

Ricardo Flores Magón

New life

1915

“What do we do now,” the workers ask themselves, not without a certain anxiety.

They have successfully taken the city in blood and fire. There does not remain a single capitalist in it, nor a priest, nor a representative of the government, except for those who hang from telephone posts or lay on the ground, showing their fat dead bodies to the sun. These bold workers understand that, if they allow a single one of these parasites to escape, they will soon return in the shadows leading a troop of mercenaries to stab them in the back.

“What do we do now,” and the anguished question is repeated by thousands and thousands of convulsing lips. These men, who do not fear shrapnel and who enthusiastically salute the roar of enemy canons that sends them death in each ball, feel timid in presence of Life, which offers them abundance, beauty, goodness, and sweetness.

The men scratch their heads shyly and thoughtfully; the women nibble the ends of their shawls; the kids, innocently free from the preoccupations of their elders, take advantage of the absence of policemen who usually are always around, and invade fruit stores. For the first time in their lives, they satisfy their puerile appetites until their bellies are full.

Before this spectacle, the multitude stirs: it was children who, with their sincerity, were educating their elders about what must be done. It is more natural for children to work like this, because their intelligence is corrupted by neither the preoccupations nor the prejudices which shackle the minds of adults. They do the right thing: they take it from where they find it. The multitude moves about, its undulation mimicking a sea of palm fronds. Our father the sun kisses the rags of these dignified people, generously allowing them a portion of its life, of its gold, of its beauty, and those clothes shine like the cheerful flags of victory.

In the middle of this sea, the most virile man surges forward, like a modest boat sailing proudly towards life. It is Gumersindo, the austere peasant farmer who had just been seen in the most dangerous places holding aloft his scythe, simultaneously the harvester of the heads of evildoers, and the symbol of fecund and noble work. Gumersindo loosens the peasant blanket that covers him. The multitude quiets down. The breathing of a child can be heard. Emotionally, Gumersindo says:

“The children grant us an example. Let us imitate them. The indispensable thing is to eat; that is our primary task. Let us take from the shops and the grocery stores what we need to satiate our appetites. Comrades: for the first time in our lives, we may eat as we like.”

In an opening and closing of eyes, the multitude invades shops and grocery stores, taking whatever they need. In other sections of the city, the same thing occurs. For the first time in the history of the population, there is not a single

human being who does not satisfy the necessities of his stomach. A great happiness reigns in all the city. The houses are vacant: everyone is on the street. Bands improvising music roam the streets playing joyous tunes. Everyone salutes each other, calling each other brother and sister. Even though they did not know each other a few hours earlier, they dance in the middle of the street, sing to each other, laugh, cry out, joke about fraternally, and frolic to the four winds: The tyrannical regulations of the police have ceased!

Night comes. No one thinks about sleeping. The celebration of Liberty continues, with more joy than can be contained. The municipal service was disbanded when the principle of Authority disappeared. In its place, men and women of good will take care of public lighting. They empty the streets of dead bodies. Everything goes cheerfully, needing neither government orders nor district regulations. Already a new day is dawning, and the celebration, the great celebration of liberty, does not show any signs that it will end soon, and why should it? The death of centuries of oppression deserves to be celebrated, not with a few hours of abandon, not with one day, but rather until the body, exhausted by the debauchment of pleasure, reclaims slumber.

While the entire population is abandoned to pleasures, pleasures they have always dreamed of, the comrades, both men and women, of the group "The Equals" work day and night.

The noble builders of the new social order barely sleep. They are dirty, unshaven, and swollen from continuously watching over the population all night. Nevertheless, they are still active, enthusiastic, and valiant.

Upon their shoulders rests the gigantic task of constructing on top of the debris of a past of slavery and infamy. They avail themselves of the meeting hall of the extinct Municipal Government to hold their sessions. The peasant railway man Ramon speaks enthusiastically. He has barely slept during the five days since the city was taken by proletarian forces. He is radiant. His square, bronzed face, in which one can read frankness, resolution, boldness, and sincerity, gleams as if behind his dark skin, a sun is blazing. He sweats; his eyes shining intensely, he says:

"Finally, the people are enjoying themselves; finally, they avenge thousands of years of sadness; finally, they know the pleasures of life. Let us rejoice in this blessing, like the father finds recreation seeing his children play. Our brothers and sisters enjoy until they are exhausted from pleasure. Meanwhile, we work: we finish the plans for social reconstruction."

