antonio Light, an American paper that has never been guilty of anything but fierce hostility toward all forms of Radicalism and one near enough to the border to know where of it speaks. An editorial a few days ago, captioned, "Why Obregon is Opposed", begins by quoting an unnamed person as saying that "Obregon is hostile to the anti-American policy of Carranza." These extracts are also significant:

"It was only when Obregon announced his international policy of friendship with the United States that the clouds began to gather... It is not so much because Obregon wants Mexico to attain such prosperity, as because he wants to accomplish that end thru the most natural and logical means—friend-

ship and cooperation with the United States — that makes his election to the presidency so undesirable to Carranza. Obregon's platform is unique in the history of Mexican politics. Its chief plank is a pledge of friendship with the United States. No other candidates for the presidency of Mexico has ever gone before the people on such a platform... When Americans realize that Carranza's objection to Obregon is primarily a result of a conflict between their respective policies with respect to the United States — the one a policy of bigoted hostility, and the others a policy of liberal interchange of needs—the action of Sonora will not be looked upon as 'just another Mexican revolution.'"

Now, when the capitalist press of the United States commends a foreign politician as manifesting "friendship for the United States", we may always understand that friendship to really be friendship for Wall Street.

The news that the bandit chief, Manuel Pelaez, who has so long lorded it over the Tampico and Tuxpam oil district, has joined in supporting Obregon with his bandit-soldiers, is also not without meaning. Pelaez, it is generally known, has been financed by the petroleum kings for some time. Let us take the words of a reasonable and reliable witness, L. J. de Bekker, the correspondent for the New York Tribune, whose articles were so fair that his paper would not accept them and he sold them to the Nation. On page 27 of "The Plot Against Mexico", de Bekker says:

"I said to the oil men: 'Why don't you shut off this blackmail and make your peace with Mr. Carranza? No doubt your stockholders could use to advantage the \$200,000 a month you are giving Pelaez, and he doesn't seem to be delivering the goods.' 'We can't,' was the invariable reply. 'He would blow up our wells if we did. Besides, the state department at Washington knows each and every payment we make to Pelaez and approves it.'"

Two years previous, Carl W. Ackerman wrote: "Pelaez and his army—estimated at 3,000 to 27,000 men depending on the authority quoted—get \$40,000 a month protection money from the oil companies." It appears that the oil companies in two years increased their retainers to Pelaez from \$40,000 a month to \$200,000 a month!

With this evidence of the relations of Pelaez with the petroleum kings, can we have much doubt as to the kind of man he would probably support in Mexican politics?

In this connection it is interesting to observe that the Sonora government has returned the Southern Pacific Railroad to its owners, after having taken possession of it. At the time of the seizure, some were jubilant at this exhibition of "Bolshevist tendencies." As a matter of fact, the Carranza government was going to seize the railroad and force the settlement of a strike, and the Sonorans seized it to get ahead of the Carrancistas. As soon as control of the state seemed certain and the strike was settled, the rebel officials turned the road back to the company.

Regarding Obregon personally, I may say this: As correspondent for various newspapers, as well as for my own satisfaction, I procured an interview with him in the latter part of January while he was spending some time in Mexico City. I submitted in writing five questions and he agreed to send me by mail the answers. The first question was as to his opinion on prohibition; the second related to the restoration of land to the peons; the third, if Mexico ought to recognize Soviet Russia; the fourth, tariff reduction or free trade; and the fifth read, "Are you disposed to favor the socialization of the mines and industries of Mexico?" Some days later, I received typewritten and signed answers to three questions, but no answers to the third and fifth queries, the one about the recognition of Russia and the one about socialization of mines and industries!

I do not mean to say that I have had any more satisfactory experience with Bonillas and Gen. Pablo Gonzales, the other candidates. I have never been able to get them to commit themselves on these questions, either.

A word about Alvarado who, in an interview in the Hearst papers in New York, just declared that

the rebel movement would control Mexico City within three months. I first met Alvarado a year or more ago when he was making plans to begin his daily, "El Herald de Mexico", in Mexico City. He had just returned from Yucatan where, after completing his term of office as governor, he turned over the reins to a self-picked successor. He was reputed to have done much for Socialism in Yucatan. At that time I know less about Yucatan than I know now. I later learned that the brand of "Socialism" that Alvarado introduced on the peninsula, letted him several million dollars, and was merely a kind of reformist politics, manipulated mainly in his own interest.

During my first conversation with Alvarado, I expressed gratification that he was about to start a Socialist daily, for it was thus that I then understood his plan. He explained that it would not be a socialist daily for he believed it was necessary to go very slowly. "We must be 'smart'," he said with a knowing smile and in excellent English, and then he explained to me that in his judgment Socialism would not come in Mexico for a long time. He expected to see serious labor troubles in the United States in the near future and he believed that many American investors could, therefore, be induced to come to Mexico and go in business. Mexico would thus be developed by foreign capital while the United States was writhing in the throes of industrial disorder. Then, years later, when Mexico had been sufficiently developed, perhaps Socialism would come. But the country must go thru a period of capitalist development first. There must, in other words, be economic exploitation first and economic emancipation later, and Alvarado was in favor of exploitation now! He added that he was going to have an English page in his paper—no Mexico City paper had one at that time—and that he hoped to gain a circulation among the American capitalists and business men in Mexico.

