

The Counter-Revolution in Mexico

By J. Ramirez

AS I WRITE this, the fate of the Mexican Republic is again in the balance. Barefoot Indian soldiers are facing each other in grim battle on the shores of the indolent Lake Chapala. Tattered regiments are advancing and retreating through the little "key" town of Maltrata, high up on the very crest of the eastern Sierras. The State of Guerrero and a large part of Morelos, are in the hands of the rebel general, Figueroa. Veracruz is a rebel fortress. Puebla has been taken and retaken.

Senor De la Huerta, smooth, urbane, conceited associate of American bankers, returned from a visit to New York and began it.

It is not a revolt against President Obregon. Wall street was fairly well satisfied with Obregon. **But Calles was about to be elected President.** This is a counter-revolution against the reformist "radicalism" of Calles.

Obregon's government has been a conspiracy against the broad masses of the Mexican people, in the interests of international capitalism. I made this clear in my article in the November Liberator—and those who read that article will perhaps be inclined to assume that the present revolutionary movement is an indignant rising of the people against Obregon; but it isn't. The possibility is ruled out by the significant fact that the masses are not taking part in the movement on either side. It has been almost entirely a military affair.

And yet it is more than the insubordination of disgruntled generals. Political figures stand back of the generals—and there are persistent economic interests back of the political.

It is the economic interests that give meaning to the whole movement. They are the driving force behind it, and they are what interconnect the various separate uprisings in a single movement under a single banner.

The real issues never appear on the surface—for one thing, because of the swiftness with which things move in Mexico: a public character does not often represent today the same issues that he represented yesterday. But yesterday's traditions tend to cling to a man despite the changed conditions of today. The resulting confusion is exemplified in the present program of Adolfo De la Huerta, the outstanding personality in the revolt. It is a radical program, almost a socialist program, but it is made up of the things De la Huerta once stood for, rather than what he stands for now.

The people from whom the whole De la Huerta movement draws its support represent interests diametrically opposed to everything the program promises.

Not so long ago, the rich landowners and capitalists of Mexico looked upon De la Huerta as a dangerous radical. Today he is **their man**, recognized as such from one end of Mexico to the other.

It was De la Huerta who, as Obregon's Minister of Finance, officiated in the selling out of Mexico to Wall Street which resulted in the recognition of the Mexican Re-

public. De la Huerta negotiated the infamous agreements with the American oil magnates turning the Mexican oil lands over to them for exploitation in defiance of the Mexican Constitution. He also concluded the deal with the Morgan and the Kuhn, Loeb interests, whereby the National Bank of Mexico was made a tool of American finance. Subservient as Obregon was to American capital, De la Huerta was more so. During the conferences with Commissioners Warren and Payne in Mexico City, De la Huerta conducted himself as though he were not Mexico's Minister of Finance but a simple agent of the American banking interests. He even fought with his chief when Obregon proposed that in return for its concessions Mexico should receive an international loan on favorable terms. De la Huerta virtually took the position that Mexico should demand nothing at all.

The agreements which De la Huerta signed with the bankers and oil men in New York are now well known, and the substance of them was given in the November Liberator. But there are other agreements not so well known. Senor Pani, De la Huerta's successor as Minister of Finance, announces that the text of the De la Huerta-Lamont protocol has disappeared mysteriously from the archives, and De la Huerta is publicly accused of stealing it as well as some recent correspondence with the American Committee of Bankers, "and other interesting documents."

What was in these papers that De la Huerta was so anxious to get hold of? Would they perhaps reveal some secret agreement with Wall Street which might indicate a connection with De la Huerta's present movements in Mexico?

From the beginning, De la Huerta was warmly supported by the most reactionary elements in Mexico. The Catholic and anti-labor newspapers, which had been attacking Calles bitterly, published De la Huerta's campaign material from day to day and backed him unequivocally in their editorial columns.

The De la Huerta rebellion is clearly in the interests of international capital. It is not a Fascist movement as some have supposed, although it resembles Fascism in some of its aspects. Fascism is passionately nationalistic and this is not. This counter-revolution of De la Huerta represents the highest strata of capital, the large landowners and the bondholding classes whose interests are identical with those of Wall Street.

At the same time, some of the figures who have been prominent in Mexican fascist circles are identified with the De la Huerta revolt. One of these is General Guadalupe Sanchez, who commands De la Huerta's eastern forces. Sanchez is widely known as a fascist, and also as an avowed friend of the big land owners. At the head of De la Huerta's forces on the west is General Enrique Estrada, an outspoken enemy of the agrarians.

