Technologies of Resistance: Media, Anarchy, and Radical Politics in Early Twentieth-Century Mexico

by

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To Fletcher, who did alright for a poor kid from North Carolina, and Mary, who encouraged me to read until I got my fill, knowing I never would.

And to my family. I finished for them.

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Preface

From the outside, my path to producing this dissertation might look a little unorthodox. I went from getting a B.A. and Master's in Russian Literature to doing a student-initiated dual-Ph.D. in Comparative Literature *and* History, with a particular focus on media studies and Mexican political history in the twentieth century. When I think about it, though, it was a pretty logical progression.

I used my first summer as a doctoral student to conduct research in Mexico City. My original conception of the dissertation I hoped to write entailed locating points of literary influence and intellectual exchange between twentieth-century figures and groups in the United States, Mexico, and Russia. So, naturally, I ended up spending most of that first summer buried in a dusty, unmarked residence on an unassuming street in Coyoacán, which housed an extensive archive of the Mexican Communist Party (the Centro de Estudios del Movimiento Obrero y Socialista, CEMOS). Day after day I rifled through seemingly endless boxes of inter-party memos, student broadsides, and old copies of the official party newspaper, *El machete*. The newspapers themselves were big—astoundingly big—and beautiful and fascinating. They contained plenty of the "connections" I was looking for: guest columns by American authors, translations of Soviet poetry, artwork by prominent artists like David Alfaro Siqueiros and José Clemente Orozco, including woodblock prints and photomontages depicting radical figures and thinkers from Marx to Maxim Gorky. I didn't have the necessary historical background to fully appreciate the contexts of the political developments and ideological and artistic polemics I was seeing unfold on the pages of each issue of *El machete*, which I now realize may have been

fortuitous, because it prompted me to wonder how much I could learn about that unfolding by—to put it in crude, media-studies-101 terms—studying the media themselves as much as their "content."

Looking back, I'd describe this as a fundamentally *literary* experience for me. The things I was touching with my hands, reading with my eyes, and absorbing into my brain were making me more than what I had been before, prompting me to think different things, sparking an eight-year process in which I would visit places, meet people, and engage in political struggles I hadn't had the capacity to imagine before. Just like when I would read my favorite Russian novels as a young undergraduate, I sensed that this encounter was rearticulating me into something *else*. And it revealed, in the process, that the person I am at any given point is contingent upon these kinds of relations and encounters, and that they occur on many levels, making me many subjects at once. It revealed that I, too, am a process, and that the being I call myself was not simply born into the world fully formed, self-contained, and in possession of all the traits that have come to define the human being behind the name on this dissertation. Rather, in a gradual but constant unfolding, or becoming, who I have come to be has always been shaped by the world I inhabit, by my evolving relations to the people I love and to the people who encounter me, by the environment of the places I live, by the information I have absorbed from sources outside of my own head (books, movies, weather cycles, "common sense"), by the tools I use to functionally participate in social life (language, clothing, phones, cars, social cues)—and by the possibilities for thinking, acting, and imagining that might not exist for me without them. Inasmuch as I have hoped to "leave a mark" on the world, to shape in some way (hopefully for the better) the becoming of others, I am marked in innumerable ways by the world I'm a part of; the being that I am is an open circuit between the two.

Moreover, as I read more about the political struggles of leftists in Mexico over the past century, I began to see Mexico City differently, noting all that had seemingly changed—and all that hadn't. At the same time that I was beginning to critically interrogate the openness and impressionability of selves like mine, to think about the contingent encounters and processes through which being is mediated and history is shaped, I also came to wonder what forces were working in the opposite direction, what structures existed in the world around me (from the architecture of buildings and cities to cultural traditions, laws, and habits) that mediated continuity and sameness more than they facilitated change and contingency. Why didn't the Mexico I was living and researching in look like the Mexico communists in the 1920s dreamed of and tried to create? How much did the Mexico they lived in change during their lifetimes as a result of their political efforts? How were they able to intervene in the arrangement of the world that mediated their own being and becomings? How might the newspapers and other media I was studying in the archives have once played a part in a larger effort to rearrange that arrangement? And if those efforts ultimately failed, why?

What I wanted to do with my project, I realized, was historicize these processes of mediated becoming, and to see if I thought about politics differently if I thought about it in these terms. This, too, was a process. After that first summer in Mexico City, I began developing a dissertation project that would analyze the political media *used by* these and other leftist factions in Mexico to communicate, popularize, and actuate their radical visions for a more just and equitable world. It soon developed, however, into an effort to articulate that dynamism of historical landscapes in which the entities and relations signified by "politics," "media," and "the left" are engaged in uneven processes of making and unmaking each other, as opposed to ever being fully defined as such by some stagnant qualities or pure essence that exist out of time and

medial context. Using interdisciplinary methods and modes of inquiry became a necessity to better analyze the ways that historical epochs, subjects, and movements emerge within such dynamically changing media-worlds, to understand the ways certain arrangements of life, society, and selfhood take root and become hegemonic, limiting the possibilities that can result from that dynamism, and to think through the varied social, material, and existential dimensions these process play out in and leave their mark on. (I say this as a partial explanation for my decision to initiate a dual-degree in History and Comparative Literature).

Putting these questions into practice, giving them concrete and intelligible form, and letting my research speak through a method of examining history that articulates the dynamism of becoming and the politics of media—that's what I hoped to achieve with this dissertation. However, I have my doubts that I have been successful. This is not the dissertation I hoped to end up with; then again, having completed the dissertation while working full-time, locked inside during a global pandemic, thousands of miles away from family, I concede that these were not the circumstances I expected to be writing under. But the dissertation, like me, is a process. Contained in the three following chapters are distinct traces of every stage of thinking and rethinking that I have passed through during my eight years as a graduate student: concepts from the same thinkers that I employ differently now than I did three years ago when I was drafting parts of what became Chapters One and Two; sources I draw from more—and analyses that are less clunky—in the sections of Chapters Two and Three that were written more recently; hopes expressed in my theoretical analyses in Chapter One that Chapters Two and Three didn't fulfill; etc. As opposed to a complete, self-contained body of work cohesively organized around a central argument and consistent approach, this dissertation is a palimpsest stamped with evolution after evolution in my thinking about the being and becoming of people, media, and

leftist politics in early twentieth-century Mexico. If certain sections that I needed to write in order to get to the writing of more sophisticated sections prove to be less useful or interesting, I hope they at least demonstrate their necessity in the evolution of my thinking over the past eight years—an evolution that was helpfully mediated by the guidance and support of my committee and my committee Chair.

Still, I believe there are glimmers of the kind of historical analysis that I advocate for in the chapters that follow. And maybe that is enough, for now. Because, ultimately, what I present here is an uneven, tentative attempt to see history, people, movements, and ideas *in motion*, and to trace that movement through the media and medial relations that connect beings to one another and to the world they're a part of—through the media and medial relations that facilitate the becoming of that which is never fully contained within itself, which is to say: everything. What I present here, that is, is an examination of two political movements on either side of the Mexican revolution, embodied in the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM) and the Partido Comunista Mexicano (PCM), as they developed in conversation with medial environments that were changing, that changed them, and that they, in turn, tried to change themselves. In so doing, I attempt to reframe (or expand) analyses of their politics in terms of their entanglements in and navigation of these medial environments, their efforts to harness components within those environments for their own ends, and their strategies for reorienting the arrangement of said environments to better fit their visions of the world people deserved to have and the lives they deserved to live. Moreover, as I argue in Chapter One, this mode of historical analysis provides a useful frame for interpreting what qualifies such political efforts as "left"—and for measuring their effectiveness (or their failures). This mode of historical analysis, that is, posits that *politics* consists of the struggle to intervene in and reorient the hegemonic medial arrangements that

mediate being and becoming, and that leftist politics as such consists in the struggle to reorient said arrangements in ways that will enable human beings to live together in unalienated communion with the world they are a part of (and that is, always, a part of them). This is the story I try to tell in the ensuing chapters, and this is the way I try to tell it; it is a story of Mexican radicals who were shaped by the media-worlds they were entangled in, and who navigated those entanglements at the same time that they developed and engaged in collective political projects that aimed to rearrange them in ways that would allow people to finally live in a world that didn't hurt.

Thus, in Chapter One, as mentioned above, I establish the theoretical foundations and justifications for analyzing media, history, people, and (leftist) politics this way—and I do so by investigating the possibilities for merging the metaphysical deconstruction of Reiner Schürmann and the anthropotechnical "spherology" of Peter Sloterdijk. While the bulk of this chapter is very much in the theoretical "weeds," it ultimately embodies a process of thought—and engagement with many different thinkers—in which I try to answer three central questions: (1) Under what circumstances could we come to understand anarchism to be the eventual horizon of all politics that could be described as "left"? (2) In comparing the political and intellectual principles of classical anarchism with Reiner Schürmann's concept of an-archē, how might such a comparison enable us to conceptualize *the medial arrangements by which hegemony is actualized* and to interpret politics as the struggle to intervene in and reshape said arrangements—and, in so doing, to establish the conditions for living an unalienated life? (3) How can Sloterdijk's spherology, combined with an elemental understanding of media as the technics of life, provide a conceptual framework for analyzing (leftist) politics in these terms? In the following chapters, I aim to synthesize these thorny theoretical questions and express them concretely by interrogating the

politics of the PLM and the PCM as, elementally, media politics. While I do analyze the primary medium through which each movement represented itself—*Regeneración,* the PLM's official newspaper, and *El machete*, which would become the official organ of the PCM—I also zoom out to show how each medium participated in broader, diffuse, and interconnected medial-political efforts to intervene in the hegemonic medial arrangements of their time. In Chapter Two, I primarily examine the diffuse and interconnecting dimensions of a concerted media politics that made up the movement of *magonismo*, from networks of Liberal Clubs throughout Mexico to *Regeneración* itself and the clandestine, transnational medial infrastructure through which it was produced, disseminated, and engaged with. In Chapter Three, however, while examining the media politics of the PCM party apparatus (such that it was) and its newspaper, *El machete*, I devote more attention to surveying the tangled, hegemonic medial landscape in which the early PCM hoped (but struggled greatly) to intervene in the 1920s.

