

CARDENAS AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY

By BERTRAM D. WOLFE
(Comrade Wolfe has been writing a series of articles in the *Workers' Age* based upon the last chapter in his book "Portrait of Mexico." The present article, however, introduces material not contained in that work. The final article of his series on Present-Day Mexico will appear next week under the title: "Whither Mexico?"

SINCE Cardenas has been in power a great railroad strike has been broken by him at the behest of American interests, the Calles group of native capitalists has continued to grow with the addition of some of Cardenas's closest associates, reactionary governors have been imposed in a number of states, peasant villages have been raided by wealthy landowners and even armed forces and agrarian leaders shot, the labor and peasant movements have been kept firmly, more firmly than ever, under the direct and open control of government agents, the President has dissolved the "left wing" of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies, continues to rule the government of the nation as a personal boss, and carries out the financial provisions arranged by Lamont and Morrow.

The Equilibrium Policy
On the other hand, he has favored the labor movement in strikes like that of the electrical workers not directed against American capital, has distributed more land than any of his predecessors, and has given help to Spain within certain limits prescribed to him by the United States. In short, he has continued the equilibrium policies of Obregon and Calles. Like them, when bidding for mass support, he had to start with radical policies; like them he has used his mass support as an enabling prop which permits him to deliver the basic resources of the country to American capital and the secondary sources of wealth to the growing native capitalist class. As in the case of Obregon and Calles he merited a cautious, critical, conditional support from the Left at the moment of his rise to power because each of these men was threatened from the Right, and the revolutionary movement had the difficult and complicated, but necessary task in each case, of supporting him as against the extreme reaction, while at the same time seeking to aid the labor and peasant movements to become independent of him, see through his demagoguery and social role, and overthrow him in time in favor of a worker-peasant government. In short, what was needed, was such support as the Communist Party gave Obregon and Calles in 1923, or Lenin gave Kerensky against Kornilov.

People's Front Mexico
The Communist Party regards the Cardenas government as a sort of "People's Front," or, in the words of Gannes in the *Daily Worker*, "almost a Socialist regime." Joseph Freeman goes to Mexico and says in a public address that "there are three luminous spots in the world today: Mexico, Paris and the Soviet Union." The Party has ceased to run candidates of its own for office, limiting itself to supporting the imaginary "left wing" of the Cardenas-bossed Senate and House, and the no less Cardenas-bossed National Revolutionary Party. They cover up, as does everybody else, the fact that there is no such party, that there are no real elections, that the president picks party executive, governors, senators, deputies. Thereby, the Communist Party has virtually ceased to exist as a genuine political party, not to speak of a revolutionary one.

When Cardenas delivered his annual message for 1936, *El Machete*, Communist official organ, called for a demonstration in front of Congress to "support Cardenas." The demonstration was reported in the next issue as "the festival of the oppressed." "The popular multitude on the march," continued the report, "is the blood of a people that lives and expresses itself with Liberty. Long live Cardenas! Long live the deputies and senators of the Left!" They preferred to ignore the fact that Cardenas had just ordered the so-called "Left Wings" of Congress dissolved as a trimming no longer needed, and gave as his ground that all Congressmen support him and carry out his orders and therefore there can be no left nor right.

On the First of May 1936 the Party called upon the peasants "to strengthen the struggle for the land within the framework of the law." It made me blush with shame to think that this was our revolutionary party and international, a party to which I had contributed some share, and that the editor of *El Machete* had once been one of my closest associates and in a certain sense a "disciple" or that I had brought Hernan Laborde, the General Secretary of the Mexican Party, into the movement during the railroad strike of 1925. Calles and Obregon had always had to reckon with Communist agitation against the agrarian law and in favor of the peasants' breaking up of the great estates and taking of the land by their own action. Obviously, this new respect for the agrarian law enormously simplifies matters for Cardenas.

The People's Army
The Mexican army, which serves Cardenas today as it did Calles and Obregon yesterday, made up, like all armies, of worker and peasant recruits officered by officials from the upper classes, has also undergone an amazing transformation in the minds of the party leaders. On Independence Day, the walls of Mexico blazon forth posters such as this:

"The Mexican People's Front salutes the glorious national army in connection with the 126th anniversary of our independence."

Hernan Laborde in October 1936 made a speech in the Central Square in which he declared:

"The Mexican army is a son of the people; it came out of the people and is bound to it; it was formed in the revolutionary struggles of 1910 and 1917 (How many of our Comrades, workers and peasants has it slaughtered since then, Comrade Laborde?) It liquidated and replaced the old and demoralized army of the pretorian Porfirians—as the militias of Spain replace today the factious and traitorous army of Franco and Mola. . . . In Mexico ought not and will not occur what is happening in Spain. . . ."

"It is necessary that here, when the time comes, the counter revolution will have to deal with a single front including the Government, the proletariat, the great masses of the people, and the National Army in the front ranks. (Great applause. Cries: 'Long Live the National Army.')El Machete, Oct. 12, 1936.

