

THE MURDER OF PRIMO TAPIA

By BERTRAM D. WOLFE.

Primo Tapia, beloved peasant leader of Mexico, president of the League of Agrarian Communities of the state of Michoacan, has been courtmartialled and shot by the Mexican government. In this manner the Calles government keeps back the Communist movement by ridding Mexico of its few much needed leaders.

Primo Tapia was the best type of Mexican peasant leader. Of Indian extraction and speaking not only the language of the country (Spanish) but also the Indian dialect of the natives of the state of Michoacan, Tapia was both worker and peasant. The peasant leaders of Mexico are all brave and rebellious, but few of them have any gift for organization or any clear concept of the relation between the peasant and the worker.

A Wise Leader.

Primo Tapia was an outstanding exception to this rule. Like many Mexicans, he had gone to the United States as an unskilled contract laborer and worked, first on the railroads and then in the coal mines, where he had joined the Miners' Union, and learned how the class struggle is conducted by an organized labor movement.

Then, after 10 years in the United

States, he returned to his native state to organize the Indians and to lead them in their struggles for the restoration of their communal lands. There he joined the Communist Party and became one of its two or three outstanding leaders.

Incorruptible and Brave.

He organized the League of Agrarian Communities of the State of Michoacan, with a membership of 15,000, and affiliated it with the League of Agrarian Communities of the State of Vera Cruz, which in turn affiliated with the Krestintern. He was absolutely fearless, and what is more important in a land where all leaders are systematically corrupted, absolutely incorruptible.

Whenever an injustice was committed against the peasants, he would take the field at the head of an armed band and see to it that justice was done. At times he was at the head of large guerrilla bands and at other times he was isolated and in hiding. His name became a terror to the big landowners of his state, and a household word in the home of every oppressed Indian.

Hitherto attempts to assassinate him, to frame him in legal trials, to isolate and render him unpopular had proved as futile as the attempts to bribe him with office or wealth.

Second Murder of Communist Leaders.

The peasants and the Communist Party of Mexico have lost, in his death, one of their greatest leaders.

Primo Tapia is the second Mexican Communist killed in a few months. The other, Francisco Moreno, deputy of the state of Vera Cruz, was shot from behind a pillar upon leaving the chamber. His fight on behalf of the peasants of Vera Cruz made him as dangerous to the government as Primo Tapia had become.

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