If nothing else, I hope that what I have produced here, incomplete as it is, will at least help to clear a space for thinking differently; for thinking about history as the history of becoming; for thinking about politics as the struggle to be more human—and to create a world that mediates the conditions for unalienated living; and for thinking about media as the connective (im)material tissue of being, as that which connects us to each other and to our world, as the lively forces of in-between-ness whose operations remind us that nothing contains its essence entirely within itself—to be is to be in conversation with the world, and media are the facilitators of that conversation.

That is to say, I hope the approach I take here will provide a space for thinking differently about the worlds we inhabit, how they (and we) came to be what they are, and how we can

change them so that we can live the unalienated lives we deserve as the humans we're capable of being.

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Abstract

All history is media history, and all politics are media politics. This dissertation provides an analytical frame for seeing and studying the people, ideas, political movements, and social arrangements that populate history as both solid forms and fluid processes; that is, as beings in the world whose shape, influence, and "essence" are never fully nor statically defined by some individual, isolable, ahistorical qualities but, rather, come to be (and be defined as) what they are in an open, interpenetrating, and constantly unfolding conversation with the world they're a part of. Media, I argue, are the facilitators of that conversation—the connective (im)material tissue that entangles beings with one another and with the world in which they live, become, and function. Thus, in the chapters that follow, I examine two political movements on either side of the Mexican revolution (1910-1920), embodied in the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM) and the Partido Comunista Mexicano (PCM), as they developed in conversation with medial environments that were changing, that changed them, and that they, in turn, tried to change themselves. In so doing, I attempt to reframe analyses of their politics in terms of their entanglements in and navigation of these medial environments, their efforts to harness components within those environments for their own ends, and their strategies for reorienting the arrangement of said environments to better fit their visions of the world people deserved to have and the lives they deserved to live within it.

In Chapter One, I establish the theoretical foundations and justifications for analyzing media, history, people, and (leftist) politics this way. Ultimately, this chapter aims to answer three central questions: (1) Under what circumstances could we come to understand anarchism as

the eventual horizon of all politics that could be described as "left"? (2) In comparing the political and intellectual principles of classical anarchism with Reiner Schürmann's concept of an-archē, how might such a comparison enable us to conceptualize *the medial arrangements by which hegemony is actualized* and to interpret politics as the struggle to intervene in and reshape said arrangements? (3) How can Sloterdijk's spherology, combined with an elemental understanding of media as the technics of life itself, provide a framework for analyzing (leftist) politics in these terms? In the following chapters, I synthesize these thorny theoretical questions and express them concretely by interrogating the media politics of the PLM and the PCM. While I do analyze the primary medium through which each movement represented itself—*Regeneración,* the PLM's official newspaper, and *El machete*, which would become the official organ of the PCM—I zoom out to show how each medium participated in broader, diffuse, and interconnected medial-political efforts to intervene in the hegemonic medial arrangements of their time. In Chapter Two, I primarily examine the diffuse and interconnecting dimensions of a concerted media politics that made up the movement of *magonismo*, from networks of Liberal Clubs throughout Mexico to *Regeneración* itself and the clandestine, transnational medial infrastructure through which it was produced, disseminated, and engaged with. In Chapter Three, however, while examining the media politics of the PCM party apparatus (such that it was) and its newspaper, *El machete*, I devote more attention to surveying the tangled, hegemonic medial landscape in which the early PCM hoped (but struggled greatly) to intervene in the 1920s.

Chapter I. Being Media

In this chapter, I establish the theoretical foundations and justifications for the historical analysis I conduct in Chapters Two and Three, in which I tell the story of the PLM, the PCM, and the political media they crafted, harnessed, and deployed in order to communicate, popularize, and actuate their radical visions for a more just and equitable world. However, as I argue throughout this dissertation, conceptualizing, let alone capturing, the dynamic historical landscape in which these media were created, disseminated, and engaged with requires a historical analysis of the ways such media, the people engaging with them, and the world they inhabited were entangled in constant, uneven processes of shaping and being shaped by one another. It requires a mode of historical analysis that eschews what Peter Sloterdijk calls the "substance fetishism" that conditions us to see ourselves and all beings as discrete, self-contained entities defined by some particular, isolable, and static qualities or essence, and not as beings in process that are defined just as much by our entangled medial relations to one another and to the world we're a part of. Thus, in this chapter, I draw upon key concepts, thinkers, and traditions in media and political theory (Peter Sloterdijk, Reiner Schürmann, Bernard Stiegler, Mark B.N. Hansen, etc.) in order to deconstruct the premises of this substance fetishism, to reframe our understanding of what media are and what they do, and to argue for the necessity of historical analyses that see history as the history of becoming in and through media. This conceptual reframing, moreover, leads us to reexamine politics as the collective struggle to intervene in and reshape the hegemonic social arrangements that mediate being and becoming. In turn, by interrogating the theoretical and practical convergences of classical anarchism and Reiner

Schürmann's concept of an-archē, I argue that the inevitable condition for a decidedly leftist politics is the ultimate reorientation of hegemonic medial arrangements in ways that enable human beings to live in unalienated communion with one another and the world they're a part of.

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At the dawn of the red century, the flag of left internationalism was undeniably black. Before the landscape of the left imagination would come to be dominated by figures of the Bolshevik revolution, Red Vienna, the Spartacist uprising, and the Third International, the spores of anarchism were germinating from Russia and Spain to Argentina and the Philippines. "Following the collapse of the First International, and Marx's death in 1883," as Benedict Anderson writes, "anarchism, in its characteristically variegated forms, was the dominant element in the self-consciously internationalist radical Left" (*Under Three Flags*, 2).

Numerous, intersecting factors converging by the turn of the twentieth century would ripen the conditions for anarchism's attractiveness to increasingly international-minded radicals. While anarchism would continue to face an uphill battle against the imposing theoretical legacy of Marx and Engels, it had still produced its own scientific figurehead in Peter Kropotkin along with charismatic leaders like Mikhail Bakunin and Errico Malatesta, who appealed to the passion and desire for direct action among those for whom the slow-moving, institutionalized forms of socialist parties and labor unions seemed unfulfilling or misguided. As a cohesive movement, anarchism paled in comparison to Second International socialism, but as a transnationally appealing intellectual and spiritual force, it punched far above its weight. This was due in large

part to the accelerated opening of the world to new communications media and transportation networks that enabled people, goods, news, and ideas to circulate around the globe on an unprecedented scale. Steamships and railroads traversed waterways and penetrated the vast interiors of national territories. In the process, as Richard White describes, these new technologies of movement, transportation, and connection fundamentally reoriented humans' spatiotemporal relations to the world, "making the quotidian experience of space one of rapid movement" and politicizing time itself by rewiring it to the tempo of modern machinery (141). In fact, the very experience of global movement in a modernizing world—the feeling of its pace and reach, the connections it fostered to new people and places—would help provide the conditions for fomenting the kind of internationalist attitude and consciousness embraced by anarchism at a time when orthodox Marxism was still more physically and epistemologically anchored to the sphere of Northern Europe. Anarchism "rode the huge waves of migration out of Europe that characterized the last 40 years before World War I: Italians, Spaniards, Portuguese, Poles, Jews and so on poured into the New World, round the Mediterranean, and into the empires being created by the Europeans in Asia and Africa" (B. Anderson, "Preface," xv).

At the same time, a communications revolution was electrifying the New and Old worlds, forging new medial connections—and accelerating old ones—across time, space, and planes of imagination. The expansion of electrical and telegraph lines across countries and ocean floors, the establishment of the Universal Postal Union, the gradual increase of working-class literacy rates, the cultural absorption and large-scale utilization of rotary presses and Linotype machines—these and other developments helped bring forth increasingly "globalized" capacities for communicating, thinking, and being. Most significantly, these medial connections and

capacities didn't just exist in the privileged realms of society elites, but they were extending to the masses as well: "International telegraphic communication had enabled elites to stay abreast of global developments in the last third of the nineteenth century, but now the communications revolution had filtered down to the working class. Labor and radical movements in much of the world had established their own newspapers and were publishing their own books and pamphlets. The democratization of access to knowledge facilitated transnational collective mobilization" (McGirr, 1101).

