

# THROUGH CLASS UNITY AND RESISTANCE Freedom



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**Freedom without Socialism is Privilege, Injustice  
Socialism without Freedom is Slavery, Brutality - BAKUNIN**

## *...and they said we couldn't do it!*

What follows is a revised extract out of the *OBU Bulletin* of October 1919. It is a story of the workers paradise that existed in the province of Morelos in Southern Mexico in the beginning of the Twentieth Century. The leading person was a guy called Emiliano Zapata. At its height, the experiment was flourishing on a gigantic scale – there were 3½ million human beings populating this Eden of the workers.

It was probably the largest, happiest and most thorough trial of communism that the world has ever seen. Let us look at one amazing fact: In all of Morelos, during this time, there was not a single coin or note of money in use. Money was completely abolished, except at the capital where some sacks of gold were stored for dealing with the capitalist systems of other countries in the transactions of import and export.

Instead of money each member of the community wore around their neck a disc of brass the size of an old R1 coin and twice as thick. On it was inscribed: "The bearer of this – Manuel Garcia for example - is a member of the Industrial Union of North and South America. Who shows him favour shows favour to all the members of this union." With this disc, Manuel and his family could catch a train and ride free of charge. He could shop at the stores, stay in hotels, go to the theatre, opera or movies, without price. In return Manuel was expected and made, if he wanted to use these advantages, to do a bit of work for the common good. If he would consume, he must produce. But work was not backbreaking, Morelos and its neighbours of Chiapas and Tabasco, where the experiment eventually spread, enjoy a tropical climate and good soil. Between the upland pastures and the hot lowlands almost every kind of fruit and vegetable can be grown in abundance, with only a little bit of work. If Manuel was a farmer, he could put in an hour or so a day with his crops; then after his own table was supplied, he would take what was left over to the market and leave it there for his fellow communists to help themselves at will. There could be no arguing over prices because everything was free.



**EMILIANO ZAPATA**



Or, say Manuel worked in a factory. Strange to say, in a society so well organised, there were factories. The sugar industry was highly organised, from cane to finished product: one refinery alone employed 25 000 people. The shoe industry, from grazing cattle to finished boot and sandal, was equally well organised, although not on so large a scale. One shoe factory employed more than 3000. The cotton industry was also well organised.

Under the old management, Manuel would have worked 14 hours a day and get 50 cents pay. The factories still ran 14

hours a day but in seven shifts of 2 hours each – and the pay was the freedom of the union, from cabbage basket to opera house!

One of the good results of this system was that women immediately became free. Every woman was as rich as every man. Therefore no woman could be bought, not even by the glitter of a wealthy marriage.

As to religion, the population is mostly Roman Catholic, but the last priest fled across the border slightly before the last dollar. So, the churches were turned into cinemas, schools and poultry exhibitions. As for “government”, the republic as such, had no affairs to settle, unless it was the management of the export and import trade, which was purely a business proposition done by a few skilled people at the ‘head office’. The countryside settled its own questions, the village its own and the city its own.

Whenever there was a problem, the people interested would gather in the plaza of the nearest town. The band would play “La Paloma” and those who were not nervous about public speaking would make arguments for and against. The majority carried the day. But often the minority won as well as the majority. One example is about a road that was needed. 70% of the farmers agreed upon a route, which left the remaining 30% no better than they were before. The minority submitted with good grace and loyally helped build the new road. This proved too much for the victors, who, when their own road was finished, went across the valley and built another road for the special use of the minority.

Zapata’s Industrial Union has been called “the Republic of Play”. For the light-hearted people had so much free time on their hands, they used it for play. They boasted no intellectual joys, for 95% of the population of Indians could neither read nor write. And Zapata had the caring to say that “this did not matter, since civilisation has not yet produced and cannot naturally produce anything worthy of a free people’s perusal.” But the country was full of happy and crazy revolutionary songs and charming ballads in which the people were producing for themselves a literature suited to their enjoyment.

One hundred years before, a humble priest named Morelos, kept in the field a revolutionary army of 60 000 until he was betrayed and assassinated. When his followers wished to salute him as General, he replied “I would rather be remembered as the serf of the people”. He left his spirit and name to the territory. Since his death there have been many uprisings in Morelos, like the others, the eighth, that of Zapata, was wrecked. It

was announced that he was killed by “strategy” and his body was produced to prove that he was at last dead. His murderer, Colonel Guajardo, was promoted to General as a reward.



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