

The Turn of the Tide in the Church Struggle in Mexico

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ARTICLE IV.

RECENT developments in the church war include the following:

1. Bankers' committee, headed by A. Lagoreto of the National Bank of Mexico, urges President Calles to accede to catholic demands.

2. Adolfo de la Huerta, whose treacherous counter-revolutionary uprising of 1924 was smothered by the unanimous indignation of the masses of the Mexican people, announces from his Los Angeles retreat that he is willing to lead the people in a fight for religious liberty."

3. The Mexican episcopate redoubles its appeals to sympathizers in the United States for aid.

4. General Arnulfo Gomez, commander of the federal troops in the state of Vera Cruz—fascist, friend of the reactionary landowners and tool of the U. S. oil interests—issues an ambiguous statement aimed to give comfort to the catholics.

Such circumstances as these indicate more sharply than ever what the alignment of forces in the conflict is. And it shows what a thin layer of support U. S. imperialism can count on in Mexico.

More important than all the above declarations is the statement of former president Alvaro Obregon, commented upon in my article of yesterday. Despite the exhortations to continued catholic resistance issued by the pope, it is already clear that the church will be unable to rally any important sections of the Mexican masses. The church will be roundly defeated. Obregon's declaration of allegiance to the government is decisive.

Imperialism's Watchful Waiting

Obregon's statement is probably decisive for the United States government as well as for Mexico. It is decidedly unlikely now that there will be any direct U. S. intervention.

American imperialism has proceeded very cautiously in the present conflict. It had burnt its fingers in the stubborn fire of Mexican resistance too many times in the past. It had had enough experience with counter-revolutionary strength. In the present struggle it has played a good deal of a waiting game—holding back to see what forces developed.

Conscious of their own weakness in Mexico, the Mexican reactionaries made, and are making, frantic efforts to draw American imperialism into the open struggle on their side. The church outdid itself in servile posturings before the altar of American imperialism. It is impossible to observe the whole tremendous current of recent catholic propaganda in the United States without realizing that fact.

And the alliance between catholicism and U. S. imperialism was undoubtedly consummated. There was what diplomats call "a general understanding of community of interests." Any number of incidents, from Sec'y. of Labor Davis' anti-Mexican tirade at the eucharistic congress to President Coolidge's sly injection of the issue of arms embargo, bear it out.

A New Slogan.

American imperialism realizes that the catholic hierarchy in Mexico has failed to stir the masses to revolt; it has failed to create any new divisions splitting the national-revolutionary front, which would bring about a situation favorable to U. S. intervention. Consequently the imperialist forces must bide their time. But in all of

the imperialist anti-Mexican propaganda from now on the issue of "religious freedom" will have a place. Too powerful and too desperate forces are massed on each side to expect this church struggle, which is an international struggle, woven inextricably into the struggle of the Mexican revolution versus U. S. imperialism, to be easily terminated.

Mexico's bold thrusts at the priestly power will continue to be a potential issue for intervention, to be raised when the undertaking may seem to be not too costly and not too hazardous—or when new difficulties over oil monopoly, etc., counsel throwing these considerations to the winds. They will remain on the lists of Mexico's "crimes";—along with the "destruction of property rights," "disregard of vested interests," and "unfaithfulness regarding foreign contracts."

U. S. In Latin-America.

The example remains as a warning to all Latin-America. In Cuba, in Venezuela, in Central America, American imperialism has long supported the conservative forces of catholicism. Recognizing that the catholic church supplied the best traditions for submission to imperialist domination, the United States has refrained from sending large numbers of protestant missionaries into the Latin-American countries. There may be an exception here and there, but catholicism is and must be the religion of American imperialism, which like all imperialisms strives to find a base in the traditionally reactionary sections of the native population. In Latin-America these include, in addition to the church, the landowning aristocracy (save where, as in Brazil, American imperialism supports the counter struggles of industrial capital in order to oust the British), military governments and dictatorships. (Juan Vicente Gomez in Venezuela, Leguia in Peru, Orellana in Guatemala, etc.,)

The Great Lesson.

But if U. S. friendliness to Mexican catholicism is an example for all Latin-America, the successful resistance of Mexico is a better one. Due to the firm stand of President Calles, due to the sound intransigence of the Mexican masses, the church will retire from its latest desperate sally with its prestige badly shattered. Counter-revolution in Mexico has received another blow—for the clerical rebellion was clearly expected to be the prelude to a general counter-revolutionary rising, and only thru successful revolution and U. S. imperialist support could the ends of the church be achieved. It is still not impossible that there may be a counter-revolutionary rising before the present conflict is settled but if it does materialize it will be put down. The weakness of counter-revolution in Mexico has caused American imperialism to hold back.

The struggle is not over yet. With ultimate triumph now definitely in sight, but with bitter opposition still to be overcome before it can be attained, President Calles cannot fail to realize that his staunchest and surest support in the battle with reaction has been the Mexican working class. It is to be hoped that he will learn by the experience.

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