Moreover, when it came to fostering the spirit of internationalism, anarchism scratched many itches socialism simply did not. While both ideologies promoted visions of worker solidarity that, to varying degrees, aimed to transcend national allegiances, anarchism proved to be more internationalist in both theory and practice at a historical juncture when inter-party rivalries and domestic concerns were driving socialist strongholds to entrench themselves in regressive and chauvinistic approaches to "the national question"—approaches that would highlight the Second International's greatest failings at the dawn of World War I.[1] This internationalism was as much a natural derivative of anarchist thought as it was an outgrowth of the anarchist experience of transnational movement and the cultivation of solidarity in the global elsewhere. Along with the expanding flows of global migration, anarchism's expulsion from the dominant sphere of institutionalized socialism in Europe left it to strike out on often unpredictable journeys to the places where its travelers and texts and spirit ventured, like viral nomads infiltrating local immune systems, coupling with homegrown political cultures, and

[1] See: George Lichtheim, *A Short History of Socialism* (1970); George Haupt, *Socialism and the Great War: The Collapse of the Second International* (1972); Roger Fletcher, *Revisionism and Empire: Socialist Imperialism in Germany, 1897-1914* (1984); S.F. Kissin, *War and the Marxists: Socialist Theory and Practice in Capitalist Wars, 1848-1918* (1990).

becoming something new. “This internationalism certainly had its theoretical side,” Anderson notes, “but more important, it was a matter of experience and struggle in non-European contexts and terrains. Necessarily these first generation activists found themselves often as ‘foreigners’, and as such bringing the outside international world with them. If and when they returned to Europe, as many did, especially Italians, they brought that extra-Europe experience back home. The main thing was that they did not only work, but they constantly crossed state borders” (“Preface,” xv).

Epistemologically, that is, anarchism proved to be far more open to the forgotten parts of socialism. While its international spirit was fundamentally tied to a vision of collective human liberation, above all else, anarchism was steeped in a libertarian romance for the education, liberation, and agency of the individual. As Max Stirner wrote,

> If it is the drive of our time, after freedom of thought is won, to pursue it to that perfection through which it changes to freedom of the will in order to realize the latter as the principle of a new era, then the final goal of education can no longer be knowledge, but the will born out of knowledge, and the spoken expression of that for which it has to strive is: the personal or free man. Truth itself consists in nothing other than man’s revelation of himself, and thereto belongs the discovery of himself, *the liberation from all that is alien, the uttermost abstraction or release from all authority, the re-won naturalness* (*The False Principle*) (emphases added).

In a way that seemingly prefigures the young Marx’s theory of human beings’ alienation from their species-being (developed in letters to Engels two years after the publication of Stirner’s *The False Principle of Our Education*), Stirner powerfully articulates both the conditions of man’s alienated existence—materialized in the authority-empowering, hierarchical arrangements of society and self—and the indistinguishable human will to get free, to “re-win” its “naturalness,” and to live a life unalienated from itself. Both thinkers, and the political traditions they speak

from, are simultaneously expressing what I'll argue are a shared metaphysical assumption—that who we are and the worlds we inhabit are always vulnerable to, and always shaping and reshaping each other—and a common end—being able to connect to and live in a world that is arranged in such a way that people don't have to struggle to be human in it. Where they differed was on how to get there and what "there" would ultimately look like. For Stirner, the path to living in a world that would clear space for unalienated being runs through the individual, who, once given a taste of "the will born out of knowledge," will be unable to suppress it and, in demanding more, will awaken that will in others. Marx would develop what, in form, was a similar premise: that the proletariat, once given a taste of class consciousness, will embody a collective and indistinguishable will to restructure the material arrangement of the world that suppresses its humanity (i.e., the political-economic arrangement that mediates its own systematized dehumanization).

Anarchism's primary celebration of individual freedom and will often translated into a more bohemian openness to eclectic intellectual canons. Thus, anarchism integrated "bourgeois" artists and thinkers into its cultural ecosystem in a way that Marxism was more resistant to. Perhaps most significantly, anarchism's faith in self-determination put it ahead of the radical curve in its hostility to imperialism in all its forms and in its attentiveness to struggles in subaltern parts of the world by those whose humanity was suppressed (and whose dehumanization, it was acknowledged, was constitutive of the "civilization" of "superior" peoples).[2] As Peter Kropotkin presciently wrote, "Since all our middle-class civilization is based

[2] See: Arif Dirlik, "Anarchism and the Question of Place: Thoughts from the Chinese Experience" (2010); Edilene Toledo and Luigi Biondi, "Constructing Syndicalism and Anarchism Globally: The Transnational Making of the Syndicalist Movement in Sao Paulo, Brazil, 1895-1935" (2010); Maia Ramnath, *Decolonizing Anarchism: An Antiauthoritarian History of India's Liberation Struggle* (2011).

on the exploitation of inferior races and countries with less advanced industrial systems, the revolution will confer a boon at the very outset, by menacing that 'civilization,' and allowing the so-called inferior races to free themselves" ("Conquest of Bread," 72). In a similar vein, anarchism proved more attentive to cultivating connections with the social classes that Marxism ignored; namely, the peasantry and "that eternal 'meat' (on which governments thrive), that great rabble of the people (underdogs, 'dregs of society') ordinarily designated by Marx and Engels in the picturesque and contemptuous phrase *Lumpenproletariat* […] the 'riffraff,' that 'rabble' almost unpolluted by bourgeois civilization, which carries in its inner being and in its aspirations […] all the seeds of socialism of the future, and which alone is powerful enough today to inaugurate and bring to triumph the Social Revolution" (Bakunin, "On the International"). Orthodox Marxism held no great stock in the unorganized and purportedly "unpolitical" sectors of society, like the peasantry—"incapable of enforcing their class interests in their own name" (Marx, "Eighteenth Brumaire," 187)—and the *Lumpenproletariat*—that "whole indefinite, disintegrated mass, thrown hither and thither, which the French term *la bohème*" (Marx, "Eighteenth Brumaire," 149). Such disregard stemmed from the firm belief that the historical progress of capitalist accumulation would eventually smooth out uneven social arrangements, including those of less developed countries, inevitably driving all laborers and "unpolitical" elements into the historical meatgrinder of industrial centers, absorbing them into the proletarian class, and amplifying the divide between workers and the upper class until it reached a breaking point. And yet, as Geoff Eley writes, "As the twentieth century confirmed, this confidence in a uniform capitalist model was misplaced—the European peasantry itself took a century to disappear; class polarization didn't occur; and industrial workers became a

diminishing rather than an expanding part of society. Yet whatever the truth of the predictions, abandoning the peasantry to one's opponents was still a mistake" (95).

Still, in spite of (or, rather, because of) their differences, it is impossible to fully comprehend either anarchism or socialism at the turn of the century without considering both together: "anarchism cannot be thought of without Marxism and vice versa" (Vodovnik, 106). Despite their heated public rivalries, Marx absorbed concepts from Proudhon, Bakunin absorbed from Marx, and so on. Both political cultures were rooted in the same soil, both shared distinct principles: "an ethics of cooperative sociality, ideals of human improvement, militant secularism, basic collectivism—and for a while the two remained porous, especially locally" (Eley, 95). Nevertheless, the points of contention between them proved to be severe and indissoluble. Above all, anarchists deviated sharply from socialists on questions regarding the means of revolutionary struggle, especially with respect to the role of the state in paving the historical path to communism, which they rejected, along with any form of centralized government, which would, by necessity, embody the ontological violence of hierarchical authority. "The State is authority, it is force," Bakunin writes, "it is the ostentatious display of and infatuation with power. It does not seek to ingratiate itself, to win over, to convert […] For by its very nature it cannot persuade but must impose and exert force. However hard it may try to disguise this nature, it will remain the legal violator of man's will and the permanent denial of his liberty" ("Morality of the State," 145). Such violence, anarchists maintained, was also an implied fact of the bureaucratic and coercive structure of unions and official parties, which, along with electoral politics in general, they rejected in favor of direct action and "the dialectic of conspiratorial organization and popular spontaneity" (Eley, 96). Against the Second International's scientific approach to gradual parliamentary and labor mobilization, anarchists harkened back to the conspiratorial

Blanquist ideal of revolution by barricades, bombs, and direct acts of subverting the hegemonic political order.

These irreparable positions bore themselves out most (in)famously in the heated rivalry between Marx and Bakunin, which culminated in the expulsion of the latter from the First International during the Hague Congress in 1872. Bakunin was officially expelled after hotly objecting to the consensus vote in favor of Marx's proposal that the true path to socialist revolution required the proletariat successfully infiltrating and taking control of the state; however, plans to get rid of the anarchist rabble-rouser and his comrades were in motion well before the Congress took place (Thomas, 327). "This is what personal vanity, the lust for power, and above all, political ambition can lead to," Bakunin wrote spitefully later that year ("On the International"). Nevertheless, Bakunin was confident that his expulsion actually vindicated the position that he felt got him expelled in the first place: "Marx, in spite of all his mis-deeds, has unconsciously rendered a great service to the International by demonstrating in the most dramatic and evident manner that if anything can kill the International, it is the introduction of politics into its program" ("On the International"). For Bakunin and his fellow anarchists, the First International purge proved, in the most transparent way possible, the socialist authoritarian impulse Bakunin had decried most fervently in his prior objections to Marx. Bakunin, in this case, proved to be quite prescient. As Daniel Guérin writes,

> Bakunin attributed dangerous authoritarian designs to Marx, a thirst to dominate the working-class movement, whose features he exaggerated somewhat and shared himself. But by doing so, the Russian anarchist showed himself to be a prophet. With wonderful acumen, he predicted that Marx's dictatorial propensities would spread out among his successors at some future and remote date, into what Bakunin called a red bureaucracy. He foresaw the kind of tyranny which the leaders of the Third International would exercise over the world labour movement (117).

Given the premium anarchism placed on the liberty of the individual as self-determining agent, there was something inherently fishy about socialism's preference for organized intellectual and political bodies that, as Bakunin contended, naturally veered towards hierarchical power arrangements and coercive means of control and enforcement. As many would claim in the latter half of the twentieth century, Bakunin foresaw the imposing and repressive state bureaucracies that would come to define "actually-existing" state socialism.

