# Obregon Assassinated

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ALVARO OBREGON was elected president of Mexico on the first of July. On the 17th of July he was assassinated. The political developments of the next two weeks resemble a crazy quilt in kaleidoscopic motion. Heterogeneous, unstable elements held together by the military chieftain begin to pull apart. The Army, Mexico's wavering, capricious force, divided in its allegiance — Joaquin Amaro, Minister of War, a pro-Morones man, Francisco Manzo, in command of 25,000 troops in the western sector, a militant Obregonite. The workers and peasants, unsteady, the entire population stunned.

What will happen next? With tensest excitement Mexico watches the chronicle of events unroll:

July 17—Obregon assassinated! Who was responsible?

July 18—Soto y Gama and Aurelio Manrique, leaders of the National Agrarista Party, extreme right wingers of the Obregon group, accuse the Laborites, stage a huge protest demonstration and demand their punishment. President Calles answers their accusation by the removal of his Chief of Police, Cruz, substituting "Zertuche," an Obregon man, to take full charge of the investigation.

July 19—Calles charges that Toral, the religious fanatic, is solely responsible for the crime.

On the same day the Mexican Communist Party issues a manifesto to the workers and peasants declaring that they condemn the assassination of Obregon, and reject individual terror as a method in the class struggle because it cannot solve the problems of the workers and peasants. The manifesto warns that the political moment will divide the political leaders into different factions which will try to use the proletariat as a sacrifice. They urge the workers to turn their backs on the bourgeois political leaders and false "revolutionaries" whose acts are motivated solely by personal ambitions, to follow the representatives of their own class, the leaders of the peasants' and workers' organizations. They point out the necessity for all workers and peasants forming a united block to fight for:

1. Complete distribution of the land.
2. Disarming of white guards employed by landowners and mining and oil companies.
3. Effective nationalization of the sub-soil.
4. Workers' control of production and distribution.

5. Complete arming of workers and peasants.
6. Extermination of the remnants of the Catholic rebellion.
7. Effective application of workers' insurance and application of the few proletarian conquests of the revolution which until today are only dead letters in the Constitution.
8. A workers and peasants block of North, Central and South America to struggle against finance imperialism.

The manifesto concludes by saying that now when the national bourgeoisie has sold out to foreign capital, "now that imperialism is advancing with rapid strides and putting an end to the historic revolutionary role of the petit-bourgeoisie in Mexico, now more than ever do we need a workers and peasants block to guide our own destinies."

The National Peasants League, one million organized peasants under the control of the leadership of the Mexican Communist Party and affiliated with the Peasants International, sends a message offering to support Calles in the present crisis.

July 20—All workers' organizations throughout Mexico pledge support to Calles.

July 21—The National Peasants League issues manifesto accusing the Catholic clergy of responsibility for the murder. It further states that the aim of the church is not only to threaten the revolution but to confuse the revolutionary elements — to create a state of affairs which would destroy the workers' and peasants' organizations and rob them of their revolutionary gains. The manifesto concludes by calling on the entire country to support Calles, and upon the workers and peasants to demand the nationalization of church property for the use of rural schools, "popular universities," agricultural experimental schools and peasants' homes."

On the same day—July 21—Soto y Gama and Manrique stage a huge demonstration parade demanding the dismissal of Morones from the cabinet and the other Crom leaders from the remaining government posts. It must be remembered that Soto y Gama and Manrique stand at the extreme right of the Obregon group, representing the middle peasantry—or better said—the comfortable farmer. Their program includes reparation of land but is conditioned by proper compensation. They are hostile to Mexican labor groups, especially to its yellow leadership.

For four years Soto y Gama, Manrique and others have been out of power—ousted by Morones and kept out by Calles. Obregon's advent to power would have meant rich spoils for them. They are most embittered by this unexpected turn of events, and are trying to patch up all kinds of alliances with the feudal and Catholic

reaction, wooing disgruntled military elements, especially General Manzo of Sonora. They are making overtures to General Topete, Obregon's leader in Congress. In the demonstration on the 21st they openly threatened Calles with revolt unless he removed Morones.

July 22—Morones, Minister of Commerce, Labor and Industry in the Calles cabinet, resigns. His resignation is followed by that of Gasca, in charge of Government Munitions, and Eduardo Moneda, head of the Government Printing Plant. The statement accompanying the resignation expresses the wish to give Calles and the government a free hand in the investigation.

July 23—The Obregon group controlling a majority in congress discusses the presidential succession. Who shall be the provisional president for the next two years? Calles or Aaron Saenz? Soto y Gama declares that the Agrarista Party will not permit Calles to remain in the presidency beyond December 1st.

July 25—Calles makes a speech to the Army congratulating it on its loyalty to the Government and repeats his charge that Obregon was assassinated by a criminal, armed by the clergy.

July 26—Aaron Saenz, one of the Sonora group, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and chief of Obregon's political campaign returns from Obregon's funeral. He attempts to restrain the extremist wing in his group and to allay hostility against Calles. He makes a statement demanding "unity of all revolutionary forces for the development of Obregon's program" and urges complete solidarity with the president. He omits mentioning or attacking Morones in this declaration which considerably strengthens Calles' position.

July 27—Ten days have passed since the assassination. Thus far Calles and Saenz have outmanoeuvered the Obregon extremists, have weakened them and taken away part of their following. This has forced Soto y Gama to make a bid for the poorer peasant support and they have issued a more radical program which declares that the "Confederation of Obregon Parties" — the COPOR (largely led by Soto y Gama and Manrique) will fight for land distribution, rural education, better roads, labor legislation, but must emphasize the "necessity of purifying the revolutionary movement through the relentless elimination" of the official labor leaders.

July 28—The Obregon majority removes the "laborites" from all municipal posts in the Federal district.

