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Ricardo Flores Magón
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[¿Gobierno?]
February 12, 1914

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Government?

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There are people, who in good faith ask this question: how would it be possible to live without government? And they conclude saying that a supreme chief, a crowd of officials, large and small, such as ministers, judges, magistrates, legislators, soldiers, jailers, policemen, and executioners, are necessary.

These good people believe that without authority we would all turn ourselves over to excesses, the result being that the weak would always be the victim of the strong.

This could happen only in this case: that the revolutionaries, through a weakness of the guillotine, would leave afoot social inequality. Social inequality is the fountain of all the antisocial acts that the law and the bourgeois consider crimes with theft being the most common of those crimes. Well, when all mankind will have the opportunity to work the land or to dedicate itself, without the need to work for salary, to be able to survive, who will take theft as a profession the way it is seen now? In the society that the libertarians long for, land and all methods of production will no longer be objects of speculation for a determined number of proprietors instead they will be the common property of the workers and as before there will

be only one class: that of the workers with the right of all to produce and consume in common, what need would there be to steal?

It will be said that there are persons given to idleness and that they would take advantage of another's work to live instead of working. I have lived in different prisons; I have spoken with many thieves, with hundreds of thieves; almost all of them have stolen out of necessity. There is no constant work: salaries are meager, the working day of laborers is truly exhausting; the scorn of the proprietary class for the proletariat class is irritating; the example of living in idleness, luxury, abundance, in the vice of doing nothing useful that the capitalist class gives to the working class, all of this causes some workers, out of starvation, indignation, or as an individual protest against the plunder of the bourgeois, to rob and they become criminals, to the point of murder, to take what is necessary to live.

The profession of theft is definitely not one of the happiest. It requires great activity and waste of energy on the part of the thief, major activity and major energy that in many cases is required to recover some task; so to complete a theft, the thief has to stake out his victim, study his practices, be careful of policemen, plan a map, risk his life or freedom, in continued anxiety, without limit in this case of work, and assume that a man does not come to him for happiness, but instead forced by necessity or the anger of seeing himself in misery, when the rich pass by his side intoxicated by wine, luxury, his mouth twisted with the hiccups of satiation, dressed in suedes and fine clothes, enveloping in one scornful look the poor people who sacrifice in the workshop, the factory, the mine, the furrow ...

The immense majority of the jail population is composed of individuals who have committed a misdemeanor against property: theft, swindling, fraud, falsification, etcetera, while in a small minority of delinquents, prisoners with crimes against people, are found. Once private property is abolished, when

one will have all of the means to choose a job of one's liking, but beneficial to the community; humanizing the work in a virtue that will not effect the patron and make him rich, but to satisfy necessities; returning to the industry the thousands and thousands of day laborers that today corner the government in its offices, in the districts, and the prisons themselves; all will be put to work to gain sustenance, with the powerful help of machinery of all kinds, it will be necessary to work only some two or three hours daily to have everything in abundance. Would there then be those who prefer theft to be able to live? Man, although the most perverse, always likes to attract the esteem of all. This can be observed today, although the way in which humanity lives weakens the best instincts of the species, and if it is so, why not admit that man would be better in the cavity of a free society?

In referring to the crimes against people, the major part is the product of the sickness in which we live. Man lives in a constant state of nervous over excitement; the misery, the insecurity of winning the bread of the next morning; the offenses of authority; the certainty that he is victim of political tyranny and capitalist exploitation; the desperation of seeing the child without clothes, education, future; the spectacle, nothing constructed of the struggle of all against all, that is born specifically of the right of private property, that facilitates the shrewd and the malicious to accumulate capital by exploiting the workers; all of that and much more fills the heart of man with bitterness, makes him violent, angry, and nudges him to take out a revolver or dagger to attack, many times for trivial issues. No society exists in which savage rivalry between human beings satisfies all necessities, soothes sufferings, softens tempers, and strengthens in them the instincts of sociability and solidarity. All of which are so strong that, in spite of worldly disputes of all against all, they have not died in human beings.

No, there is no need to fear life without government; we long for it with all of our hearts. There would be, naturally, some

individuals given to criminal instincts; but politics would take charge of attending to them, as ill as they are, because those poor people are victims of [atavismos], illnesses inherited of inclinations born of anger from the injustice and brutality of the environment.

Mexicans: remember how the rural populations of Mexico have lived. Communism has been practiced in the rural huts; authority has not been missed; before, to the contrary, when it was known that an agent of authority was coming near, the men would flee to the forest because authority is only present when men are needed for the barracks or for contributions to maintain the parasites of the government and nevertheless life was more tranquil in those places where laws were not known nor the threat of the gendearme with his club.

Authority is not missed except to maintain social inequality.

Mexicans: Death to Authority!

Long Live Land and Liberty!