It has been a topic of interest for historians to determine whether or not this split was—and always would be—the inevitable result of a conflict between two insoluble modes of anti-capitalist thought or if, perhaps, things might have gone a different way if it weren't for the heated personal conflict between two proud, anti-capitalist thinkers (Rocker, "Marx and Anarchism"). Regardless, the great rift between Karl Marx and Mikhail Bakunin historically exposed the irreparable differences between socialism and anarchism as much as it obscured the ineradicable ties between the two. "There is no difference between the ultimate objects of marxists and anarchists," the great political historian Eric Hobsbawm writes; each ultimately strive for "a libertarian communism in which exploitation, classes and the state will have ceased to exist" (57). There are, of course, crucial strains of anarchist and proto-anarchist culture that take different positions in regards to the achievement and shape of the communist utopia: from visions of decentralized societies based on cooperative and communal integration of industry and agriculture in which workers would either be remunerated for labor time and retain some degree of private property (mutualism) or would participate in a system of communal work and ownership (anarcho-communism), to idealized arrangements that operated through the federation of producer-controlled industrial units (anarcho-syndicalism), and so on (Woodcock, 19-20). In this sense, as a historical movement and a theoretical ecosystem, anarchism is irreducibly

heterogeneous. As Peter Marshall writes, anarchism "does not offer a fixed body of doctrine […] It is a complex and subtle philosophy, embracing many different currents of thought and strategy" (3). One could argue that this heterogeneity is actually a built-in feature of anarchist belief itself, which, as Proudhon described to Marx, professes "an almost absolute […] anti-dogmatism" ("Proudhon to Marx"). To situate anarchism within a single, coherent philosophical doctrine, to understand it primarily as the guided historical application of intellectually hashed-out and fire-tempered theoretical principles, to give primacy to the textual authority of said principles over the practical working-out of lived experience, would contradict the very spirit of anarchism.

Nevertheless, if we saw all the way down to the bone, we find that the spirit of anarchism, in its varied historical and theoretical iterations, commonly upholds: (1) a distinct view of human nature as something that inherently bends towards the will for freedom and cooperation; (2) a radical opposition to hierarchical and authority-empowering arrangements of life, self, society, and world; (3) the dream of a society-to-be in which the arrangement of life and society clears space for the expression of natural, authentic, and unalienated human being, an arrangement that is only possibilized by securing the mutual, mutually affirming, and simultaneous realization of full equality *and* liberty (Étienne Balibar, to signify this necessary mutuality, insists on the term "equaliberty"). As a state of being, anarchy actuates more than a social vision for a world that has inevitably rid itself of the existing artificial systems of power and authority that hold humans prisoner; anarchy is the expression of the coming-to-be of humanity itself, a humanity that has been unable to know itself insofar as its being is systematically stifled by such artificialities. It is, in Stirner's terms, "the liberation from all that is alien, the uttermost abstraction or release from all authority" in the struggle to "re-win" the

"naturalness" of human being. Understanding this allows us to reposition anarchism's relation to Marxism.

Especially in his earlier writings, Marx fleshes out the alienation of man's species-being (*Gattungswesen*) by exploring the degree to which it is subsumed under his relation to the process of production in a class society. This relation imposes on man and his labor the role of being a means to an end that is determined by an external force, thus stealing away the human capacity and natural drive to produce as an end in itself in a society where "Life itself appears only as a means of life" ("Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts," 76). Another way of saying this (which this dissertation hopes to justify), is that: by having our naturally im*media*te and symbiotic relations to the world rewired and mediated by external (and fundamentally hierarchical) forces, the human being itself becomes a dehumanized, biopolitical medium for materializing the arrangement of a political economy that alienates us from ourselves, from others, and from the world we're a part of. Thus, for Marx, "The emancipation of the workers contains universal human emancipation—and it contains this, because the whole of human servitude is involved in the relation of the worker to production, and every relation of servitude is but a modification and consequence of this relation" ("Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts," 80). Anarchism, it goes without saying, does not subscribe to this absolutist emphasis on "the relation of the worker to production" as the ur-form of human alienation. This relation most certainly counts as one of the primary forms of human being's alienation, but it is by no means the only, or absolute, form: "Anarchism emphasizes that people have the drive for freedom. The desire to abolish oppression," including the systematized oppression of capitalism, "is thus a universal characteristic of all people regardless of their class," which is why the

anarchist orientation towards a communal future "does not emerge from theory but from a natural instinct" for liberation (Vodovnik, 107).

Above all, anarchism stresses that the alienation of human being occurs in all uneven relations of power, which is as good as saying power relations writ large. This is because such uneven relations invariably institute a disequilibrium in the distribution of the two principles that, for anarchism, are the conditions for the unalienated expression and flourishing of being: equality and liberty. In many Western countries today, for instance, especially the United States, the rotted conditions of liberal democratic state governance have laid bare gross, systemic social and economic inequalities that are necessarily "resolved" by the restriction of liberty through the erection of massive surveillance and policing apparatuses designed to repress those whose liberties are already stolen by intersecting systems of economic domination, racism, patriarchy, etc. This seemingly confirms anarchism's condemnation of liberalism as a political philosophy whose systems of law and state governance cannot help but pit liberty and equality against each other, often undermining both in the name of "security." "While anarchism would seem to share with liberalism an insistence on individual freedom and self-determination," Saul Newman writes, "it exposes in this the very inconsistency of liberalism itself: individual autonomy cannot be realised in conditions of inequality, nor under the domination of private property. Nor can it be realised through the state and law" (17). On the other hand, "actually-existing" state socialism frequently demonstrated the impossibility of safeguarding individual liberty when economic and social equality is enforced by hierarchical institutions that, by default, veer towards authoritarian and centralizing tendencies. Anarchism shares with socialism a celebration of equality not just in terms of individual civic rights, but in economic and social terms as well; however, it despises socialism's drive to suffocate individual autonomy while, at the same time, creating centralized

state machines that amplify the unequal concentration of power. There is, thus, no room for compromise when it comes to what anarchism sees as the ultimate "truth" of politics: without the radical insistence on the mutual affirmation of liberty *and* equality, no political system can prevent itself from eating away at both. As Balibar writes, "There are no examples of restrictions or suppressions of freedoms without social inequalities, nor of inequalities without restrictions or suppressions of freedoms, be it only to put down resistance, even if there are degrees, secondary tensions, phases of unstable equilibrium, and compromise situations in which exploitation and domination are not homogeneously distributed across all individuals" (49).

Nevertheless, in exposing these philosophical and practical contradictions, anarchism aims not to negate both liberalism and socialism so much as expose the conditional necessities without which neither system can be what human beings and society need. Each represents a failed attempt to account for what, in Balibar's terms, is "the proposition of equaliberty," which "is indeed an irreversible truth, discovered by and in the revolutionary struggle—precisely the universally true proposition on which, at the decisive moment, the different forces making up the revolutionary camp had to agree. In turn, the historical effects of this proposition, however contradictory they may be, can only be understood in this way, as the effects of a truth or effects of truth" (48). The proposition of equaliberty is, for anarchism, nothing less than the proposition of the dignity of human life and the unalienated expression of human being as "the truth-effect without which there is no revolutionary politics." Thus, in its extension of the ontological proposition of equaliberty to the point of its fullest lived and material realization—to the point at which, at last, equality and liberty can only be thought together, as the essential complements to each other, without which neither can express itself to the greatest possible degree—to the point at which a voluntaristic, self-regulating social arrangement of mutually free and equal beings can

take shape as the natural expression of human being and cohabitation unshackled by the forces of alienation—we could consider, as Saul Newman does in *The Politics of Postanarchism*, that anarchism may be interpreted as "the ultimate horizon," not only of Marxism, but, indeed, of "All forms of radical politics," so defined (18).

Anarchism, Newman contends, "is more than a political and philosophical tradition—*it also constitutes a universal horizon of emancipation which all forms of radical politics must necessarily speak to if they are to remain radical*. Anarchism, in other words, contains a beyond, a moment of its own transcendence, when it exceeds the discursive limits and ontological foundations within which it was originally conceived and opens itself up to a multitude of different voices and possibilities" (20) (emphases added). Newman draws a pretty radical conclusion here: while the "political and philosophical tradition" of anarchism eventually runs aground against the essentialism of its own principles, the spirit of anarchism points beyond itself, towards "its own transcendence." Historically, in practice, anarchist collectivities have often succumbed to the very same authoritarian tendencies that anarchists identified in organized socialism. As George Lichtheim notes, while accusing Marxists of supporting modes of centralized organization that concentrate power in the hands of intellectual and bureaucratic vanguards at the expense of democratic functioning, anarchism's own conspiratorial revolutionary cells in the nineteenth century "dispensed with all democratic process," expelling those who deviated from or questioned the convictions of leaders like Bakunin. "No secret society could operate unless it was willing to subordinate itself to a self-appointed directorate invested with powers of life and death over its followers" (135). Most notably, this practical tendency would come to a head in the rash of terrorist bombings and assassinations by anarchists in Russia (1881), Spain (1893), France (1894), London (1894), the United States (1901), etc. "In

the existential moment of the terrorist act, anarchist secrecy and violence produced the purest authoritarianism" (Eley, 95). Nevertheless, as Newman maintains, there remains a sort of principial wormhole that allows for anarchy to transcend the "discursive limits and ontological foundations" of anarchism, which are highlighted in such pointed moments of political and philosophical contradiction.