During all these heated days Calles has been quietly mending his position. His earlier concessions to the extreme right seemed like complete capitulation, but in reality, judging from present developments they may be interpreted as an attempt to secure a breathing

spell—to keep the country from civil war. That he worked with great deftness is proved by the fact that on August 6, the official Obregon Center was closed. In this brief space of time Calles was able to neutralize the worst extremist opposition and to protect his "labor" group. In closing the Obregon Center, Aaron Saenz declared that the Obregonites placed complete faith in Calles and Congress, confident that the crime would be properly investigated and punished. This statement permitted Calles to push more aggressively his preparations for the next session of Congress.

The news that comes on August 14th states that Luis Leon, former Minister of Agriculture in the Calles cabinet, removed for malfeasance of public funds, close friend of Morones, is returned to his post. This is another defeat for the extremists, Soto y Gama and Manrique.

The present reorganization of the cabinet indicates no further concessions to this extreme wing. It is affirmed that Adalberto Tejeda, liberal governor of Vera Cruz—supporter of the National Peasants League—will return to the Ministry of the Interior which is one of the most strategic positions in the cabinet. Roberto Cruz, former Chief of Police, dismissed right after the assassination, has been given military command of the State of Sinaloa—thus breaking Obregonite military hold on Western Mexico. Calles is also planning to control the next Congress by refusing to recognize credentials of elements hostile to him and the "labor" group. A majority in congress will permit him to choose the next president.

### CLASS FORCES IN MEXICO

It is difficult to understand the significance of the above events, so briefly sketched, without a hasty background of Mexican economics and politics during the last decade at least. Briefly summarized—the last ten years have produced a loosely organized working class but this working class is divided. On the one hand the Mexican Federation of Labor (CROM) led by Morones and his satellites, on the other a number of independent unions. The CROM is a class-collaboration organization *par excellence*. Not only does it make alliances with its own bourgeoisie but also with American finance capital. Morones has repeatedly refused to organize the workers employed by American interests. Therefore most of the oil workers, a majority of the textile workers, all the miners, and the railway confederation belong to independent unions.

In the recent struggle of the Jalisco miners the CROM made an alliance with the Catholic unions to break the strike of the indepen-

dent miners. *El Machete*, the organ of the Mexican Communist Party, published a series of sensational documents exposing the relations between the CROM and the Catholic rebels in Jalisco and proving that the CROM had furnished arms to the Catholics against the miners.

Opposed to the ideology of the CROM leadership are the independent unions of railway workers, oil workers, textile workers and miners. These base themselves on the class struggle. They have had a difficult uphill fight against foreign interests in Mexico. Everytime they declared a strike President Calles would use Morones to break it.

On the Agrarian field—The last eighteen years of revolution and suffering have produced a partially armed peasantry. For a long time they were militant in a sort of hit-and-miss way. During the last five years, however, over a million have been organized into the National Peasants League, under the direction of Communists and affiliated with the Peasants International. This makes them a powerful force in Mexican politics and considerably lessens the importance of the army and reduces its capacity for irresponsible mischief.

The Agrarian field, however, is also divided. There is a National Agrarista Party, a political organization, under the direction of Soto y Gama, which although it really represents the well-to-do farmers, nonetheless in its program and official statements uses revolutionary phraseology to confuse the peasants and divide them; and by this means it has acquired a peasant following controlled by the well-to-do farmers. This party stands against the program of land distribution to the peasants.

In close relation to the above economic groups stand the foreign interests. They are the worst exploiters in Mexico and often provoke the militant workers and peasants to strike or fight. This is where the yellow labor and peasant leaders come in. A Mexican president, if he is to remain president, must know how to jockey between the demands of the militant workers and peasants on the one hand and the ruthless pressure of foreign capital on the other. The president alone is incapable of such a feat; so he constructs a cabinet to assist him. In his cabinet he must have someone identified with labor, who can keep labor docile; someone who can put the brakes on the militants. That is why Calles chose Luis Morones as his Minister of Commerce and Labor. Morones has acquitted himself with honors as strikebreaker and traitor to his own class.

As for the peasantry—the presence of Adelberto Tejeda in the

Calles cabinet was a sort of sop to the poor peasants. In case of militancy Calles could count on him to attempt to keep them in check.

This sketch of Mexico's present political structure gives one an uneasy feeling—it appears to be such an unstable combination (almost upset) in the present crisis. It is stated, however, by those acquainted with Mexican affairs, that under present conditions, it is the only kind of combination which can offer peace. That this is so, is proven by the fact that Calles at this very moment is reconstructing his cabinet along these lines.

Why has he protected the labor leaders? The foregoing facts answer the question. He still needs Morones, he still finds him essential to the development and consolidation of the national bourgeoisie and to help keep the peace with foreign interests. And although Calles accepted Morones' resignation, it is an open secret that the Labor Departments of the Government, Munitions and Printing are still run by labor men under the guidance of Morones and his friends. Before many months have passed, Morones will be back in another official position.

There are some who contend that American imperialism is trying to build a coalition between the petit-bourgeoisie, the Catholic Church and the remnants of feudalism in Mexico. There are others, close to Mexican events, who maintain that the remnants of feudalism are so small and politically so unimportant that they are not worth wooing, that representatives of the Church would be the upsetting element in the government, for the workers and peasants could less easily be fooled then; that such a coalition would be extremely unstable—incapable of insuring peace. And since "peace" permits of more intensive exploitation and greater profits it seems logical for foreign interests to maintain the present combination—a petit-bourgeois "labor-agrarian" coalition.

Statements that Morrow has supported Calles in his defense of Morones against the extreme right of the Obregon group bear out this contention. The present reconstruction of the Calles cabinet along these same lines, further strengthens this view.