

## The Socialist ABC's

*Anonymous*

*During the 1920s, following the revolution's bloody military phase, several Mexican states carried out homegrown radical experiments, vying with one another for the title "Laboratory of the Revolution." The southern state of Tabasco, during the regime of governor Tomás Garrido Canabal (1922–1935), was a leading contender for that title. Much in the manner of Ché Guevara and the Cuban revolutionaries decades later, Garrido aimed to create a "new type of man," an abstemious and atheistic "man of the future." To accomplish this, he persecuted the Catholic clergy, prohibited alcoholic beverages, structured production and consumption in the state along cooperative lines, organized all citizens into "resistance leagues," formed a red-shirted paramilitary force, and adopted "rationalist" education in the state's schools. What follows are excerpts from a school primer published by the state's "Redemption Press" in 1929.*

Man is a sociable being.

Anyone who isolates himself is an *egoist*.

Those who want to have everything for themselves, and who try to monopolize land and money in a few hands, impoverish the country and bring general discontent and misery to the majority.

The monopolizers of wealth exploit the workers and are humanity's worst enemies.

The worker needs to alternate between tools and books, between the workshop or field and the school, so that, cultivating his intelligence and forming his sensibilities, he will become a conscious being who thinks, feels and loves.

The worker who has cultivated his intelligence improves and dignifies both himself and his family.

The worker's ignorance is very dangerous, for it allows him to be victimized by the exploiters, priests, and alcohol.

*Little Proletarian*

I call you this because I know that your father is a proletarian, and you will be one also.

You lack much, and you and your family work hard for your food.

Although you are still young, you have already begun watering the soil with the sweat of your brow, and your hands are growing coarse from using heavy tools.

It is good that this is so: although small you are already manly, because as a child you still enjoy the feeling of being useful. To be useful is to be good for something, to do something, to give something, and it is the noblest aspiration one can have in life.

To be useful is to be happy.

There are very many proletarian families throughout the world who, despite their hard work, do not have what they need.

If you learn that the man who works is the man who produces, and that he has the right to enjoy the product of his labor, you will understand that there is no reason for proletarian families to suffer misery. Think about this: look around you, and you will see the cause of this injustice. Your labor and that of your family produce more than you can use; a small group lives at your expense and steals from you through deceit, and exploits you without your knowing it. It has been this way for a long time! Your ancestors endured it patiently, as did your parents; they have become indifferent and have kept their sorrow to themselves. But you were born in a century of freedom and compensation, you must win for the proletarian family the right to enjoy all that it produces.

*The Society of Yesterday*

Human beings need to associate in order to live.

The first union of human beings led to the formation of the family.

The grouping of families which lived in the same place, had the same customs and language, and were linked by ties of affection, resulted in the formation of society.

In our society, before the Revolution of 1910, an odious division of classes came into being. There was one class that enjoyed every consideration and which had the support of the government.

This was the privileged class.

The victims of the privileged class were the workers of the cities and of

the countryside; the latter were called "mozos" ["servants" or "boys"] and they lived in the saddest conditions you can imagine.

They were exploited without pity, and the greatest fortunes of Tabasco were built upon their excessive labor.

The greedy capitalists packed many tears and sorrows away in their strong treasure chests.

Their wild festivals and brilliant parties prevented them from feeling like human beings, and from understanding the battle that was raging within their suffering souls. Believing that things must be as they were, they grew more and more demanding; they were helped by the clergy in their unhealthy passion to exploit; they shared their riches with the clergy in exchange for absolution, and they were blind and deaf to the sorrow of the oppressed; and, assured that their sins would be forgiven, they grew more and more tyrannical.

It was within this society, organized so unjustly and completely lacking in the principles of love and justice that must exist among men, that the Revolution broke out; the struggle was joined against the regime which protected this state of affairs, and after several years and much blood, tears, and suffering, the Revolution triumphed.

With its triumph, the workers' freedom was secured, and they abandoned the farms where they had worked as servants for many long years.

The privileged class, being opposed to the change that had come about, abandoned their haciendas. They left the state, and they pooled their money with their fellow exploiters in other states, and they tried to form a counterweight to the Revolution.

They have not yet succeeded in their efforts. The Mexican people now understand that they must occupy the place of men and citizens in their country; they compare their lives today with their sufferings of yesterday, and they stand by their conquests and do not listen to those who try to disturb the peace that they enjoy today and that they will enjoy for many years. They are men who feel true fraternity and justice and are opposed to all tyrants and exploiters.

*The New Society*

The current society tries to organize itself without iniquitous exploitation and without shameful servility.

The goal is the dignification of the Mexican family, and we do all we can to achieve that goal.

The principles of solidarity, a spirit of cooperation, and feelings of equality, are inculcated in the school and propagated at civic and cultural meetings.

