

# The "Failure" of the Mexican Claims Commission

By MANUEL GOMEZ, Secretary All-America Anti-Imperialist League.

BY subtle trickery and distortion of news, thru the complete domination of Wall Street and Washington over all the avenues of publicity, one of the most flagrant acts in the recent history of American foreign policy has been allowed to go unmarked. This was the wanton wrecking by the U. S. representative a few days ago of a special U. S.-Mexican claims commission.

The commission consisted of the Mexican and U. S. representatives and a neutral chairman, Dr. Rodrigo Octavio of Brazil. It was created to settle the question of responsibility for the murder of fifteen American mining engineers by the followers of the notorious "Pancho Villa" some years ago, during the regime of Carranza. The U. S. government has maintained that the present administration of Mexico must make financial amends for the massacre. President Calles, on the other hand, has insisted that Villa was a bandit and outside the law.

Last Saturday's newspapers came out with a mysterious report that the special claims commission had "failed," that it had "broken down."

The truth about the "failure" did not appear in a single headline. Not an editorial writer referred to it. It was buried away in an obscure paragraph at the tail end of the Associated Press dispatch. The paragraph is as follows:

"Dr. Rodrigo Octavio, of Brazil, the neutral member of the commission, upheld the Mexican contention with the result that the body decided to disband after a violent controversy. Octavio has left for Havana and Judge Earnest D. Perry, the American member, is on his way home to report to President Coolidge.

Thus we see that the commission did not "fail" in the sense of failure to come to a decision. A decision was plainly reached, for the neutral chairman supported the position of the Mexican government. However, the U. S. representative refused to accept the decision, notwithstanding the fact that the personnel of the commission had been approved by the state department. Obviously there was nothing left to do but disband. Dr. Rodrigo left for Havana in disgust, declaring that the attempt to arbitrate had "failed."

One does not have to go deeply into the merits of the case itself. Anyone who has been following Mexican events at all closely knows that Villa was a common bandit at the time of the murders, and that, moreover, he was receiving arms and supplies from the United States in order

that he might make as much trouble for Carranza as possible. The important thing is that a special claims commission has met and rendered a decision, and that the United States government refuses to abide by that decision.

By its deliberately provocative action in the special claims case, the U. S. government has taken a stand which belies all its pretenses that it is striving to reach an amicable solution of the U. S.-Mexican crisis, that the U. S. state department is patient and reasonable but that Mexico insists upon trouble. The action makes a mock of arbitration on the American continent. It strips the rulers of the United States of their hypocritical democratic-sounding phraseology and reveals their cynical determination to make American imperialism the absolute arbiter of the western world.

There is reason why such great care was used to distort the story in the reports of the capitalist press. Wall Street and Washington are moving toward a definite break with Mexico over the anti-imperialist oil and land laws which that country has adopted as a measure of self-preservation. It is necessary to fool the unsuspecting workers with news of the "failure" of negotiations of all kinds—but in this

news the good intentions of the U. S. government must be always insisted upon, or at least implied.

That an open rupture with Mexico is being planned is no longer open to doubt. The wrecking of the special claims commission means that the attitude of Wall Street and Washington is about as follows:

Our plans are made up: we know that a break is coming soon anyway. Why should we let an impartial commission decide our right to collect damages when we shall soon be in a position to collect them by forcible means?

The attitude of the U. S. representative on the special claims commission have only that meaning.

"A new strain has been thrown on the already none too firm tie that unites diplomatically the United States and Mexico," editorializes the Chicago Tribune. "The sudden desertion by Dr. Rodrigo Octavio of Brazil of his post as neutral chairman of the commission called to adjudicate American losses in Mexican revolutions comes at an inauspicious moment."

No one can deny that the episode of the claims commission constitutes a new strain on U. S.-Mexican relations. But it also constitutes a very severe strain upon the credulity of the American workers.

## Breaking the Chains of American Imperialism



The work of a noted Mexican artist, used now as a symbol of the All-America Anti-Imperialist League in its organ, *El Libertador*, issued in Mexico City.