When the paper began publication, its policy was precisely what Alvarado had predicted. When I was arrested, fined and imprisoned for publishing a Spanish translation of Margaret Sanger's book on birth control methods, I went to Alvarado and tried to induce him to champion the cause of birth control editorially. He answered evasively, saying, "We must be careful", and that birth control was not popular in Mexico yet. I told him it would be popular if the people understood it and called his attention to the swarms of hungry, half-naked children that may be seen on almost every street of the city, asking if he did not think that a few children, properly fed and clothed, would be better than thousands of homeless, begging, potential criminals. But I could get no direct answer and the only thing the paper did for the cause was to publish a letter of a subscriber endorsing birth control. On the other hand it published a vicious article attacking me in connection with the birth control book, same appearing on its English page and being written by one Charles F. Phillips, then editor of that page. For this, however, Phillips was alone responsible, and later he retracted his attack. Shortly after, my sentence was revoked by order of Secretary of State Borah.

Still later, when the Socialist local of Mexico City adopted my resolution denouncing intervention and I sent it to an employee of "El Herald de Mexico", who published it, Alvarado gave the employee a call-down and told him to keep out of print all reference to Socialist organizations of any kind in Mexico.

Possibly the policies of the organs of the two candidates, Obregon and Bonillas, ought to be mentioned in this connection. "El Monitor Republicano", the Obregon daily, has given extensive space to articles about labor unions dominated by Luis N. Morones, local representative of Samuel Gompers, has shown the utmost friendliness for Gompers and the A. F. of L., and has studiously avoided any mention of the Bolshevik government of Russia except in rare cases. "El Civiltista", one of the three Bonillas organs, has a labor page and some time ago offered to publish any articles submitted by the Communist Party or the Mexican I. W. W. The offer was accepted with the distinct understanding that, since the Mexican Communists and the Mexican I. W. W. repudiate parliamentary action, they would not be obligated in any way to support Bonillas. Since then, articles on Communism, the dictatorship of the proletariat, etc., have been published, and no article, no matter how revolutionary, has been refused. This does not mean that "El Civiltista" is a Bolshevik sheet nor that Bonillas is a Communist. I have seen and still see no real Radicalism in either camp. That there are some Radicals supporting Obregon and some others supporting Bonillas, is true. A larger number is supporting Obregon than Bonillas.

But as yet, I see in the activities of both sides merely the maneuvers of cunning politicians who are shrewd enough not to antagonize the growing Radical sentiment of Mexico and instead, seek to lure it with revolutionary catch-words and saccharine deceits, into voting for this candidate or that.

The Sonora revolution is not today a Social Revolution. In it politicians, professional generals, bourgeoisie and some Radicals are standing side by side.

If the Mexican masses knew their own power, they could make it a Social Revolution, sweep into the discard all the sophists and soft-soapers on both sides, and erect a Proletarian State under which exploitation and graft would cease.

They can do it! But will they?

RUMINATIONS OF A REBEL.

(Continued from page 3)

not entitled to live in opulence at the expense of the proletariat. Prepare yourself, old boy. The proletariat are getting ready to "renig."

Speaking of men of ability, wise men like George are wont to inquire, in a supercilious way, what Socialists would do with men of "ability." We'll handle them, all right. We'll put them to work and prove their ability by the quality of its product. However, there are some men of ability we might not be able to use, such as able bootlers, able burglars, able bandits, able bankers, able barons of business and able shooters of the "bull," like George Horace. For instance: It is just possible that the interests of society would be best conserved by turning the ability possessed by the above enumerated gentlemen into other lines of activity. They might in time become able to make their own living, speak the truth, drop their hypocrisy, and thus contribute to the general welfare of the new order of society. O, yes. We'll take care of 'em.

Among all the methods employed by the bourgeoisie to quell a threatened awakening of the working class the

"red herring" is the favorite, for it has never failed to draw the attention of the workers away from their misery. Whenever signs of general discontent prevail, the master class send out an S. O. S., and immediately the fish is requisitioned and started on its mission. The Interchurch Movement is the particular "red herring" now being used as a soporific and it remains to be seen whether the workers will yield to its influence. They are asked to "Give God His Share." Since God has permitted the bourgeoisie to absorb all the surplus wealth, the wise worker will simply let Him look to

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those gentlemen for His share of the spoils. Of course the workers are not expected to respond to any marked extent financially. The master class will cough up the "dough," and be satisfied with its investment if the workers will continue to absorb the sophistical dale of kingdom come beyond this vale of tears.

This will lull them to sleep just as effectively as through they had a lower berth in Abraham's bosom. Great game, this religious stuff. Be contented with your lot, and great shall be your reward in the sweet afterwhile.

There are over one hundred makes of automobiles on the market, differing so slightly that only an expert can tell them apart. Millions of dollars are being spent and thousands of glib tongued salesmen employed in presenting the merits of the various machines. This enormous waste of time and labor could easily be avoided through the incorporation of the best features of all machines in one product. This standardizing would reduce the labor cost of production to a minimum and give greater efficiency. Will it be done? Not as long as the profit system prevails. Waste is a basic feature of capitalism and competition its cardinal virtue. The remedy is Socialism.