The present revolt seems to have been directly inspired by the ultra-reactionary forces in Mexico itself, rather than those of the United States. De la Huerta's action in becom-

ing a candidate for the presidency was taken at the behest of Wall Street—but open rebellion is a more serious matter, and Wall Street, which had just concluded its very profitable little bargain for the recognition of the Obregon Government, would no doubt have preferred a harvest period of peace under Obregon. The New York agreements have not been punctually carried out on the part of the Mexican Government but, in part at least, this has been due to sheer inability. True, Obregon is not the uncompromising advocate of the international bankers that De la Huerta is, and the two have had sharp differences over the carrying out of these very New York agreements. Yet, there is no question but that Obregon would be quite satisfactory to Wall Street. He has his fits of stubbornness and he still finds his actions hindered by a number of embarrassing friends, but essentially he is “all right” for Wall Street.

What must not be lost sight of, however, is that Obregon's term of office is nearing its end. Correctly understood, the De la Huerta revolt is basically not a movement against Obregon, but against Calles.

Calles is overwhelmingly the leading candidate for the presidency to succeed Obregon. No intelligent man in Mexico doubts that if elections are held, and they are fair elections, Calles will be returned at the head of the poll. And Calles is backed by labor. The great masses of workers and Indian peons are solidly behind him, as well as important sections of the lower middle class. His candidacy is endorsed by the Labor Party, the Agrarian Party, and even by the Communist Party, which is taking part in the campaign because it recognizes it as essentially a class conflict in which Calles represents the united front of the exploited. General Calles is not a “red” at heart. He once called himself a socialist, but so did his friend De la Huerta. His program is radical, but it is not so radical as that of De la Huerta. He is overcautious in his promises, and plays for every shadow of support that might be his in all classes. What he says is this:

“I must declare with absolute frankness that I am of the labor party and that I will sustain without hesitancy the rights of the workers, which are specified in article 123 of the constitution.

“I consider it just that the worker shall obtain sufficiency in order to educate his children, and in order to give a certain amount of well being to his family.

“I consider also that the capitalist should take the workers into consideration, for labor is a most principal factor in production, but I must also say that if I am a friend of the workers it is within the law and with the law, and for this reason I desire that all the rights of the capitalists shall be respected as they are found specified in our laws.”

One of Calles' campaign managers even declares that his election would benefit the reactionaries as well as the workers, because “being a friend of the poor and a man of energy, he would be able to control the radical elements.”

Yet his capitalist class enemies continue to call him “bolshhevik” and “anti-clerical”, and the alignment of opposing forces in the campaign has made the issue clear.—Once in power, Calles would no doubt drift from social reformism to petty bourgeois nationalism, somewhat on the Carranza model—in which case the reactionaries and our American imperialists would still be his bitter enemies, just

as they were enemies of Carranza. There is a popular belief that Calles could be depended upon to stand his ground against Wall Street in the interest of a native Mexican capitalism. It will be seen that the American kings of finance are not disinterested in the outcome of the elections in Mexico—if they are held; nor are they disinterested in the outcome of the present counter-revolution.

Whether or not the revolt will succeed is still an open question, but the chances are that Obregon will be able to crush it. Not being a popular movement, it must depend on military forces solely. There are accumulating evidences that workers and peons are now beginning to take the field actively against the rebels, fighting side by side with the federal troops. Armed peons came to the assistance of the handful of besieged federals at Jalapa, and peon guards are said to be policing the state of Guanajuato from end to end. Moreover, even the regular army units which rebelled with De la Huerta are decidedly undependable. The composition of the army has always been a determining factor in Mexican movements of this kind—and the army is no longer what it was in the time of Porfirio Diaz or Victoriano Huerta. It is made up of predominantly proletarian elements—that is workers and peons—most of whom have volunteered very recently and only for a short period of service. Sometimes they are allowed to live with their families, so that they are in fresh contact with the non-military proletarian masses. It is not surprising that defections from the ranks of the rebels already appear.

Three possible outcomes present themselves: (1) the De la Huerta revolt may attract new supporters and thus be victorious; (2) Obregon may take advantage of the situation to postpone elections indefinitely “because of the disordered state of the country”, as permitted by the constitution; (3) the revolt may be put down and Calles duly elected president.

For the reasons referred to above, the first eventually does not seem very probable. The second, however, would be almost equally acceptable to the reactionaries back of De la Huerta, and would be a great relief to the nervous bankers of Wall Street, who have been seeing their bonds drop in value before the menace of Calles. It is not without precedent in Mexican history. Obregon has been suspected of intentions along this line for several months—even before the De la Huerta movement flamed into open revolt. At that time he was discharging pro-Calles officials from important government posts and refusing to recognize pro-De la Huerta governors—weakening both sides, presumably for purposes of his own.

In the event that all else should fail, there is still another means by which the international bankers might attempt to keep the affairs of Mexico in friendly hands. That is direct action—armed intervention on the part of the United States Government. Preparations for this as a possible contingency are already finding echo in the big American capitalist newspapers. Editorials are appearing day after day pointing to the present upheaval in Mexico as justification for a final break with the “Wilson policy” (curiously so called) of hands off. The Chicago Tribune has coined a new word and is out unequivocally for the “Plattizing of Mexico,” which means to reduce Mexico to the status of Cuba as a helpless vassal of the American financial oligarchy.