

Zabalaza Books

*"Knowledge is the Key
to be Free"*



Post: Postnet Suite 116, Private Bag X42, Braamfontein, 2017,
Johannesburg, South Africa E-Mail: zabalaza@union.org.za
Website: www.struggle.ws/africa/safrica/zababooks/HomePage.htm

Flores Magon
and the
E Z L N



★ For Further Reading:

- ★ Albro, Ward S. *Always a Rebel: Ricardo Flores Magon and the Mexican Revolution*. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1992.
- ★ Cockcroft, James. *Intellectual Precursors of the Mexican Revolution, 1900-1913*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976.
- ★ Flores Magon, Ricardo. *Land and Liberty: Anarchist Influences in the Mexican Revolution*. David Poole, ed. Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1977.
- ★ Gomez-Quinones, Juan. *Sembradores, Ricardo Flores Magon y El Partido Liberal Mexicano: A Eulogy and Critique*. Los Angeles: Aztlan Publications, Chicano Studies Centre University of California. 1973.
- ★ Hart, John M. *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class, 1860-1931*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987.
- ★ Langham, Thomas C. *Border Trials: Ricardo Flores Magon and the Mexican Liberals*. El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1981.
- ★ MacLachlan, Colin M. *Anarchism and the Mexican Revolution, The Political Trials of Ricardo Flores Magon in the United States*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
- ★ Raat, Dirk W. *Revoltosos: Mexico's Rebels in the United States, 1903-1923*. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1981.
- ★ Sandos, James. *Rebellion in the Borderlands: Anarchism and the Plan of San Diego, 1904-1923*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992.
- ★ Turner, Ethel Duffy. *Ricardo Flores Magon y el Partido Liberal Mexicano*.
- ★ Morelia: Editorial "Erandi" del Gobierno del Estado Morelia, 1960.
- ★ Zamora, Emilio. *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas*. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1993.

Flores Magon and the EZLN

★ Introduction

There is still considerable debate regarding the role of the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM) and its Organizing Junta, including such figures as Ricardo Flores Magon, Librado Rivera, Anselmo Figueo and Enrique Flores Magon, as well as the specific foco leaders Praxedis Guerrero and Jesus Maria Rangel, in the unfolding of the Mexican Revolution in the early part of the twentieth century.

Whether led by or simply inspired by the PLM, there is little doubt that the uprisings, land appropriations and bids for political power constituted one of the major revolutions of the twentieth century. The "Manifiesto of September 23rd 1911" reprinted below describes a call for the continuation of such efforts as well as a justification for the struggle as it was taking place in one of the early phases of the revolutionary process. The Magonista manifesto's importance transcends its significance as an important primary document of the Mexican revolution. The Magonista ideology and language are relevant to contemporary readers for the simple reason that much of the revolutionary activity described below has continued until the present day in Mexico. In particular, Mexico has witnessed a number of peasant uprisings that have appropriated the means of production, confronted corrupt local and state governments and endured brutal repression by police and military forces. In some of the more economically and socially exploited regions of the country peasant organizations have consistently challenged the imposition of market regulations, exploitive labour practices, and corrupt politicians in order to maintain an independent and distinct lifestyle outside the logics of capital. Most recently, campesinos and PRD activists in Tobasco renewed their efforts to confront the devastating environmental destruction and the exploitation of the state controlled oil producer PEMEX. Local residents throughout Tobasco successfully blockaded over sixty oil platforms costing PEMEX approximately \$450,000 a day despite brutal attacks by a force of over eight hundred military, state and judicial police. Peasant organizations such as the OCSS in Guerrero and the OCEZ in Chiapas have fought successfully for self government in opposition to the corrupt one party state led by the PRI and have regularly re-appropriated land from criminally irresponsible land barons.

The most notable parallel with the PLM program rests with the revolutionary project of the EZLN. Beginning with their January 1, 1994 capture of four municipalities in Chiapas, the Zapatistas have captured the imagination of those people who have maintained their relentless struggle for democracy, liberty and justice! The Zapatista armed struggle has reinvigorated moribund political movements and ignited new revolutionary activity mobilising Mexican civil society and others internationally. Zapatista efforts to foster dialogue through sophisticated use of technologically advanced communication systems, manipulating the media, convening political forums, creating centres of resistance and specific efforts designed to empower local democratic action have resulted in invigorated confrontations with exploitive and destructive forces in the service of global financial capital.

MANIFESTO of September 23rd 1911

Manifesto issued by the Junta of the Mexican Liberal Party, September 23, 1911, scattered at that time broadcast and republished in its official organ, Regeneracion, January 20, 1912.