Thus far, we have been discussing the iterations of so-called "classical anarchism," which, for a time around the turn of the twentieth century, had managed to assert itself as the righteous symbol of left internationalism. While there are many proto-anarchist strands of political and religious philosophy, stretching back to the Taoists of ancient China, classical anarchism's historical becoming would emerge in conversation with intellectual and social shifts that concretized the sublime objects of its formal opposition. "It required the collapse of feudalism in order for anarchism to develop as a coherent ideology," Marshall explains, "an ideology which combined the Renaissance's growing sense of individualism with the Enlightenment's belief in social progress. It emerged at the end of the eighteenth century in its modern form as a response partly to the rise of centralized States and nationalism, and partly to industrialization and capitalism" (4). While such developments would help the anarchist spirit define itself, they also historicized classical anarchism in a way that would inevitably expose its greatest epistemological gaps in the 20th century. Anarchism's "equal-libertarian and anti-authoritarian" politics, that is, are still founded on Enlightenment discourses of rationalism and humanism; hence the central assurance that "society is constituted by self-regulating natural mechanisms, relations and processes that are rational and that, if left alone"—if stripped of the unnatural, "inauthentic" forces of alienation—"allow a more harmonious social order to emerge" (Newman, 37). This essentialist view of the rational foundation of human nature—coupled with

a strong, positivist, scientific-materialist perspective—runs through the works of William Godwin, Bakunin, Kropotkin, and other anarchist thinkers. As Bakunin himself writes, "real science, materialism and socialism […] are bound to end in the establishment of the greatest freedom of individuals and the highest form of human morality" ("Truly Human," 146). This positivist grounding defined what would be one of the most essential works of classical anarchism, *Mutual Aid*, in which Kropotkin rejected not only the contemporary and fashionable utilitarian arguments of "social Darwinism" but the long tradition of political philosophy founded on a view of human nature as inherently competitive, vicious, and in need of a supplementary authoritative body—implemented through a supposedly voluntary "social contract"—to regulate it in the name of maintaining social peace and order. Instead of a constant war of all against all, Kropotkin argued, nature was brimming with proof of intra-species cooperation and common good. In the long run, "the practice of solidarity proves much more advantageous to the species than the development of individuals endowed with predatory inclinations. The cunningest and the shrewdest are eliminated in favour of those who understand the advantages of sociable life and mutual support" (*Mutual Aid*, 17).

There is, thus, a certain essentialism at the heart of most iterations of classical anarchism, which take as a given that society and human nature itself embody an immanent rationality and morality that are scientifically observable. The primary exception is the existentialist anarchism of Max Stirner, who famously wrote, "To know and acknowledge essences alone and nothing but essences, that is religion; its realm is a realm of essences, spooks, and ghosts" (*The Ego and Its Own*, 41). (Stirner's expressed aversion to essences might seem to contradict his belief in the human struggle to "re-win" its "naturalness," but his is an aversion to "essences alone and nothing but essences"; insofar as Stirner believes in a human essence, it has more to do with the

innate human desire to be free of the alienating forces of hierarchically arranged life—to be free to express that freedom as an individual, a fundamentally singular and anti-essentialist unit of being.) Such essentialism underlies the classical anarchist conviction that the social life of humanity contains "the seeds of its own emancipation, as well as the potential to organise itself without political power. It also provides the basis for the anarchist understanding of equal-liberty: freedom understood collectively and realised on the basis of an essential human commonality between people, forming the foundations for solidarity and community" (Newman, 39). But, again, this objective, scientific-materialist understanding of humanity's social essence is founded on the authority of rationalist-humanist beliefs in: the teleological laws of human progress, the progressive enlightenment of the individual, the immanent logic of social life and the natural principle of mutual aid, etc. Such beliefs have, over the course of the past century, undergone repeated deconstructions that have exposed their conditional grounds, their contingent epistemological dependence on hegemonizing discourses of normalized (Eurocentric, patriarchal, racial, etc.) power. To interrogate these rationalist-humanist principles is to probe the truth of their contingency and instrumentality within historically situated discourses (as opposed to their universal truth beyond history itself), to approach the sense that, as Michel Foucault writes, "there is 'something altogether different' behind things: not a timeless and essential secret but the secret that they have no essence, or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms" (353).

Moreover, once such principles are unmoored from their universalist foundations, once their seeming totality comes into view as historical-ephocal contingency, their founding function as a grounds for determining how one should act is thrown into crisis. Indeed, as Reiner Schürmann argues in his reading of Heidegger, this crisis is coterminous with the crossing of the

historical threshold from which the metaphysical linkage between principles and acting can itself be interrogated and deconstructed in such fashion. This threshold, which, according to Schürmann, is instituted by the age of technology, signals "the closed unity of the metaphysical epoch," the systematic closure of the age of humanity in which, throughout successive historical epochs, the metaphysical relation—by which human action (practical philosophy) conforms to the determining power of higher principles (first philosophy)—was taken for granted. "If in the epoch of post-modernity (in short, since Nietzsche) the question of presence no longer seems capable of articulating itself as a first philosophy, and if the strategy of the concept of 'presencing' in Heidegger annihilates the quest for a complete possession of self by self, it is in the epochal constellation of the twentieth century that the ancient procession and legitimation of praxis from theōria comes to exhaustion. Then, in its essence, action proves to be an-archic" (Schürmann, *On Being and Acting*, 4). To put this in the context of classical anarchism, the "epochal constellation of the twentieth century" brings us to a breakage point at which the kinds of first principles on which classical anarchism relies in order to assert its truth are deconstructed, thus revealing their rationalist-humanist foundations as contingent articulations of a will to universalization and timeless permanence ("permanent presence") that are themselves the product of a shifting history. Indeed, from the vantage point of the twentieth century, all such principles take their place in the successive history of metaphysically arranged epochs; we can historicize the metaphysical relation itself from "outside the fief where presencing functions as constant presence, as identity of self with self, as unshakable ground" (Schürmann, *On Being and Acting*, 4). From Plato to present day, Schürmann writes, "Western civilization has been placed under the control of metaphysical 'stamps' (*Prägungen*), under the control of […] epochal principles" (*On Being and Acting*, 17). Each successive epoch in the history of

metaphysics, that is, can be observed to have situated human life within hegemonic arrangements that shaped and adjusted the scope and purpose of living, thinking, doing, and being in accordance with an archē of first principles, which ontologically justified the shape said hegemonic arrangements took. But "the history of epochs is drawing to a close," Schürmann contends, and so goes with it the metaphysical relation by which action during a given epoch can reliably be arranged, ordered, and directed by such principles.

What, then, is the fate of anarchism in the age of an-archē? Even if we accept the argument that anarchism exists not only as a form of radical politics, but as "the ultimate horizon of all forms of radical politics […] an end point or limit condition for the politics of emancipation" (Newman, 29), it would seem that such a position still derives from rational-humanist principles whose will to permanence cannot escape their own historical contingency and finitude. It may very well be the case that anarchism, as Schürmann himself argues, is destined for the dustbin of the history of metaphysics, destined to remain a system of thought and action produced within the metaphysical relation that ties action to the defining ground, the archē, of first principles. It may be the case that, at "the end of the history of being," the "principle of an-archē" turns on and inevitably deconstructs all modes of metaphysical thought, including anarchism. But one could argue that the spirit of anarchism is already pregnant with the deconstruction of its own metaphysical relation—that, even within its classical iteration, anarchism's radical anti-authoritarianism, along with its inbuilt drive to strip away all "artificial" forces of alienation, points beyond itself, to the horizon of an-archē.

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In his monumental study of Heidegger, Schürmann speaks from the void that "deconstructs action." The basic problem is as old as Plato and Aristotle: the presumed (metaphysical) unity between thinking and acting, by which thinking entails securing a rational foundation "upon which one may establish the sum total of what is knowable" and, thus, organizing the ground and purpose for acting (Schürmann, *On Being and Acting*, 1). More simply, the problem is the presupposition that action ("What is to be done?") follows programmatically from thought (i.e., from within a matrix of the thinkable wherein one's reasons for acting a certain way are derived), while thought itself is grounded in, adjusted to, and shaped by the principles articulated in a hegemonic first philosophy (archē). What Heidegger achieved, according to Schürmann, was a radical deconstruction of this traditional coupling; that is, of metaphysics as a historically contingent phenomenon (or, rather, a phenomenon in which human expressions of the seemingly timeless question of being are revealed to be marked by the historicity of the particular language and circumstances of their expression). "'Metaphysics' is then the title for that ensemble of speculative efforts with a view to a model, a canon, a principium for action" (Schürmann, *On Being and Acting*, 4). Deconstructed, such an ensemble appears "as a closed field," which is to say that the purportedly transcendental-universal principles organizing every previous philosophy of action are shown to be finite, epochal, historically contingent—"historical constellations of presencing" whose first principles give them "cohesion, a coherence which, for a time, holds unchallenged" before "its hold [eventually] loosens, giving way to the establishment of a new order" (Schürmann, *On Being and Acting*, 25). Moreover, as already mentioned, the deconstructive "hypothesis of closure" is itself a historical product of the "epochal constellation" of the twentieth century, since, as Schürmann argues, "the deconstructionist discourse can arise only from the boundary of the era over which it is

exercised" (*On Being and Acting*, 4). "The starting point," he continues, "is the hypothesis of 'the end of the history of being,' the end of that history of presencing in which 'being lies in destiny.' Its ending is technology, understood not as a set of tools for some people's material culture—as one would speak of Roman or medieval technology—but as the phenomenal configuration of the twentieth century" (*On Being and Acting*, 17).