The leaders of this social transformation seek to organize men into a more just and humane society.

The ideal of the new societies is to derive individual rights from those of the collectivity.

The supreme aspiration is to create governments that respond to man.

Socialism is the system of organization that is best adapted to reaching these goals, ideals and aspirations.

### *The Good Citizen*

Worker of the field and city:

If you want to feel the true happiness to which we all aspire, bear in mind your duties. Once these are carried out, you will understand your rights and how to retain them when someone opposes you.

The first duty that nature has imposed upon you, whether you are a son, a husband or a father, is to provide comfort to those who depend upon you; in order to be sure that your work is justly remunerated, that work must be of high quality, since no one pays for work that is poorly done or done only out of necessity. If you do shoddy work, you will be obliged to take whatever the boss sees fit to pay you, which will never be enough to account for your needs. If your work is done well, you have the right to set the price in accordance with your needs, and you will have enough to live with decency and ease.

When you have received the product of your work, take care not to spend it unwisely; adjust your expenses to your income, reserving a part of it for savings. Although that portion may be small, it is not insignificant, since the centavos form pesos, and with pesos one can attend to unexpected changes of fortune, such as unemployment, strikes, illness, or death, in which event savings will ensure the future of the family.

Do not ask for a loan, and do not stop eating in order to save money, since savings through debt or at the cost of hunger are not savings.

Be good, work, and economize, and happiness will come to you.

### *The Plagues of Humanity*

*Campesino:*

Never linger in the doorway of a tavern, and never enter that den of perversion, because there you will only find degradation and misery for yourself and your children.

Think of your home before you cross its threshold; think of what you will

be leaving in the hands of the man who exploits your laziness and weakness — the bread of your selfless wife and your beloved children.

Think of how alcohol destroys your system, making you incapable of all human activities which are indispensable for you and your family to live; be aware that if you ruin your body, you enervate and pollute your spirit to the point of allowing it to degenerate into abjection and wretchedness.

Think of the shameful spectacle of the disheveled drunkard who falls down in the street and becomes the object of scorn or pity for passers by.

Reflect on the brutal scene one sees in the home of the drunkard when, disorderly and demented, he mistreats his tender and long-suffering wife and his innocent children with words and deeds.

Think of the sorrowful mornings your children will have when they ask for breakfast, only to find the cruel anguish of hunger because the tavern-keeper, whenever you go to the saloon, takes your wages so as to fatten his own children, while your children grow rickety and weak.

Know that the damage you do with liquor is not limited to yourself alone, but you pass it on to your children and they pass it on to your grandchildren, and thus you are forging a chain of misfortune for which you, and you alone, will be to blame.

*Campesino*, think, reflect, arm yourself with valor and energy, flee from the tavern and from vice, because this depresses and dishonors you and takes away the fruit of your labor.

Hate those who poison and despoil you!

### *The False Religions*

*Campesino:*

If you need to have faith in something, have faith in yourself and in your labor. Nothing contributes to the success of an undertaking like perseverance and effort.

No mythical god, no supernatural cause, is capable of granting you the recompense for a job you have not done.

Do not think or hope for aid from gods who live in heaven. The only thing that can make you prosperous is the effort that you make to better your own position.

The only way to achieve welfare is through work. Work that is conscious, guided, and always striving toward perfection is what makes us prosper economically and lets us enjoy the satisfaction of having finished a job.

Do not have faith in false religions that teach you humility and force you to renounce your rights as a conscious citizen. Do not enter into religions that



Anti-religious demonstration in Villahermosa, Tabasco, late 1920s. Demonstrators appear to have placed priestly headwear on a cow, while a man holds a sign saying "Down with the Priests." (Reprinted by permission of Fototeca del INAH, Mexico.)

counsel you to be meek when other men belonging to superior classes exploit your labor and turn you from a man into a beast of production.

Reject the religions that offer you glory in heaven in exchange for your slavery here on the earth. Live on your feet, like a man among men! There are no superior castes!

Repudiate the religions that preach and maintain the division of human beings into castes. Man must not live to be exploited by other men. Socialism, the modern doctrine of social confraternity, advocates cooperation, not the exploitation of man by man.

Recall with horror those who admonished you to be meek when you worked fourteen hours a day and lived like a beast, often worse than some of the animals which belonged to the privileged people. The ones who counseled you thus were the infamous representatives of a false god, who would permit such foul injustices and cruelties.

Think that your only god is labor, because it redeems you; but work that de-

mands just recompense, work that is coordinated and organized by socialism, because it unites and strengthens the workers to demand their rights.

Work is an individual duty; it is also a social duty and a high moral duty, because the morality which prevails in modern society teaches that only the person who works should live, whether he works materially or intellectually, with brawn or brain; so long as, in the end, he works.

Have faith in work as a duty, and this belief will be your best religion.