Mexicans:

The Organising [sic] Junta of the Mexican Liberal Party views with sympathy your efforts to put in practice the lofty ideals of political, economic and social emancipation, the triumph of which on earth will bring to an end the already sufficiently extensive quarrel between man and man, which has its origin in that inequality of fortune which springs from the principle of private property.

To abolish that principle means to annihilate all the political, economic, social, religious and moral institutions that form the environment within which are asphyxiated the free initiative and the free association of human beings who, that they may not perish, find themselves obliged to carry on among themselves a frenzied competition from which there issue triumphant not the best, not the most self-sacrificing, not those most richly endowed, physically, morally or intellectually, but the most crafty, the most egoistic, the least scrupulous, the hardest-hearted those who place their own well-being above all considerations of human solidarity and human justice.

But for the principle of private property there would be no reason for government, which is needed solely to keep the disinherited from going to extremes in their complaints or rebellions against those who have got into their possession the social wealth. Nor would be there any reason for the church, whose exclusive object is to strangle in the human being the innate spirit of revolt against oppression and exploitation, by the preaching of patience, of resignation and of humility; silencing the cries of the most powerful and fruitful instincts by the practice of immoral penances, cruel and injurious to personal health and -that the poor may not aspire to the enjoyment of this earth and become a danger to the privileges of the rich -by promising the humblest, the most resigned, the most patient, a heaven located in the infinite, beyond the farthest stars the eye can reach.

Capital, Authority, the Church - there you have the sombre [sic] trinity that makes of this beautiful earth a paradise for those who, by cunning, violence and crime, have been successful in gathering into their clutches the product of the toiler's sweat, of the blood of the tears and sacrifices of thousands of generations of workers; but a hell for those who, with muscle and intelligence, till the soil, set the machinery in motion, build the houses and transport the products. Thus humanity remains divided into two classes whose interests are diametrically opposed -the capitalist class and the working class; the class that has possession of the land, the machinery of production and the means of transporting wealth, and the class that must rely on its

the guidance of directors. Let each be master of himself. Let all be arranged by the mutual consent of free individualities. Death to slavery! Death to hunger! Long life to "Land and Liberty!"

Mexicans! With hand on heart and with a tranquil conscience we formally and solemnly appeal to you all, men and women alike, to embrace the lofty ideals of the Mexican Liberal Party. As long as there are rich and poor, governors and governed, there will be no peace, nor is it to be desired that there should be; for such a peace would be founded on the political, economic and social inequality of millions of human beings who suffer hunger, outrages, the prison and death, while a small minority enjoys pleasures and liberties of all kinds for doing nothing. On with the struggle! On with expropriation, for the benefit of all and not of the few! This is no war of bandits, but of men and women who desire that all may be brothers and enjoy, as such, the good things to which nature invites us and which the brawn and intelligence of man have created, the one condition being that each should devote himself to truly useful work.

Liberty and well-being are within our grasp. The same effort and the same sacrifices that are required to rise to power a governor - that is to say, a tyrant - will achieve the expropriation of the fortunes the rich keep from you. It is for you, then, to choose. Either a new governor - that is to say, a new yoke - or life-redeeming expropriation and the abolition of all imposition, be that imposition religious, political or of any other kind.

LAND AND LIBERTY!

**Signed in the city of Los Angeles,
State of California, United States of America,
September 23, 1911.
Ricardo Flores Magon
Anselmo L. Figueroa
Librado Rivera
Enrique Flores Magon
Antonio de P. Aruajo**

****This has been reproduced from: Flores Magon, Ricardo. Land and Liberty: Anarchist Influences in the Mexican Revolution. David Poole, ed. Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1977.***

live tortured by uncertainty as to whence will come tomorrow's bread for our women and little ones; we, who when we have reached old age, are ignominiously discharged because we can no longer work; it is for us to make powerful efforts and a thousand sacrifices to destroy to its lowest foundations the edifice of the old society which has been a fond mother to the rich and vicious and a hard-hearted stepmother to the workers and the virtuous.

All the ills that afflict humanity spring from the existing system which compels the majority to toil and sacrifice itself that a privileged minority may satisfy its wants and even its caprices while living in ease and vice.

The evil would be less if all the poor were guaranteed work, but production is not regulated for the satisfaction of the needs of the workers but for what the bourgeoisie want, and they so manage things that it shall not exceed their capacity of expenditure. Hence the periodic stoppage of industry, or restriction of the number of workers, which proves also how perfect is the machinery operated for the advantage of the rich by the proletariat.

