New Party of Cardenas

By ELLEN WARD

(This is the fourth article in Ellen Ward's series on Mexico.—Editor.)

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THE constituting convention of the new Cardenas party had the following composition: 101 representatives from the army, all officers; 100 representatives from labor divided among four organizations; 96 delegates from all peasant groups; 96 delegates representing the "popular sector," that is, the small merchants of the country.

The Character Of The Party

War Minister, General Camacho, wealthy landowner from the State of Puebla, and last year denounced by the Communist Party as fascist in tendency, leads the controlling section of the new party, which is the army. It was Cardenas who decided upon the proportion of representation and had the delegates handpicked from the peasant organizations.

Despite the fact that the army has the largest single representation, the Machete, official organ of the Mexican Communist Party, hailed this new "Party of the Mexican Revolution" as the "people's party" and tried to rally to it all possible support! Toledano of the C.T.M. was a little more critical. At the convention of the C.T.M., he spoke out against the army for attempting to dominate the new party. But neither the Machete, nor the Communist Party, nor Toledano nor the C.T.M. has bothered to point out the real meaning of this new conglomeration which has been dignified with the name of party.

At its recent convention, the "Party of the Mexican Revolution" adopted the following program:

1. Progressive nationalization of big industry—such as the recent expropriation of oil lands.
2. A democracy of workers and the socialist regime.
3. Equal rights for men and women, including the vote.
4. Collective agricultural economy thru the continued breaking up of large estates into communal farm groups.
5. Social security for peasants as well as industrial workers.
6. War on monopoly and high prices.

The very fuzziness of the wording of this demagogic program makes it obvious that it is not intended to be taken seriously; but it does make a high-sounding platform in preparation for the next presidential campaign, in which Cardenas hopes to name and put across his candidate. The only group in Mexico who pretends to take the program seriously is the Communist Party.

Hernan Laborde, secretary of the Mexican Communist Party, in an editorial in El Machete of January 15, 1938, tells the workers how overjoyed labor is at the prospect of the army joining in the new party—"these men in arms who are a guarantee of peace, of national integrity and the defense of the revolution"! He does not tell the workers, however, that even Cardenas has less faith in the army than the Communist Party has. All during his regime, he has moved generals and commanders about with great regularity. Few are left long enough in any one district to build up a following. Some spend as little as six months at their posts.

The Role Of The Army

Nor are leaders like Lombardo Toledano willing to believe that the army is prepared to defend the gains of the revolution. So little does he believe it that he has pushed the recent formation of a workers uniformed militia, which outnumbers the regular army. And

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a leadership that has proven itself unworthy of your support.

Begin the fight now! Prepare to take over your own union!

Cardenas Party

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Cardenas has armed a great many peasants as "army reserves" in a move to offset the more reactionary generals. We saw these function only a few months ago in the struggle against Cedillo. There is no doubt that today, the army, as a political entity, is not quite as important as it was earlier, but it is still a powerful force to reckon with—and its officers are by psychology and class origin on the side of conservatism. It is therefore especially criminal for the Mexican Communist Party to develop illusions concerning it in the minds of the workers and peasants. On the contrary, a fight should have been put up against majority representation for the army in the new party. For it is still the position that the army takes that will help decide the course of events of Mexican history.

Already some of the most influential generals of the military caste are questioning the more radical policies lately adopted. It is true that most of these generals came up thru the school of revolution which began in 1910 and they are somewhat more progressive than professional military men in other lands. Their ideas are not reactionary, like those of the Spanish officers at the time of the outbreak of the rebellion in July 1936. Yet many of them are determined that only a "moderate" course be followed. It was the army that forced a majority block in the Mexican Congress to declare against the measure giving federal workers the right to strike against the government. On June 30, a cable from Mexico City, printed in the New York Times, stated that "the split between the army officers and the labor leaders is reported to be growing." The army is, of course, opposed to the arming of workers militia. The language of their manifesto, signed and issued by five colonels, is provocative in the extreme, ending with the following threat: "The army is tired of anti-army calumny by labor leaders who are seeking to fool the workers into starting a fight like that in Spain. . . . In good time, the army officers will answer their aggressors. We wish it to be known that, if our brother officers, in defense of our armed institutions, punish Lombardo Toledano, we are not guilty since we have been provoked."

This is the spirit of the officer caste and it is this caste which has the largest representation in the new party and it is this army, and especially this officer caste, which the Mexican Communist Party hails with such glee as the "defender of the revolution."

Dress Union

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the whole scheme was nothing but a political manouver, an attempt to advance the narrow factional interests of the Communist Party at the expense of the unity of the local and the interests of the dressmakers?

Further provocation appeared the next day in a report of Tuesday's meeting in the Daily Worker, a report bristling with downright lies and distortions in an effort to "prove" that Local 22 was being "instigated" against the C.I.O. by the "Lovestoneites." In order to expose these lies, Zimmerman took occasion at the meeting on Wednesday to introduce a telegram of greetings to the C.I.O. conference, summarizing the statement of the local's executive board. This telegram was, of course,