

Class Lines in the Mexican Church Conflict

By MANUEL GOMEZ.

ARTICLE II.

NEARLY 100,000 workers paraded thru the streets of Mexico City a few days ago, demonstrating their support to President Calles in his conflict with the Roman catholic hierarchy. The capitalist press represents the number of marchers as 50,000, but even the latter figure is large enough. It must have made a lot of people think. The demonstration, organized by the Regional Confederation of Labor (C. R. O. M.), will help to throw light on the question of the present line-up of forces in Mexico.

What everyone is asking about the Mexican situation is: Where do the Mexican people stand? American workers have read in the newspapers that there are 10,000,000 catholics in Mexico, and some of them must be frankly puzzled as to how the Mexican government can proceed so confidently with its anti-clerical program when apparently two-thirds of the Mexican population is against it. The truth is, of course that like many organizations, the church does considerable padding of its membership rolls. Nevertheless, Mexico is undeniably still a "catholic country." Catholicism embraces undeniably wide sections of the population, and no other denominational creed has succeeded in supplanting it.

How does it happen then that in a "catholic country" the government should dare embark on an anti-clerical campaign?

Decisive Areas Lost to the Church.

THE answer to that is two-fold:

First, many of the decisive areas of catholic strength have been lost to the church; and second, there are deep class antagonisms within the ranks of "the faithful" themselves.

One reads much these days of catholic riots against government authority. These are magnified many times over for publicity purposes but they do happen. They happen particularly in the Federal District, in Puebla, in Guadalajara, in the states of Guanajuato and Michoacan—where the clerical power is concentrated. But go into the states of the north or along the coastline, where the revolutionary struggles of the past 15 years have been fought out, and you find a totally different state of affairs. The active clerical minority in these areas is very small indeed for a "catholic country." Among the toiling masses, and even among the petty-bourgeoisie, the back of the church has been broken. That could be seen several years ago in the reception accorded to the constitution of 1917.

I have gone into church after church in the state of Sonora and found them deserted except for a few women. I have noticed the same thing in Vera Cruz, and in Tamaulipas. That cath-

olicism has lost its hold during the experiences of revolution and counter-revolution is common gossip in these parts. They are important parts, for every successful revolutionary movement in recent history has swept forward the center from one of them.

Catholics But Not Too Seriously.

THE convinced catholics, however, are by no means all clericals. Mexico, catholic Mexico, has a long record of struggle against the church. Insurgent soldiers of the anti-clerical revolution of 1854-56 died with an "Ave Maria" on their lips. Indignant at the swollen wealth of the catholic episcopate, its greed and its countless petty impositions, millions of barefooted peons long ago began to har-

STREET CARMEN TO SUPPORT 'L' MEN'S DEMANDS

Will Stick Together in Fight Against Insull

Workers on Chicago surface lines have decided not to go into negotiations for a new agreement with the company until the elevated men, now talking a new wage scale over with the bosses, have completed their settlement.

William Quinlan, president of the Surface Lines division of the Amalgamated Street and Electric Railway Employees said that would be the union strategy in the present fight being waged by the men both for an increase and against a wage cut offered by the company as a counter proposal.

All Have One Boss.

The Insull interests control both the street lines and the elevated as well as the North Shore line, workers on which are also in negotiations. The surface line men will ask for the gains the elevated men secure as the result of their negotiations.

The North Shore men, who are getting 76 cents an hour are out after a 6 cent increase. The company is talking about a 3 cent reduction but it is known that it would be perfectly willing to pay the old rate.

Meetings Continue.

The surface line men met at Carmen's Hall in their monthly meeting and came to the above decision. The elevated employees' representatives will meet with the bosses today for the first tilt in the negotiations and the North Shore men will continue their conversations with Insull's agents today and tomorrow.

bor a resentment against the church dignitaries. With the church eternally on the side of their enemies, they have not hesitated to take up arms against it time after time.

Thus is explained the Ayutla revolution, culminating in the reform laws and the constitution of 1857.

Thus is explained the irresistible popular support behind Carranza, Zapata and the others in their revolutionary movement against Huerta, the federal army, landed aristocrats and the church.

Thus is explained the mass repudiation of Adolfo de la Huerta in his abortive counter-revolution of 1924.

Inside the very ranks of the ecclesiastics there are divisions, tremendous divisions, which have helped to make history and which are part of Mexican tradition. The great mass of poor priests—most of them native Mexicans—are cruelly oppressed by the higher church dignitaries, the great majority of whom happen to be foreigners. The latter appropriate all the fat livings and sinecures to themselves, with the result that a bitter antagonism exists between the upper and lower layers of the priesthood. The poor priests have sometimes stood with the people against their superiors. Hidalgo and Morelos, honored by every Mexican patriot as fathers of the republic, were both priests. Their fame has not been diminished by the fact that they were both excommunicated from the catholic church for their activities on behalf of Mexican independence in defiance of the Spanish church dignitaries.