The joyous notes of a waltz arise from the street, making all the faces turn toward the windows. The waltz ends, followed by an explosion of cries, whistles, hearty laughter, all sorts of sounds produced by striking all kinds of objects against each other.

“The people are enjoying themselves,” says Ramon. “We are working.”

And the men and the women of the group “The Equals” continue their labors.

Ten days have passed since the proletarian forces took the city. The entire population rests, fatigued by the week of pleasure during the celebration of Liberty. Numerous groups of proletarians assemble in the plazas asking each other what would be the right thing to do now. The comrades of the group “The Equals” have completed their plans for social reconstruction. They have affixed announcements to the street corners, inviting the residents of various city neighborhoods to congregate in specific sites in each neighborhood to discuss affairs of common interest. Everyone responds to the call, because they are all yearning to do something. For many, the future is uncertain. For others the horizon is limited. There even some who believe that the skies will soon discharge its anger against the men who executed the priests. The terror of the ignorant is widespread. The anxious crowd begins to murmur.

The comrades of the group “The Equals” distribute themselves in the various city neighborhoods. In plain language, they explain the excellence of communist anarchist to the people. The people crowd around. They do not want words: they want deeds. They are right: they have been deceived too much! But no: this time no one is trying to deceive them. The orators lecture with all clarity about where they should go next, without delay, on the march of progress. The first thing they must do is investigate, with the greatest possible exactitude, the number of residents in the city. They must make a thorough inventory of the food and clothing in all the shops and department stores. With this information, they must calculate how long they will be able to feed and clothe the population with the assets they have on hand.

The problem of the adequate shelter still remains. It was partially resolved during the days of the Festival of Liberty. On their own initiative, some residents of the city housed themselves in the dwellings of the bourgeoisie and other parasites, who have finally disappeared forever. However, many families still remain living in tiny neighborhood rooms and shacks. On hearing this, the masons leap forward, saying that they will make as many cozy, lovely houses as would be necessary. Without needing anyone to order them around, they themselves organize commissions to investigate precisely how many houses must be built to lodge those who are still living in tiny rooms and shacks.

The murmuring ends: fears and suspicions dissipate from the gathered crowd. No; “This is serious,” they say and confidence is reborn in their hearts, that, like a amiable fire, frees up the enthusiasm that is so necessary in all human enterprise. More than enough men of good will volunteer to perform the census of the population and to take inventories of all the articles in the shops. It is necessary

to take inventory not just of the food and of the clothing, but of all items useful in domestic and industrial settings.

The applauses repeat again and again, not so much to praise the merit of the volunteers, but to express the joviality of their spirits. These simple people understand that the fulfillment of duty does not need to be rewarded. The sea of palm hats stirs cheerfully under the rays of an amiable sun. The women display their satisfaction, cleaning the clothing taken from the shops. For the time being, the kids suspend their frolicking, because they all have furious bellyaches from stuffing themselves so fully. Convoys of parrots fly joyfully above the crowd, leaving an impression of openness, of freshness of health, of youthfulness, of spring. All dawns are beautiful, why shouldn't this dawn of Liberty and Justice be beautiful as well?

The conclusion of yesterday's meetings were postponed until today at two in the afternoon. The volunteer commissioners are all present. Not one is missing. All carry exact data about the number of residents in the city, as well as the existence of food and the other articles contained within the shops and grocery stores.

The day is splendid, one of the last days in April, when all is light, perfume, color, youth, love. In all the gardens, now tended by female volunteers, the flowers show their petals of silk, their exquisite, smooth, warm, humid vegetable lips that invite caresses and kisses.

In the same sites of yesterday's meetings, people speak animatedly. "How well and how quickly everything comes together when Authority does not intervene," they say in their conversations. Their hearts palpitate violently. Gumersindo does not take a moment of rest for himself. He roams all the neighborhoods in an expropriated automobile, now property of the community. Its usage is now absolutely necessary, because it unifies the resolutions made in each city neighborhood. He does not abandon his scythe, tying it to the hood of the automobile, giving prestige and luster to a machine that yesterday was merely aristocratic. The blanket that covers the shoulder of this rural peasant guarantees his modesty and concern.