To make an end of all this it is necessary that the workers take into their own hands the land and the machinery of production, so that they themselves may regulate the production of wealth in accordance with their own needs. Robbery, prostitution, assassination, incendiarism, swindling - these are the products of the system that places men and women in conditions in which, that they may not die of hunger, they find themselves obliged to take where they can or prostitute themselves; for, in the majority of cases, even though they have the greatest desire to work, no work is to be had or it is so badly paid that there is no getting the sum necessary to satisfy the most imperious necessities of the individual and his family. Moreover, the long hours of work under the present capitalist system, and the conditions under which it is carried on, in a short time make an end of the worker's health and even of his life. These industrial catastrophes have their origin solely in the contempt with which the capitalist class looks on those who sacrifice themselves for it.

Irritated as is the poor man by the injustice of which he is the victim; angered by the luxury flaunted in his face by those who do nothing; beaten on the street by the policeman for the crime of being poor; compelled to hire out his labour on tasks distasteful to him; badly remunerated; despised by all who know more than he does or who, having money, think themselves the superiors of those who have none; having in prospect an old age of bitter sorrow and the death of an animal turned out of the stable as unserviceable; disquieted from day to day by the possibility of being without work; obliged to regard as enemies even the members of his own class, since he knows not who among them will offer his services for less than he himself is earning - it is natural that in such circumstances there should be developed in the human being anti-social instincts and that crime, prostitution, and disloyalty should be the inevitable fruits of the old and hateful system we are trying to destroy, to its very lowest roots, that we may create in its stead a new one of love, of equality, of justice, of fraternity, of liberty.

Rise, all of you, as one man! In the hands of all are tranquillity [sic], well-being, liberty, the satisfaction of all healthy appetites. But we must not leave ourselves to

muscle and intelligence to support itself.

Between these two social classes there cannot exist any bond of friendship or fraternity, for the possessing class always seeks to perpetuate the existing economic, political and social system which guarantees it tranquil enjoyment of the fruits of its robberies, while the working class exerts itself to destroy the iniquitous system and institute one in which the land, the houses, the machinery of production and the means of transportation shall be for the common use.

Mexicans! The Mexican Liberal Party recognises [sic] that every human being, by the very fact of his having come into life, has a right to enjoy each and every one of the advantages modern civilization offers, because those advantages are the product of the efforts and sacrifices of the working class from all time. The Mexican Liberal Party recognises labour [sic] as necessary for the subsistence [sic] of the individual and society, and accordingly all, save the aged, the crippled, the incapacitated and children ought to dedicate themselves to the production of something useful for the satisfaction of their necessary wants.

The Mexican Liberal Party that the so-called rights of individual property is an iniquitous right, because it subjects the greater number of human beings to toil and suffering for the satisfaction and ease of a small number of capitalists. The Mexican Liberal Party recognises that Authority and the Church are the supports of the iniquity of Capital and therefore, The Organising Junta of the Mexican Liberal Party has solemnly declared war against Authority, war against Capital, and war against the Church.

Against Capital, Authority and the Church the Mexican Liberal Party has hoisted the Red Flag on Mexico's fields of action, where our brothers are battling like lions, disputing victory with the hosts of bourgeoisdom, be those Maderists, Reyists, Vazquists, Cientificos or what not, since all such propose merely to put in office some one as first magistrate of the nation, in order that under his shelter they may do business without any consideration for the mass of Mexico's population, inasmuch as, one and all, they recognise [sic] as sacred the right of individual property.

In these moments of confusion so propitious for the attack on oppression and exploitation; in these moments in which Authority, weakened, unbalanced, vacillating, attacked on every side by unchained passions, by tempests of appetites that have sprung into life, and hope immediately to glut themselves; in these moments of anxiety, agony and terror on the part of privileged, compact masses of the disinherited are invading the lands, burning the title deeds, laying their creative hands on the soil and threatening with their fists all that was respectable yesterday - Authority, Capital, the Clergy. They are turning the furrow, scattering the seed and await, with emotion the first fruit of free labour.

These Mexicans, are the first practical results of the propaganda and of the action of soldiers of the proletariat, of the generous upholders of our equalitarian [sic] principles, of our brothers who are bidding defiance to all imposition and all exploitation with the cry - a cry of death for all those above, but of life and hope for all those below - "Long Live Land and Liberty."

Expropriation must be pursued to the end, at all costs, while this grand move-

ment lasts. This is what has been done and is being done by our brothers of Morelos, of Southern Puebla, of Michoacan, of Guerrero, Veracruz, of the Northern portion of the State of Tamaulipas, of Durango, Sonora, Sinaloa, Jalisco, Chihuahua, Oaxaca, Yucatan, Quintana Roo, and parts of other States, as even the Mexican bourgeois press itself has had to confess. There the proletariat has taken possession of the land without waiting for a paternal government to deign to make it happy, for it knows that nothing good is to be expected of governments and that the emancipation of the workers must be the task of the workers themselves.

