



SHALL HE MAKE THE PLUNGE?

The War Against Gompersism in Mexico

(By Linn A. E. Gale)

The workingmen of Mexico are almost a unit against Samuel Gompers and the American Federation. Yet the first national congress that the Mexican Socialist Party ever held sold out body, soul and breeches to Luis N. Morones, secretary of the Pan-American Federation of Labor and bosom friend of Gompers. Strange? No. It merely shows how sharp and shrewd the enemy is, how cunningly he plays the game, how he continually contrives to slip into the midst of those sincere but erring people who

pin their faith to political action as the open sesame to Industrial Freedom. It shows once more what an easy thing it is to subsidize a political party and reminds us that, on the other hand, it is a hard job to do anything like that with industrial unions.

Instinctively, the average Mexican worker approves of Industrial Unionism and looks with suspicion on craft unions. The psychology of the Mexican may explain this party. After centuries of servitude and exploitation at the hands of Spaniard, Englishman,

American, German and Frenchman, the Mexican toiler begins to feel an unreasoning, unexplainable but strong and withal very justifiable sense of solidarity with every other toiler. He does not philosophize about it. He cannot. He has been a beast of burden for alien robbers so long that intellectual effort is well-nigh impossible in many cases. But without giving it much thought he just "knows" that all workers are in about the same class and ought to stick together, and he figures out that there is not much difference between them, even if some do one kind of work, others another, and so on. So the notion of One Big Union strikes him as a good one because it means that all the poor devils in the same boat with him are going to work together with him. And the idea of separate craft unions is distasteful to him because it means just the opposite. Primitive reasoning but it rests on a sound basis. It is a pity some of the more educated members of craft unions in the United States cannot see with as clear mental vision.

Still another reason why the Mexican worker does not usually "take to" agents of the A. F. of L. is that attitude which the jingo press north of the Rio Grande usually calls the "pro-Germanism" of the said worker. As a matter of fact, the laborer here is not pro-German and never was. He is not "pro"-anything. He simply knows that as a general rule the well-groomed American who comes down to Mexico comes for the purpose of exploiting him, grabbing the country's wealth and using shotguns and similar devices as a means of arbitration when difficulties arise. He notices that the A. F. of L. organizer generally looks very much like the capitalist, mining man or oil magnate. The organizer seems to belong to the fortunate few rather than the oppressed many, of which the peon forms a part, and the peon has his doubts when the organizer offers membership in the A. F. of L. as the short road to big pay, short hours and greater bliss. When a "wobbly" comes to Mexico the peon knows the difference instantly. He feels a kinship for the "wobbly," believing the latter is actually an under-dog like himself and is on the level in his promises. He has an idea that I. W. W.'ism is something not distinctly American and this appeals to him, for he has come to associate "Americanism" with robbery and slavery. The word "world" in the name "Industrial Workers of the World" sounds pleasanter to him than the word "American" in the name "American Federation of Labor." Internationalism, although he usually only incompletely understands the word, seems to him a desirable thing, but he detests "Americanism." The only "Americanism" he knows is misery, wretchedness and abuse, and if he had no other reason this would be sufficient to perpetually prejudice him against the Gompers organization.

Again, the Mexican worker had a strong impression during the late war that after Wall Street disposed of Germany it would crush Mexico. That was why, in many cases, he did really hope Germany would win the war. He thought in such a case one gang

of robbers might balance the other, and Germany's victory would keep the "gringos" from invading his own fair country. Recent events and the entrance of American troops onto Mexican soil in two distinct instances have made him feel that his fears during the war were correct. He knows that Samuel Gompers was very active in helping Wilson and Wall Street "win the war." And he concludes that anything that Gompers, Wilson and Wall Street are in favor of is a splendid thing for him to keep away from.