Theories of action depend on "what prevails as ultimate knowledge in each epoch" within what Schürmann calls the "attributive-participative schema" (i.e. the naturalized relation entailed in seeking an origin for action—a program—and a reason for being in an archē). "The prime schema which practical philosophy has traditionally borrowed from first philosophy is the reference to an archē" (*On Being and Acting*, 5). When translated into the doctrines of praxis, this schema essentially narrows the matrix of possible ways of acting—and possible reasons for acting that way—down to a "focal point"; that is, to an archē that is the general condition of intelligibility for all thinking and acting that is guided by a "Why?" (In *Broken Hegemonies*, Schürmann describes this general condition of intelligibility as the discursive contexts constituting "the phenomenality of phenomena" [6]). What Heidegger and Schürmann's deconstruction shows is that this "focal point is continually displaced throughout history: ideal city, heavenly kingdom, the happiness of the greatest number, noumenal and legislative freedom, 'transcendental pragmatic consensus' (Apel), etc." (*On Being and Acting*, 5). This is to say that the history of metaphysics—the history of people posing the ostensibly universal and timeless question of being—can be broken up into historical epochs differentiated from one another by the hegemonic hold of their respective epoch-defining *archai* conditioning the conditions out of which the question of being could be articulated. Regardless of the changing loci of these focal points, though, the attributive-participative schema remains a normative pattern in the history of

Western metaphysics: "The archē always functions in relation to action as a substance functions in relation to its accidents, imparting to them sense and telos" (Schürmann, *On Being and Acting*, 5).

As Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott writes, Schürmann develops an understanding of "philosophy as an epochal organization of the history of being, where a 'philosophical epoch,' is organized around a series of first principles that work as nomic injunctions determining hegemonic configurations of meaning, articulated by a fantasmatic referent (The One, Nature, Consciousness)" ("Anarchy as the Closure"). Such fantasmatic referents are the designata that give sense to life, serving as the fundament of reason within any given historical epoch, the conditions of "the phenomenality of phenomena"—of the appearing of the world to us and of our sensing and understanding of (and how to be in) it. They hold the world together (as it appears to us); they make it livable. They answer the burning question of being: "Why?"[3] In so doing, however, they draw being forth ("bringing to presence") into the concrete particularity of the epochal constellation, into the historical epochality of the language in which the question of being can be posed in the first place. In fact, this constitutes the tragic nature of philosophy itself: striving to think the question of being in its timeless essence within the fantasmatic restrictions of one's historical episteme, grasping to articulate its seeming universality within the grammatical limits of one's epochally particular language. This is the "price fantasms [charge to] render the world livable. Life is paid for by denying the singular; according to the vocabulary of apriorism by subsuming it under the figure of the particular" (Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies*,

[3] "The principles answer the question, Why? Why do people in a given epoch speak about, act upon, suffer from phenomena the way they do? The principles, which are arch-present in their respective epochal orders, provide the reasons for all that is the case, whether lofty or lowly, within that order" (Schürmann, *On Being and Acting*, 39).

7). In the history of such tragic articulations of the question of being, the epochal media are the message.

The history of being thus becomes a history of coding; a history, that is, whereby a given epochal hegemony administers orders of intelligibility ("economy of presencing") and authority in accordance with the "nomic injunctions" issued by "fantasmatic" first-principial referents. What I will argue in this dissertation—and what I hope the following chapters will demonstrate—is that these epochal hegemonies don't just come from nowhere, nor do they settle their regimes of intelligibility all at once. When I say "the history of being thus becomes a history of coding," what I mean is that the historical erection of metaphysical economies of presencing happens through the (im)material arrangements of society that mediate being itself. The process of becoming and maintaining hegemony is actuated—*takes place*—through medial technologies that code, order, and execute the nomic injunctions of fantasmatic referents. Such technologies are the very functional means by which epochal hegemonies are sedimented and administered. Thus, insofar as the historicity of epochal hegemonies is revealed in the *historically particular medium* of the expression of the question of being ("the vocabulary of apriorism" subsumed "under the figure of the particular"), the technics of being are revealed in the historically particular media through which hegemony is made manifest in historical reality as it shapes, conditions, and flows through the inter-penetrative, mutually open circuits between human and world. For this point to make sense, though, we need to seriously expand our understanding of media, which I will argue for presently.

Moreover, if we are to think (let alone practice) a politics that intervenes in the medial arrangement of hegemony—a politics that aims to break, adjust, or radically reshape the hegemonic arrangements that mediate the conditions of human being's alienation—there are

more questions to answer regarding how (and *Why?*) to do it. Because, as Schürmann writes, it is precisely in our epochal constellation—once the deconstruction of metaphysics has historicized what presented itself as foundational in the past, once the supposedly derivative relation between first philosophy (theōria) and practical philosophy (praxis) has itself begun to close—that the discourse on action is left dangling. Whence action in the post-metaphysical epoch? Or, more specifically, what of action "bereft of archē"—that is, anarchy? "The schema of reference to an archē then reveals itself to be the product of a certain type of thinking, of an ensemble of philosophic rules that have their genesis, their period of glory, and that today perhaps are experiencing a decline" (Schürmann, *On Being and Acting*, 5).

It is here that the conceptual foundations, not only of anarchism, but of any semblance of a radical left, is most vulnerable. Is "the left," understood in the broadest terms, an epochal constellation of presencing whose archē has already been historically displaced? And what was it to begin with? What are the focal points around which doctrines of "leftist" praxis (violent, legislative, communicative, etc.) have been ordered? Communism? Equaliberty? Justice? Dignity? Many of the same deconstructive thinkers who have advanced Heidegger's hypothesis of closure have struggled mightily with the will to hold onto the left as something (a presencing) with staying power (permanent presence), if not for its first principles or its practical philosophy, then for its "orientation" and "openness." "One may add," Schürmann writes: "if *logos* designates the structure of the constellation in and by which beings are near one another at any moment of the synchronic cut, and not the 'reason' enduring beyond all breaks and ruptures, it seems difficult to insert Heidegger within onto-theo-teleological logocentrism" (*On Being and Acting*, 8). Rather than a transcendental ("onto-theo-teleological") foundation, "there is no unity of action except that which characterizes an epoch" (*On Being and Acting*, 8). Is there, then,

nothing left to do but to historicize—that is, deconstruct—the *logos* that has determined the structure of the epochal constellation called the left?

This is where anarchism, as the potential horizon of the radical, is put to the greatest test. Because, as previously mentioned, the spirit of anarchism aims not only to deconstruct the metaphysical constellations that legitimize the hierarchical institution of external and "artificial" power, but *to call forth the deconstruction of its own metaphysical relation*. Anarchism speaks a language whose logical conclusion—whose horizon—is the "principle" of an-archē itself, the ultimate "force of dislocation, of plurification" by which the "referential *logos* becomes 'archipelagic speech,' 'pulverized poem'" (*On Being and Acting*, 6). Anarchism is not negated by an-archē; rather, it is fulfilled by it. For Schürmann, it goes without saying that his definition of an-archē is not "a question of anarchy in the sense of Proudhon, Bakunin," and the disciples of classical anarchism:

> What these masters sought was to displace the origin, to substitute the 'rational' power, principium, for the power of authority, princeps—as metaphysical an operation as has ever been. They sought to replace one focal point with another. The anarchy that will be at issue here is the name of a history affecting the ground or foundation of action, a history where the bedrock yields and where it becomes obvious that the principle of cohesion, be it authoritarian or 'rational', is no longer anything more than a blank space deprived of legislative, normative power (*On Being and Acting*, 6).

Schürmann confirms what we have explored thus far; namely, that anarchism's supreme drive to negate "the power of authority" in all its alienating forms is still founded on the presumed metaphysical permanence of rationalist-humanist principles. For all of anarchism's expressed anti-authoritarianism, its core principles nevertheless impose the same authoritative ("attributive-participative") schema of all metaphysics, whereby action is apparently directed by a relation of fidelity to a first philosophy. In its classical form, anarchism's antagonism to human alienation is

dependent on a rationalist-humanist ideation of natural, un-alienated being whose flourishing can at last come to be when the forces that alienate it are stripped away. But Schürmann may, in fact, be mistaking the cart for the horse.

Schürmann writes off anarchism's adherence to "rational power" as just another origin among others authoritatively instituting the metaphysical relation between theōria and praxis. In other words, Schürmann counts anarchism as one of many metaphysical systems that organizes itself around the archē, as principium ("principle of intelligibility")—in this case, the principle of rational power—and princeps ("the principle in its function as [institutional] authority") (*On Being and Acting*, 26). But this directly contradicts one of the primary conditions of anarchism as such: the negation of institutional authority writ large. In discussing the ancient Inca empire, for instance, Schürmann notes that "as the first in the order of authority, the princeps [of this society] was the political apparatus with the supreme cacique exercising vertical control at its head" (*On Being and Acting*, 28). Throughout the history of new and passing epochal constellations of presencing—epochs whose orders of intelligibility are "onto-theo-teleologically" organized around core first principles, which strive for universality and permanence, and whose metaphysical relation is embodied and enforced by some form of institutional authority—each constellation bears the stamp of a new principium, manifesting its power in a different princeps. But what, to ask the blunt question, would be the princeps in the constellation of anarchism when anarchism rejects all princepes? What is the destiny of a metaphysical system that has built into itself a radical negation of all institutional systematicity, which, if taken to its logical conclusion, would even negate its own metaphysical foundations? Because the anti-authoritarian spirit of anarchism points to a horizon beyond itself, beyond the rationalist-humanist founding of its classical iteration. It does not stop, as Schürmann believes, at the bedrock of rational power, but

persists to the radical horizon from which, like an autoimmune disease, it attacks the authoritative relation to first principles itself. Such ecstatic movement would begin to manifest most forcefully in the radical movements of the 1960s and '70s, which, though deconstructing classical anarchism's essentialist foundations, still loudly proclaimed themselves to be anarchist in nature.

