

To the patriotic proletarians

Ricardo Flores Magón

1916

Patriots, listen to some healthy words, some words quite different from those you are used to hearing. They are new words for you, but they contain the truth. Listen then carefully, and, if possible, learn by heart what I am going to tell you.

You call yourselves patriots; you are proud to be considered patriots; the word “fatherland” swells your heart, and yet you act like traitors; with your actions you give your beloved country a blow in the back.

Your patriotism consists in loving, first of all, that piece of land where you were born; there where your innocence dragged itself along in your first steps along the path of life; the courtyard of the neighbourhood, the city, the village, the hamlet, the hut lost in the forest, in the plain, in the mountains, and the territory that encompassed your gaze, where you ran and crossed as children, and which later, already young, was witness to your loves, your happiness, alas!, also to your sorrows and disappointments. You love that piece of land with a sweet and healthy love, and you find it beautiful even if to others it seems ugly, and if you are outside it, sometimes you cannot repress a sigh when remembering it, even though you were unhappy there. This love for the land is natural: you feel it in your hearts without anyone having instilled it in you; it seems as if that piece of land contains something of your being; as if you are part of it: it is that your sentimental life is closely linked to it; in it resided the girl who infiltrated your heart the sweetness and the storms of love; There are your first friends; the faces of your neighbours are familiar to you.

But your patriotism is growing: it no longer consists only of love for your native land, but includes a certain feeling of sympathy for individuals who speak your own language; who have traditions common to yours; who, like you, share the same prejudices, suffer from the same concerns and in whose breasts similar virtues nest and similar vices meander and mingle. This patriotism is still healthy, because it is a natural feeling, which no one has instilled in you and does not encourage you to commit villainy.

But there is another patriotism, an artificial patriotism, which has been taught to you from childhood: an official patriotism, one might say, because it is administered, suggested, fostered, strengthened by the government, that obedient dog of the capitalist or bourgeois class. This patriotism is very different from the two that I have just outlined for you. If those two consist of delicate feelings of sympathy and love, they arouse the sweetest emotions and fill your breasts with tenderness, artificial patriotism, official patriotism, bourgeois patriotism to put it in a nut-

shell, does nothing but awaken, within you, the sleeping beast. This last patriotism is ferocious, brutal, bloodthirsty, cruel, inhuman, unjust, hateful. This last patriotism is that which puts a bandage of blood on your eyes when you see a foreigner; This patriotism is what teaches you to hate everyone who was not born in the place where you were born, where people were born who share a common language with you, identical traditions and concerns, similar vices and virtues and who suffer from the same prejudices. This patriotism tells you that you are the most intelligent, bravest and most virtuous men in the world; this irrational patriotism marks out as a mortal enemy every human being who was not born within the borders of the homeland; this patriotism is what teaches you to love a flag that has no more value than the rag it is made of; This patriotism has been skillfully inculcated by the bourgeoisie and by politicians so that you attack the human beings who populate the countries that extend beyond the borders and the seas, when the bourgeois of your country want to increase their wealth at the expense of the wealth of the bourgeois of other countries, and so the bombastic words of “integrity of the country”, “national honor”, “dignity of the flag” and others like them, and which are so pleasant to your ears because they have been repeated to you since you were children, can be translated by these others: “defense of an economic, political, social and moral system” that has humanity divided into oppressors and oppressed, made by the oppressed themselves, because it is the proletarians, those below, the workers, the pariahs, the helots and not the bourgeois, for whose well-being wars are made, those who take up the rifle to make pieces, to exterminate, to kill the oppressed, the proletarians, those below, the pariahs, the helots of the other homelands.

Well then, Mexican proletarians: you have just committed an act of treason by consenting, with your silence, that Carranza had agreed, with foreign governments, to the death of the revolution. If you are patriots of the official school, that is, if you love the homeland that the government teaches us to love, you have committed a crime, because the honor of that homeland consists mainly in its sovereignty, in its political and economic independence from the governments of other homelands; and by consenting to foreign governments meddling in its internal affairs, you have allowed its sovereignty to be outraged, that is, the ability it has, as an independent homeland, to govern its own destiny. But since that official homeland is that of the bourgeoisie, it matters little that you have betrayed it; What matters is that, by betraying it, you have betrayed yourselves, compromising your future and that of your children, because the bourgeoisie, who are the ones directly interested in making peace, have much to lose by prolonging the revolution, because they are the owners of the land, the houses, the forests, the water, the mines, the workshops, the factories, the railways, the warehouses, everything that exists. On the other hand, you, what have you to lose? Nothing and much to gain: the possession of all that wealth.

Here, proletarians, how you are played with patriotism; how by calling yourselves patriots, both proletarians and bourgeois, what benefits one harms the other and vice versa. Here, how with the same act: that of betraying the country, the bourgeoisie have benefited and you have been harmed. This comes from the fact that the working class and the capitalist class have nothing that affects them in the same way, that their interests are diametrically opposed, and that, therefore, if there is to be war, let it be a war against the bourgeoisie, a war of classes, seeing the workers of all races as friends and brothers, and the bourgeoisie of all countries as enemies.

If you are patriots in the healthy sense of the word, that is, if your patriotism is reduced to harboring feelings of sympathy for the place where you first saw the light and for the region where the people who speak your language live, and with whom you have common traditions

and concerns, etc., and you do not harbor hatred against individuals who happened to be born in other regions of the planet, overthrow Carranza and overthrow any government that is attempted to be established, because the government perpetuates the bourgeois homeland, the ferocious homeland that instills and fuels hatred among the races so that the oppressed of the various homelands tear each other apart when it suits the interests of capital; And if you are patriots, lovers of the bourgeois homeland, do the same: overthrow all government, since the bourgeois homeland is only a pimping invented by the rich and politicians to serve the people in the field of exploitation, in the political field and on the battlefields.

Up, Mexicans, against your executioners! Long live Land and Liberty!

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