However, in spite of these beliefs and prejudices, the Mexican Socialist Party is completely in the hands of Gompers. And the sale of the party has resulted, very naturally in the formation of the Communist Party of Mexico which is emphatically on record in favor of Industrial Communism and will cooperate to the fullest extent possible with the I. W. W. Although organized as a political party, it frankly says that political action is of value only in a secondary sense for purposes of propaganda, education and agitation, and that industrial action is of far more importance. The Communist Party has organized with provisional officers to serve until the national congress of the party called to be held in Mexico City in November. Its International Secretary is Adolfo Santibanez, formerly International Secretary of the Mexican Socialist Party and virtually the pioneer in Mexican Radicalism, having been a worker for the past fifteen years. Santibanez is a lawyer who devotes his energies entirely to the legal work of the toilers. He was ousted from office in the recent Socialist Congress when the "Moronistas" or followers of Morones, seized control. The National Secretary of the Communists is Enrique H. Arce, a printer of nine years' connection with the Socialist Party and a man with exceptional literary talent. The address of the Communist Party is P. O. Box 985, Mexico City, D. F., Mexico, and all I. W. W. secretaries in the United States should communicate with it for they will find the party unequivocally committed to I. W. W.'ism and ready to do anything possible to further the One Big Union idea.

The story of the capture of the Socialist Congress by Gompers' man, Morones, is an interesting one. It hinges largely on the doings of a Hindu, M. N. Roy, who is supposed to be an exile from the United States, but who is also said by some to be a spy for the American government. As to the truth of this I do not know. But I do know that Roy and his wife have lived in Mexico City for nearly two years and during that time he has given frequent lectures and written a few pamphlets and articles on British misrule in India, a subject in which all Radicals are naturally keenly interested. However, in this period Roy took no interest in Socialism or allied subjects until a couple of months ago. In fact I have a letter he wrote in January, 1919, declaring emphatically he was "not a radical" and had "no connection with any radical group." Not many weeks ago, for reasons to be surmised, Roy's attitude changed decidedly and he manifested sudden and noticeable interest

in the Mexican Socialist Party. He and his wife joined and began to attend regularly the meetings of the Mexico City local. A little later he offered to give financial aid to "El Socialista," a little monthly published by Francisco Cervantes Lopez, National Secretary of the party. His financial backing was admitted by Lopez in a meeting of the Mexico City local the other evening. "El Socialista" increased in size, improved in appearance and was soon published semi-monthly instead of monthly.

Arrangements were begun shortly thereafter for the first national congress of the Soc. Party and the various groups and organizations whose ideas were practically the same. In these arrangements Roy also took a prominent part.

The congress met in this city on August 25th and was attended by a little less than thirty delegates, about half being from Mexico City and a few from Puebla, Zacatecas, Morelia and other cities. Mrs. Roy came as a delegate with the proxy of the "Centro Radical Feminino," a Radical and anti-Catholic organization of women in Guadalajara. Roy had credentials from "El Socialista," each publication being entitled to representation. Lopez, the National Secretary, was present as delegate from the Mexico City local with Santibanez, International Secretary.

A murmur went around the hall of the bakers' union, in which the congress was held, when a portly, fashionably dressed man with a diamond stickpin, took his seat, accompanied by another portly and prosperous looking chap. The former was Luis N. Morones. He was accompanied by one Samuel Yudico. The two had credentials from some obscure labor organization of Mexico City which, it developed, rents a hall and is supposed to meet once in a while, but details as to the membership, origin and activities of the said organization were not forthcoming. It functioned "somewhere in Mexico" and that is about all anybody knew. Morones looked decidedly out of place, but he is hardened and was not disturbed by a sense of fitness of things—or unfitness. A majority of the delegates came in their working clothes, some wearing the typical wide-brimmed Mexican sombreros which are becoming less and less common with the advance of our commercialized civilization. Not a few of them looked askance at Morones and Yudico. Several swore vigorously in Spanish. But Morones and Yudico were cool and unperturbed.