The anti-authoritarian spirit of anarchism, if taken to its logical conclusion, inevitably performs a kind of autophagy, turning inward and eating away at the very principial authority of its rationalist-humanist foundations. This is also the basis for the claim that said spirit is already pregnant with the metaphysical deconstruction itself, which devours the authoritative relation by which action is determined by first principles, and which has as its own horizon the epochal constellation of an-archē, of acting without principle, of "being 'without why.'" Another way of saying this is that the epochal constellation of an-archic action that Schürmann and Heidegger envision becomes possible at the same endpoint of anarchism taken to its radical conclusion—the two meet at the horizon.

Anarchism's philosophical armature is indeed grounded in first principles that essentialize the rational foundations of human nature in problematic, limited, and historically contingent ways, but the presupposition of such foundations must be understood less as a limiting grounds for determining "proper" action and more as a condition of possibility for living, at last, beyond the capture of principial authority. To borrow a term from Stevphen Shukaitis, we might better understand these foundational principles as "imaginal machines" that perform the crucial technical function of spacing, that provide an ontological cut, which, in turn, clears a path for acting. For instance, "the backwards projection of the existence of an autonomous subject, collectivity and capacity […] is integral to creating the conditions for the

possible realization of an autonomous existence in the present. The existence of an already present form of autonomy is part of a process of mythological self-creation and institution that needs to be assessed based on its ability to animate forms of autonomy and self-organization" (26). Such mytho-poetic tools may rely on the necessary grounding functionality of metaphysical principles—in the vein of what Gayatri Spivak calls "strategic essentialism," or, for that matter, what Alain Badiou describes as the militant subject's fidelity to the event—even if that ground is acknowledged as illusory or conditional. "To live the everyday life of revolution is certainly a dangerous task, one fraught sometimes with very necessary illusions, allusions, and delusions" (Shukaitis, 59). To put this another way, in its historical iterations, anarchism's founding in metaphysical principles may not determine the acts and forms of resistance so much as open the space for them.

What is especially notable here is that we are, once again, within the scope of what Schürmann and Heidegger articulate as the conditions of an-archē. Schürmann's study "reads Heidegger backwards," as it were, in order to link his earlier and later writings along the axis of a lifelong, unfolding attempt "to think presencing explicitly as plural" (*On Being and Acting*, 14). In so doing, Schürmann notes that, even in *Being and Time*, Heidegger's thoroughly existentialist phenomenological focus is implanted with the same, if latent, concern in his later writings for "the 'belonging together of man and being' as it varies from epoch to epoch. As a method of procedure, this is still an explication" (*On Being and Acting*, 237). Such an explication of "the belonging together of man and being" depends on the radical assertion of what Schürmann calls the "practical a priori," which aims to avoid the 'methodical' errancy" of metaphysics, "which substitutes the contingency of time for the consolations of the eternal or the permanent presence of consciousness and forgets about its humble and historical origins" (Schrijvers, 421). With the

practical a priori, Schürmann asserts the "priority of praxis and everyday experience" by showing how "a mode of thinking is made dependent on a mode of living." This is to say that, in the "methodical" analysis of epochal economies of presencing, the thinking of historical subjects can only ever be a thinking in response to the conditions of the epoch they inhabit. No one in the Stone Age was dreaming of stainless steel sheers, nor were members of the Greek polis imagining battles over campaign finance reform, and so on: "*one thinks correctly only that to which one belongs*: the economies of presencing" (*On Being and Acting*, 42) (emphases added). And such epochal fidelity of thought reigns up until the point that … it doesn't.

Each hegemonic epochal economy is dominated by a "supreme referent," which holds unchallenged as both principium and princeps until its hegemonic hold withers away. "As long as its economy dominates, and as long as its order disposes the paths that life and thought follow, one speaks otherwise than when its hold loosens, giving way to the establishment of a new order […] When the habitat which has transitorily become ours decays and falls, questions previously unheard of, questions hitherto incapable of being asked, surge forth" (*On Being and Acting*, 25). For Schürmann, the phenomenological notion of a practical a priori asserts the possibility of the primacy of acting over thinking—to think within a given epoch is to respond to the experienced conditions of a "habitat," to an ordered matrix of principial authority that "disposes the paths that life and thought follow." However, within our current epochal constellation, within the technological epoch of the "metaphysical closure," there is a lived contest playing out between the capture of the residual forces of "unthinking" and the "authentic" thinking of being that the technological epoch has itself made possible. The age of technology implements a two-pronged path of possibility: while unmooring the metaphysical relation in a way that opens up the thinking of metaphysical epochality, the ordering of modern technology also opens up the lived

haze of objectified unthinking. There is no guarantee whatsoever that the thinking of being will emerge on its own: "to exist an-archically is the condition, the practical a priori, for the understanding of the origin as an-archic" (Schürmann, "Questioning the Foundation, 367).

"To understand authentic temporality," Schürmann writes, "it is necessary to 'exist authentically'; to think being as letting phenomena be, one must oneself 'let all things be'; to follow the play without why of presencing, it is necessary to 'live without why'" (*On Being and Acting*, 287). In order to think being without authoritatively imposing on it a "why," in order to understand "the origin as an-archic" at the threshold of the metaphysical closure, it is necessary to act an-archically, to respond to the epochal conditions of the technological age by existing "authentically," stripped of the alienating forces that obscure the disclosure of being from us. "One has to be perfectly detached in order to allow for the rise of an order of things that is detached from any first principle, that is utterly contingent—in 'humanistic' terms, in order to bring about a generation no longer preoccupied with ultimate foundations" ("Questioning the Foundation, 365). "To the question, What is to be done? when raised together with the question, What is being? a radical phenomenologist can only respond: dislodge all vestiges of a teleocratic economy from their hideouts—in common sense as much as in ideology—and thereby liberate things from the 'ordinary concept' which 'captures' them under ultimate representations" (*On Being and Acting*, 280). This, as I've already suggested, is the point on the radical horizon at which anarchism and an-archē touch. How to get there—that is the real question.

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In the chapters that follow, I aim to demonstrate a method for analyzing the history of the media politics of radical leftists—a method that is, at the moment, tentative, very much incomplete, and definitely at risk of seeming absurd at points, but it's my hope that demonstrating such a method will be useful in the collective project of developing and practicing a leftist media politics that approaches the radical horizon of an-archē, of "being without 'why.'" Even if they are not stated explicitly, these are the terms with which I trace the deconstructive movements and media politics of the Partido Liberal Mexicano (embodied in its party organ, *Regeneración*) in the first decade and a half of the twentieth century as well as those of the Partido Comunista Mexicano in the 1920s.

Taking up Schürmann and Heidegger's notion of a practical a priori, it follows that to think an-archically—to "think being as letting phenomena be"—requires a comportment that makes such thinking possible: "a particular kind of acting appears as the condition for understanding being […] Here praxis determines thinking" (*On Being and Acting*, 287). Heidegger prescribes no semblance of a program for such praxis, which would seemingly be a contradiction, but he does lay out its conditions:

> action turns into a condition that needs to be fulfilled *in concreto* for thought—the thought of being—to be at all possible. The transcendental inversion does not rehabilitate humanism, this time under a practical guise. The economies of presence unfold with little human control. Thinking may choose to remain enfolded in its given fold, without raising a question about it, the question of being. What it cannot choose is to dis-imply itself from its historical ply. But it can free itself from mute implication. It can begin to question. In Heidegger, the conditions for so emerging from the slumber of thoughtlessness are *that action take explicit aim at all principial vestiges, that it challenge and subvert their sway, and that this subversion be collective* (*On Being and Acting*, 244) (emphases added).

No form of thinking can escape its imbrication in the "historical ply" by which it is determined as a response to its "given [epochal] fold." Moreover, according to Schürmann, it is not up to thinking to determine the unfolding or shape of each new economy of presence. But in the epoch of the metaphysical deconstruction, thinking does have a choice to shake itself from "the slumber of thoughtlessness," to gain a voice and question the metaphysical relation itself. Such a choice, again, is not a given. It requires, first, "that action take explicit aim at all principial vestiges" and, second, that its subversion of the authoritative sway of these vestiges "be [a] collective" process. "Due to the encompassing character of any destinal or historical 'stamp' of presence, a challenge to the principles by marginal, individual actions cannot, by right, transfer us into the economy of *Ereignis*. The scope of the imperative that requires us to 'open ourselves to the injunction' is therefore societal" (*On Being and Acting*, 244). Is this not, as we've described it, the *modus operandi* of anarchism (which is also its *modus vivendi)*? The praxis of anarchism is one that, in its resistance to the alienating forces of authoritative power, takes "explicit aim at all principial vestiges," even, eventually, those that belong to classical anarchism itself. While such action may make use of the "imaginal machines" of first metaphysical principles ("rational power"), we could also say that the action of resistance is the practical a priori for anarchism's "emerging from the slumber of thoughtlessness," for its eventual deconstruction of the authoritative relation to metaphysical foundations, including those upon which classical anarchism itself is based. Moreover, and most importantly, the praxis of anarchism embodies and enacts the condition of *collective* subversion that Heidegger and Schürmann emphasize. Anarchism understands, perhaps better than any other political philosophy, that to act—to take aim at, to resist, and to strip away the alienating vestiges of principial authority—is necessarily a matter of what Peter Sloterdijk calls anthropotechnics.