The tragedy of such speeches outwards their farcical side, for they mentally disarm the masses, make them rely on this professional army with an officership that has a record as black as that of Spain, and make easy and pleasant the way of the Molasses and Francos of Mexico.

Cardenas' Mexico
If one seeks for a description in sociological terms of Cardenas's

Mexico, one finds the following:
(1) A personal dictatorship of President Cardenas which enables him to name all governors, senators, deputies, the executive committee of the sole existing party, the *Partido Nacional Revolucionario*, and will presumably enable him to name, perhaps even control, his successor.

(2) This government is run primarily in the interests of native capital, as the junior partner of American capital.

(3) The dictatorship is thinly overlaid with the phrases and trappings of democracy and constitutionalism. There is a Congress but its members are in practice selected by the president or by the National Committee of the *Partido Nacional Revolucionario*. This year, as usual, it voted away its legislative powers to Cardenas after spending the period of its sessions making resounding revolutionary speeches and protesting its loyalty to the President. At the end of the year it voted him "extraordinary," i.e. dictatorial, powers in the following fields: commerce, cooperatives, mines, oil, electricity, weights and measures, irrigation, land distribution, patents and trade marks, monopolies, income, credit, currency, banking, public debt, social insurance, labor legislation, pensions, public accounting, treasury and taxes. What else is there left to legislate on?

(4) Even the labor movement openly acknowledges his rule. Throughout the past year they have repeatedly asked him to step in and settle not merely disputes with the employers but even factional disputes within the organized labor movement. The *Crom* and the *CTM* have accepted his decisions in their disputes with each other without question and have vied with each other in the indecent competition as to who is the more loyal in carrying out those decisions and which movement is the more loyal to him in general.

(5) The dictatorship maintains itself without great difficulty through the army, backed by popular and American governmental support. In recent rebellions the United States has supplied munitions to the Government and embargoed them to the rebels, and has set up generous emergency credits for their purchase. Popular support is secured through radical

EUROPE TODAY

(Continued from Page 4)
by more than a half. But world market prices are steadily mounting and no government measure can stop retail prices from reaching the level of wholesale prices. The mass struggle of the workers alone can prevent real wages from falling and arrest the rise of prices. Since workers' organizations have, under the influence of the People's Front policy, become ineffective, the increased pressure of the bourgeoisie on the government and the working class makes itself strongly felt. However, in spite of government opposition and the passivity of the people's front parties and the trade unions, there are signs that the resistance of the French workers against the rising cost of living is growing.

Under the date of February 15th, the Moscow "*Deutsche Zentral-Zeitung*" published an article on "The Necessity of Bolshevik Self-Criticism," from which we quote the following:

"It is only due to a complete or almost complete lack of self-criticism that the Trotskyite scum succeeded in doing damage to the work of socialist construction."

The article also talks about the necessity of eradicating "arrogance," "omniscience," and "syco-phancy," and advocates practising self-criticism in factory meetings, the press, etc.

TRADE UNION

By George

THE A. F. of L. went in for some week and all it can show for it. It's a well known fact to all that Illinois made desperate efforts to which it still controls to curb the interference for it in blocking out the sole bargaining agency at some ered a great difficulty, however, are discredited because of their continued battle, to this very day, against the growth of legitimate trade unionism. At this point Carnegie-Illinois got a bright idea. Why not utilize the schism in labor ranks for its own purposes, Why not call in the A. F. of L. to take over its company unions? There would certainly be no serious danger of the A. F. of L. becoming a threat, and there might be something to gain if the A. F. of L. label, whatever it may be worth at the moment, gives the illusion of legitimacy to these company unions. Who knows, some workers might be fooled into joining up. At least, they figured, it's worth a try.

In due course of time therefore an invitation to a conference was extended by the Carnegie-Illinois company unions to William Green. And right here is where the master-minding began. The council leaders were divided. Some argued, Green among them, that to confer with the company unions is

phrase demagoguery, which perforce deposits a growing sediment of actual though meager concessions and reforms: government-controlled but ever more inclusive organization, intermittent and limited distribution of lands, support of labor struggles when the rising governmental native capitalist and American interests are not involved. Supplementary measures for control are government subsidies and appointments which strengthen the hand of the government agents in the labor and peasant movements, and corruption or elimination (assassination and deportation) of "incurable" opposition elements. Thanks to the present attitude of the Communist Party, Cardenas has not needed to have recourse to those severer measures.

The signal for beginning the struggle against these faults, must come from the top by abolishing the Stalin cult. The cult of the small gods stems from the worship of the highest deity.

Lenin never hesitated to point out errors committed by the leadership. Even the relative weakness of the USSR at that time did not prevent discussion of these errors.

There is no method of extirpating these evils of "omniscience" and "arrogance" from the state and party apparatus except through the destruction of the theory of the infallibility of the top leadership.

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