The convention began to pass on credentials. Morones and Yudico presented theirs and the storm began. A whole day was spent in oratorical fireworks. I had the audacity to say some harsh things about Morones, declaring he was not a Socialist, had no business in a Socialist congress, came there for no good purpose and represented an organization that existed chiefly to betray the working class into the hands of its exploiters. For this I was called to order by—my friend, Roy, the financial angel of "El Socialista." I had been a little doubtful of the genuineness of Roy's conversion to Socialism anyway, but it had not dawned on me before that he

was working hand-in-hand with Morones. Even then I was not sure of it. I thought perhaps Roy only objected to my strong language on general principles and might have done the same if a friend of Morones had talked in the same way. But I soon changed my mind. When Roy addressed the congress he said he did not approve of the policy of the American Federation of Labor, but he left the impression that it was only a friendly difference of opinion over minor details. There was no hint of a fundamentally different conception of economics. Not a word about the real object of the A. F. of L. being to patch up a rotten system and make it last a little longer, instead of preparing the way for the new and better system.

Speech-making finished. A ballot was taken. Roy did not vote and the result was—tie! Another ballot. Tie again—Roy still not voting. Then, as though fully decided to do a painful task, Roy voted in favor of seating Morones, casting the deciding vote! ! !

International Secretary Santibanez left the congress in disgust and said he would not return. He did, however, to help us fight Morones, for at one time we thought we could down him. Later, the Morones machine kicked Santibanez out and that sent him into the new Communist Party with the rest of us direct-actionists. National Secretary Lopez was angered and humiliated, but he did not leave the congress. He tried to convince himself that Roy might have acted from honorable motives. His was not an easy place. Without Roy, "El Socialista" might have to suspend, or at the best, could not be published regularly as at present. Roy, of course, explained his vote to Lopez and the rest of us. He thought it would be better to give Morones a seat and then "show him up" in the congress. Maybe it would have been, but this is precisely what he didn't do.

From that day Morones really ran the congress. When the national committee was named a furious fight developed over letting him have a seat on it, and he discreetly allowed himself and his friend Yudico to be excluded. This Roy, aided by Frank Seaman, editor of the English page of "El Heraldo de Mexico," the liberal bourgeois daily of ex-Gov. Alvarado of Yucatan, proudly declared was a great victory over Morones. But as a matter of fact, it was a beautiful piece of camouflage, for while not a member, Morones, it later developed, controlled a majority of the national committee. When the executive committee was named, Morones got three of the five members, possibly four. Lopez is the only one who is not a Morones man, but his sincerity will avail little if he remains with the Gompers-dominated organization. However, it is believed he will break away and join the Communists soon.

The congress lasted for ten days but it consisted really in grandstand plays and exhibition speeches made to convince the delegates that they were taking part in an epoch-making event. In this business of bluff Morones and Yudico were most active, and Roy

and Seaman were able assistants. Elaborate discussions over Utopian nonentities gave the congress the appearance of great activity, but an examination of what was really done shows next to nothing.

A statement of "revolutionary Socialism" of an ambiguous and dish-watery sort, was adopted and a program for a permanent organization was also accepted, after much philosophizing and generalizing. The chief feature of the latter was that it left the control of the party machinery entirely in the hands of the present officials who are all Morones' men.