Largely on the basis of these divisions between upper and lower clergy, the schismatic church movement of last year was organized. The "cismaticos" founded the "Mexican Catholic Apostolic Church" as against the "Roman Catholic." Notwithstanding the manifest aid of the government, the "cismaticos" never were able to make

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OHIO STATE FEDERATION TO ACT ON LABOR PROBLEMS, BUT

AKRON, Ohio.—The convention of went its usual way. It came together able speeches that contained nothing b aged to keep the delegates interested meaningless resolutions on jurisdiction ment Workers, at the Amalgamated Clo outlaw union, etc., etc.

It declared itself for the union label, but did not give a moment's time to consideration of the organization of the unorganized, which would render the union label superfluous and unnecessary. Fundamental questions were ignored, for the old men present dominated and as one of them said, "There are too many young men here, and

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much headway. Today their church is little more than a name.

Class Lines Apparent.

CERTAINLY there is nothing more striking about the present conflict in Mexico than the sharpness of class lines. The outstanding supporters of the clergy are invariably drawn from the ruling class in society. The leaders of the so-called "League for the Defense of Religious Tolerance" are aristocrats. Read over your paper at random until you come across one of the stories of "popular violence" on behalf of the church. It is always "a young girl belonging to one of the best families in Mexico City arrested for throwing stones at a government official" . . . or "A group of wealthy students attempting to start a disturbance . . ."

On the other hand, the anti-catholic supporters are in their overwhelming majority workers, peasants and petty-bourgeoisie. The labor unions are of especial strategic importance, and 75 per cent of the Mexican proletariat is organized in labor unions. Except for isolated exceptions, notably the catholic unions, of course, these are predominantly anti-clerical.

THE powerful Regional Confederation of Labor is solidly behind the government. In answer to the query as to whether or not the rank and file of the confederation accepts this stand, one has only to point to the parade of 100,000 in Mexico City. The C. R. O. M., thru its general secretary, announces to union workers that if any commercial or industrial establishment supports the economic boycott, the confederation "will take the necessary steps to control the establishment until the owners or managers cease supporting it."

The correspondent of the New York Times raises frail doubts as to the strength of the C. R. O. M. "Another group known as the United Workers," he writes, "has control of the majority of the (cotton) mill workers in the republic." This is true, but no matter. The opposition group (which by the way is not known as the "United Workers" but as the "General Confederation of Labor") is anarchist in ideology and at least quite as opposed to the catholics as the C. R. O. M. is.

Independent unions, such as the electricians, oil workers, etc., take as determined a stand.

Only in the case of the railroad workers has there been any serious doubt. Calles, true revolutionary nationalist but always the petty-bourgeois, has committed grave crimes against the railwaymen. Their leaders supported de la Huerta in 1924. Despite the circumstances that their

leadership is now totally changed, Calles has seized this single fact as an excuse for launching attack after attack against the railway unions. When the clerical conflict burst into flame he was engaged in crushing a strike on the Tehuantepec railroad and a general strike on all lines was threatened because of his attitude.

It is to be hoped that the present crisis will make him realize that he cannot play with the labor movement in this fashion. If he adopts a different attitude toward the railroad workers there is little reason to doubt that they will stand with the rest of the working class against Catholic reaction.

No such qualification is needed to indicate the alignment of the Communist Party. Government persecution will never keep the Communists from taking a militant part in the anti-clerical struggle.

The Peasants.

AMONG the peasants the situation is not the same as among the city workers. The peasants constitute the chief basis of popular Catholic support. Nevertheless, they have fought energetically against the reactionary-clerical alliance in past revolutions. And in the northern and coastal states the majority of them have broken away from influence of the Church entirely.

Organizations like the "League of Agrarian Communities of the State of Vera Cruz" can be counted definitely with the anti-clerical forces. As to the "Partido Agrarista," that is a different matter. The correspondent of the Times reports that Soto y Gama and the rest are taking a stand against the government, but even if this should be true it is difficult to believe that the "agraristas" can maintain their forces intact.

That "religious" struggle in Mexico is being waged upon class lines is obvious in every particular of the situation. There is nothing accidental about this. It is merely an indication of the fact that the fight against the Church is a phase of the fight against the other enemies of the Mexican masses.

A Call to Solidarity.

WHERE the Mexican workers stand we know. What we must now determine is: What shall be the stand of the workers of the United States? Ricardo Trevino of the Mexican Confederation of Labor has sent a cablegram to the A. F. of L. declaring that Mexican labor is with President Calles and soliciting support. While the imperialist organs are howling their heads off against Mexican "bolshivism," the executive council of the A. F. of L. is silent. Class conscious trade unionists should take up the issue in their local unions and in central labor bodies, demanding that the American labor movement pledge prompt and immediate support to our Mexican brothers.