Now they know how many residents there were in the city as well as the quantity of all kinds of manufactured goods. Despite their inability to find a mathematician on hand, they rapidly calculate how much longer they can continue to live off the provisions, a necessary calculation for regulating production. Hundreds of working hands plot the figures with expropriated pencils.

In a few minutes, these men of the hammer, of the shovel, of the saw, and of the chisel explain that this quantity of food is needed to provide daily subsistence for that many residents. They say that, because this quantity of foodstuff has been found, the entire population can subsist for that length of time.

Everyone is satisfied. "My goodness, this is going well" they say. Not a single complaint can be heard. "Truthfully, one needs only anarchists to arrange things," they add. Cries of "Long live Anarchy" thunder throughout the space, in well-justified ovations that finally accept the sacred ideal. Ramon, the peasant railway man, cries with emotion and shakes a red bound booklet above him, saying in a voice broken with sobs:

"This is our masterpiece!"

It is the Manifesto of September 23, 1911, issued by the Organizing Council of the Mexican Liberal Party.

Ramon is magnificent. Like all heroes, his square face, which looks like it has been hewn by ax blows in the strongest wood, radiates light. However, a hero is not a god, because anarchists do not have gods. Rather, it is a being who, through his actions, elevates himself above us as an example, as a great and beneficial teaching. Whether or not one wants to admit it, he shines like a sun.

Ramon explains that, considering the quantity of supplies, all the workers in the each industry must assemble to agree upon how work will be organized in their industry. Once they obtain this agreement, delegates from all the industries must also come to an accord on how to produce what the population needs. All approve of the idea, and Gumersindo lets all the assemblies in the different city neighborhoods know of this agreement. They all receive this idea with grand gestures of enthusiasm. An era of prosperity and progress is opening up before the redeemed city. From now on, the production will be adjusted to the needs of the population rather than to enrich some bandits.

Volunteers from the many trades have completed the construction of vast galleries in various locations in each of the neighborhoods which divide the city. Other volunteers have carried to these galleries all the items that always are found in great quantity in the shops, stores, and other warehouses. These articles are classified carefully. They have been distributed in the storehouses made expressly for containing them, where people who need them can go take them. In these galleries will be deposited all the articles that the many industries produce.

The comrades of the group "The Equals" do not rest. What an enormous task they have! What colossal responsibilities will flatten them if the new order comes to nothing. However, they work with great faith in its success, the intense faith that is born from a profound conviction. Nevertheless, some details preoccupy them. The city can not get beyond a certain point without the aid of the farm workers. The peasant farmers must give the city worker what they need to eat, as well as the primary materials for industry such as cotton, wool, wood, cactus leaves, and many other things. In exchange, the peasant farmers will have the right to take from the city's storehouses everything they need: clothing, prepared or manufactured food, furniture, machinery, and utensils for work. In a word,

everything they need. The metallurgic industries need the miners to cooperate with metals. In exchange, they obtain all that they need, like their brothers the peasant farmers.

“Yes!” Ramon cries enthusiastically, “we need the cooperation of the peasant farmer, of the miner, of the quarrymen, of all who work outside the city, and we have obtained it!”

A cloud of volunteer commissioners scatter to the region conquered by the workers’ firearms. They invite their brothers to cooperate in the great work of social production, as has been said before. All accept with enthusiasm, and promise to send what they produce to the city, in exchange for what the city workers produce.

The anarchist society is finally a reality. Everyone works, everyone produces according to his strengths and aptitudes and consumes according to his needs. The old and the invalid do not work. All live contentedly, because they all feel free. No one orders and no one obeys. In all fields of work, the greatest harmony reigns between everyone, without needing taskmasters or bosses. There is very great traffic on streetcars, on railroads, on automobiles, and on carts, because now everyone has the right to transport himself from one place to another according to his whim.

Some five or six days is all it has taken to obtain such a cheerful result. Finally, humanity has been regenerated through the adoption of the principles of communist anarchist. One can not even understand the depth of feeling in Gumersindo and Ramon when they emotionally contemplate the beautiful work in which they played such a large part. From the nearby hill, on the route to the city, they look with eyes dampened by emotion upon the tranquil city, the peaceful city, the city of brothers and sisters. The murmur of the immense metropolis breathing comes to them. It is no longer the breathing of fatigue nor the death rattle of an agonized population of slaves, but the ample, profound, healthy breathing of a city of free and happy beings.

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