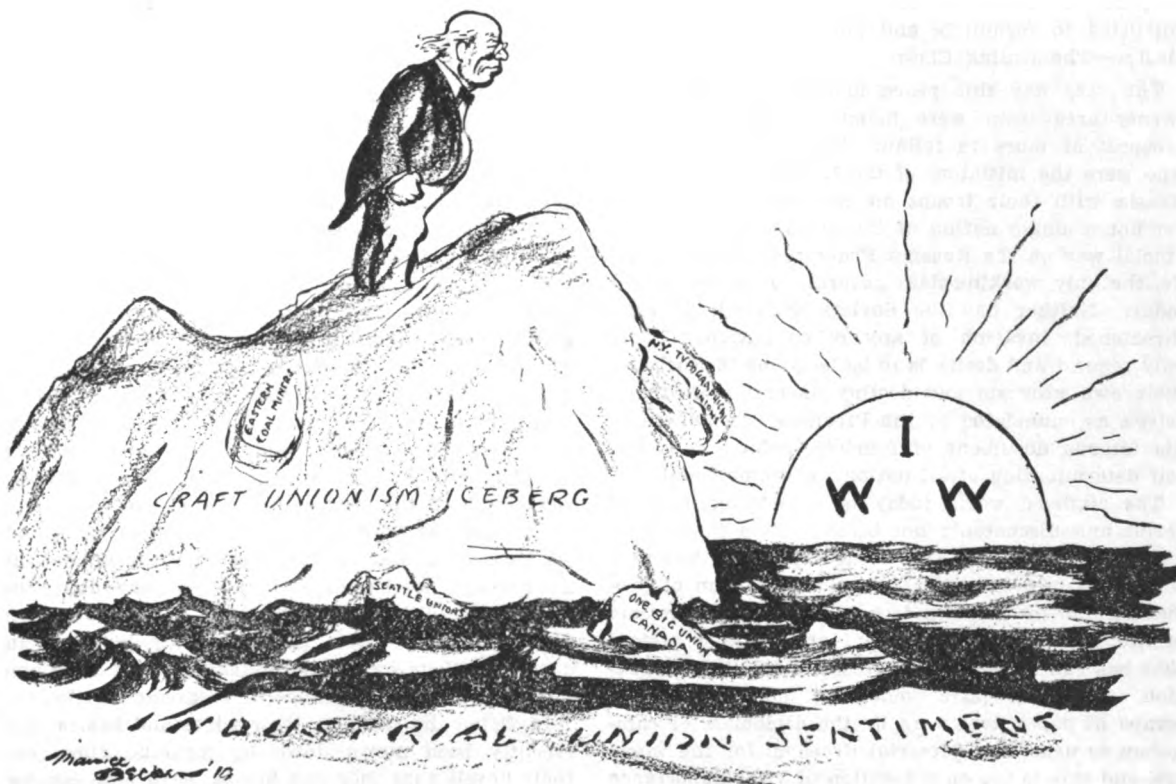
No official action whatever was taken on intervention, although the working class of Mexico is bitterly against any interference with Mexico's affairs by foreign governments. Of course Gompers (despite what he may say) does not want concerted opposition to intervention. That would make Wall Street's task harder and Gompers' business is to smooth out the obstacles to Wall Street's plans.

Early in the congress I called attention to the fact that the manifesto issued beforehand mentioned the election of delegates to the Second International at Berne, Switzerland, and remarked that such action would be an insult to the party. The committee which drafted the plan of organization, Roy and Seaman being members, therefore inserted a clause saying that delegates would be elected to the Third

International at Moscow, to save the face of the congress. But the congress adjourned without electing anybody and left the choice of delegates to the executive committee which will probably select Roy and Seaman and somebody else satisfactory to Morones. Inasmuch as the Communist Party will elect delegates to Moscow, it is not probable that the Socialist delegates will get much consideration from the Bolsheviks. But it was a clever thing to do to indorse the International Left Wing and it served in some cases to distract the attention of delegates away from the fact that the Gompers reactionaries had emasculated the congress.

Meanwhile the Communist Party is receiving assurances of support from all parts of Mexico and springs into life virile, well-organized, revolutionary and emphatically in favor of Industrial Unionism. There are many syndicates and not a few branches of the I. W. W. in Mexico and these will co-operate thoroughly with the Communists. There is reason to think that the Gompers victory will prove a Pyrrhic one. Industrial Unionism is stronger than ever in Mexico despite this temporary defeat.

(Editor note: Not knowing the condition in Mexico, we publish the above with some mental reservation, insofar as we believe that the I. W. W. men of Mexico may take a different view of cooperation with the new Communist party.)



DRIFTING IN WARM WATERS