These first acts of expropriation have been crowned with most pleasing success; but they must not be limited to taking possession of the land and the implements of agriculture alone. There must be a resolute taking possession, of all the industries by those working in them, who should bring it about similarly that the lands, the mines, the factories, the workshops, the foundries, the railroads, the shipping, the stores of all kinds and the houses shall be in the power of each and every one of the inhabitants, without distinction of sex. The inhabitants of each region in which such an act of supreme justice has been effected will only have to agree that all that is found in the stores, warehouses, granaries, etc., shall be brought to a place of access by all, where men and women of reliability can make an exact inventory of what has been collected and can calculate the time it will last - the necessities and the number of inhabitants that will have to use it being taken into account - from the moment of expropriation, until the first crops shall have been raised and the other industries shall have turned out their first products.

When such an inventory has been made the workers in the different industries will understand, fraternally and among themselves, how to so regulate production that none shall want while this movement is going on, and that only those who are not willing to work shall die of hunger - the aged, the incapacitated, and the children, who have a right to enjoy all, being excepted.

Everything produced will be sent to the community's general store, from which all will have the right to take what their necessities require, on the exhibition proof that they are working at such an industry.

The human being aspires to satisfy wants with the least possible expenditure of effort, and the best way to obtain that result is to work the land and other industries in common. If the land is divided up and each family takes a piece there will be grave danger of falling anew into the capitalist system, since there will not be wanting men of cunning or grasping habits who may get more than others and in the long run exploit their fellows. Apart from that danger is the fact that if each family works its little patch of land it will have to toil as much or more than it does today under the system of individual property to obtain the miserable result now achieved; but, if there is joint ownership of the land and the peasants work it in common, they will toil less and produce more. Of course there will be enough for each to have his own house and a ground-plot for his own pleasure. What has been said as to working the land in common applies to working the factories, working shops, etc., in common. Let each, according to his temperament [sic], tastes, and inclinations choose the kind of work that suits him best, provided he produces sufficient to cover his necessary

wants and does not become a charge on the community.

Operating in the manner pointed out, that is to say, expropriation being followed immediately by the organisation [sic] of production, free of masters and based on the necessities of the inhabitants of each region, nobody will suffer want, in spite of the armed movement going on, until the time when, that movement having terminated with the disappearance of the last bourgeois and the last agent of authority, and the law which upholds privilege [sic] having been shattered, everything having been placed in the hands of the toilers, we shall meet in fraternal embrace and celebrate with cries of joy in inauguration of a system that will guarantee to every human being Bread and Liberty.

Mexicans! It is for this the Mexican Liberal Party is struggling. For this a Pleiades of heroes is spilling its generous blood, fighting under the Red Flag to the famous cry of "Land and Liberty."

The Liberals have not laid down their arms despite the treaty of peace made by the traitor Madero with the tyrant Diaz, or despite the offers of the bourgeoisie which proposed to fill its pockets with gold. It has acted thus because we Liberals are men who are convinced that political liberty does not benefit the poor but only the place hunters, and our object is not to obtain offices or distinctions, but to take everything out of the hands of the bourgeoisie that it may put in the power of the workers.

Whichever one of them may triumph the activity of the different political bands who are now disputing among themselves for supremacy will result in exactly what happened under the tyrant Porfirio Diaz, since no man, however well-intentioned he may be, can do anything in favour [sic] of the poor class when he finds himself in power. That activity has produced the present chaos, and we, the disinherited ought to take advantage of the special circumstances in which the country finds itself, in order to put in practice, without the loss of time, on the spot, the ideals of the Mexican Liberal Party. We should not wait to carry expropriation into effect until the peace has been made, for by that time the supplies in stores, granaries, warehouses, and other places of deposit will have been exhausted. Moreover, owing to the state of war prevailing throughout the country, production will have been suspended and the sequel of the struggle will be famine. But if we carry expropriation and the organisation of labour into effect during the struggle no one will be in lack of the necessities of life then or afterwards.

Mexicans! If you wish to be free once more, struggle only for the Mexican Liberal Party. All others are offering you political liberty when they have triumphed. We liberals invite you to take immediate possession of the land, the machinery, the means of transportation and the buildings, without excepting any one to give them to you and without waiting for any law to decree it, since the laws are not made by the poor but by the gentry, who take good care not to make any against the interests of their caste.

It is the duty of us poor people to work and struggle to break the chains that make us slaves. To leave the solution of our problems to the educated and rich is to put ourselves voluntarily in their clutches. We, the plebians [sic]; we, the tattered-malions; we, the starvelings; we who have no place wherein to lay our heads and