In *You Must Change Your Life*, Sloterdijk drastically asserts that "Anyone who speaks of human self-production without addressing the formation of human beings in the practising life has missed the point from the outset. Consequently, we must suspend virtually everything that has been said about humans as working beings in order to translate it into the language of practising, or self-forming and self-enhancing behaviour" (4) Such an assertion extends Sloterdijk's decades-long project to upend the epistemological rendering of the human as a self-contained agential being that acts in the world as such, for which he substitutes the immunological notion of the human as the necessary creator of the world in which it can be. "I gather material on the biography of *Homo immunologicus*, guided by the assumption that this is where to find the stuff from which the forms of anthropotechnics are made. By this I mean the methods of mental and physical practising by which humans from the most diverse cultures have attempted to optimize their cosmic and immunological status in the face of vague risks of living and acute certainties of death" (Sloterdijk, *You Must Change*, 10). Sloterdijk argues that human life does not and cannot exist on its own, naked, exposed to the barren "outer space" of the world. Human "self-production" emerges as a becoming of and through anthropotechnics; that is, through the "methods of mental and physical practising" that condition the spaces—spheres—of being, that make a home for being in which life can fashion itself, flourish, and protect itself from the "vague risks of living and acute certainties of death." Anthropotechnics is the making of the human itself. And humans become and survive "by recreating protective envelopes, which constitute immunity, using technological means […] humans have no choice but to build spheres. They need protective or immunising systems to survive. In order to exist they need to be 'continually working on their accommodation in imaginary, sonorous, semiotic, ritual and technical shells. They are, in that sense, interior designers" (Janicka, 65).

Moreover, for Sloterdijk, the spatial analytic that such an approach brings to the question of human self-fashioning highlights the fact that "being is never an isolated being. Much more than is true for Heidegger, being is social. Spatial being is always a co-existence" (Noordegraaf-Eelens & Schinkel, 12). Thus, what I argue here, and aim to demonstrate in the following chapters, is that Sloterdijk's focus on the anthropotechnical-immunological conditioning of life in spheres ("spherology") provides an essential analytic through which we can understand the anarchist media-political praxis of self- and world-fashioning that not only makes it possible to think being beyond the metaphysical closure, but that also aims to create the space of and for the collective subversion of "the injustice, the hubris, of enforced residence under principial surveillance—whatever form it may take" (Schürmann, *On Being and Acting*, 281). I discuss this anthropotechnical conditioning in the context of the political creation and enacting of "resistance cultures," which spherologically mediate the conditions of individual and collective life that aims to de-alienate human being from itself (and, thus, to clear a space for "being without why").

What Sloterdijkian spherology adds to our reading of Schürmann (and Heidegger) is a necessary attention to the space of being, to the anthropotechnical clearing that makes possible the thinking of being. Because even an-archē—the a-principial action of "being without 'why'"—is and requires the anthropotechnical conditioning of life in spheres. A being without "why" does not negate being's need for a where. Sloterdijk characterizes his inaugural study of spherology as a "philosophical anthropotechnical theory of space." In response to Heidegger's existential analytic, which poses the question of the nature of being, Sloterdijk's spatial ontology counterposes the question: "where is (the human) being?" Whereas Heidegger accepts the human as a nature—a being-in-the-world-as-such, a world in solid form—Sloterdijk is concerned with the production of worlds, with "the human being's being-in-the-spheres." In the history of

Western metaphysics, Sloterdijk traces the problematic categories of thought and existence that have supported, and have been supported by, notions of human self-contained-ness and of a distanced, instrumental relation to the world we're a part of. Even if we broaden our epistemological bases to interrogate these categories in theory (or purely "thematically") the fact remains that "In everyday life, we remain metaphysicians of the hardcore" (Sloterdijk, *Neither Sun nor Death*, 139). We see in solids, we think as singularities. As Sloterdijk asserts, the "conception of substance has led us, almost since time immemorial, to look for the essence of the world and of life and, to do so as regards only that which can be apprehended in a concrete and individual manner, that which has an existence by its matter and its form, that which, in the objects and the situations that we encounter, prove themselves always as their essence" (*Neither Sun nor Death*, 139). We move and think and act on the "hardcore" topsoil of the world, on the plane of forms from which objects and situations appear as products, not process. What Sloterdijk's spherology aims to do is thus refocus our vision to see that which is not apparent in solidified forms, arranged as such in the grocery aisles of phenomenal reality. What we are looking for in the study of spheres and their "immunological" dynamics are, instead, "the categories of relation, of contact, of suspended flight in a situation of mutual cohabitation, the fact of being contained in a 'between'" (*Neither Sun nor Death*, 140).

What Sloterdijk articulates is, I argue, an invitation to develop a media theory of being—with "media" being fundamentally understood as the technics of living "in a [permanent] 'between.'" It's not for nothing that, in the first volume of his truly massive *Spheres* trilogy, Sloterdijk asserts that the aim of this extensive project is to "show that media theory and sphere theory converge: this is a hypothesis for whose proof three books cannot be excessive" (31). What we call media—typically in reference to information and communications media—is an

exceedingly narrow expression of a concept that encompasses the technicity of life itself. Like John Durham Peters, I believe that, "At its most ambitious, media studies sees itself as a successor discipline to metaphysics, as the study of all that is" (27). Media connect that which is separated, not just by space, but by time—and, even, planes of being. Just like the epochally specific metaphysical hegemonies Schürmann describes don't simply come from nowhere, all that lives and changes is conveyed from one state of being to the next by some form of media, by some process of mediation, by means and circumstances that exceed what defines them in our limited ways of understanding discrete entities by their self-contained essence—as products, not processes in constant conversation with the world they're a part of.

This more expansive conceptualization of media follows from the work of thinkers like Bernard Stiegler and Mark Hansen. In his *Technics and Time* series, following the work of paleontologist André Leroi-Gourhan, Stiegler asserts that human beings have evolved in ways that can't be explained in purely zoological or biological terms. Our evolution inheres in the passing on of knowledge through culture, which is made possible (just as history—the elsewhere to which we are connected in this "passing on"—is made conceivable) through technics. Technical objects are the very support for a cultural, non-biological, "epiphylogenetic" memory. Thus, the evolutionary process that has come to define our humanity has been, from the beginning, a technical process:

> The problem arising here is that the evolution of this essentially technical being that the human is exceeds the biological, although this dimension is an essential part of the technical phenomenon itself, something like its enigma. The evolution of the "prosthesis," not itself living, by which the human is nonetheless defined as a living being, constitutes the reality of the human's evolution, as if, with it, the history of life were to continue by means other than life: this is the paradox of a living being characterized in its forms of life by the nonliving—or by the traces that its life leaves in the nonliving (Stiegler, 50).

Stiegler's description thus presents human evolution as simultaneously biological and cultural and occurs as a process of what he terms "epiphylogenesis": the evolution of human life "by means other than life." What we call technics, therefore, encompasses the "evolution of the 'prosthesis,'" which is, from the beginning, an exteriorization of the living organism in its pursuit of life by means other than life. Or, in Sloterdijk's terms, the exteriorization of the living organism is necessarily an anthropotechnical creation of the medial spheres in which humans can be that which they are. "The paradox," Stiegler notes, "is to have to speak of an exteriorization without a preceding interior: the interior is constituted in exteriorization […] the appearance of the human is the appearance of the technical" (141). For Stiegler, the aporetic relationship between the inside and the outside can only be understood as *différance*—a movement of differing and deferral without origin, a transductive synthesis mutually constituting the who and the what while giving the illusion of their opposition. For Sloterdijk, this seeming opposition is just as much a product of our epistemologically stunted and instrumentalist understanding of beings as self-contained entities defined by some internal essence as opposed to beings-in-process whose processual becoming always implicates their "essence" in their relations to that which exceeds what they "are."

It is in opposition to this instrumentalist and one-dimensional view of media, the human, and the worlds they make together that I hope to position this dissertation and the analytical method I practice in the following chapters. In the process, I hope to show that the seeming opposition between the two primary competing approaches to media in contemporary cultural studies is untenable. On one hand, in the anti-humanist vein of thinkers like Friedrich Kittler, there is an approach that privileges the ontological singularity of technical objects and their agency in determining the shape and scope of human life ("Media," as Kittler famously put it,

"determine our situation" [xxxix]); on the other hand, thinkers like Michael Warner have developed a cultural constructivist approach to media, which places greater weight on the discursive encoding of technology and shaping of technological progress ("the practices of technology, in other words, are always structured, and [...] their meaningful structure is the dimension of culture" [10]); in the middle would be someone like Raymond Williams, whose approach is more fluid, but still dialectical ("while we have to reject technological determinism, in all its forms, we must be careful not to substitute for it the notion of a determined technology […] the reality of determination is the setting of limits and the exertion of pressures, within which variable social practices are profoundly affected but never necessarily controlled" [*Television*, 133]).[4] However, as Mark Hansen writes, the analytic of epiphylogenesis presented by Stiegler deconstructs the terms of this debate. From this position,

> there simply is no such thing as technical determinism, not because technics don't determine our situation, but because they don't (and cannot) do so from a position that is outside of culture; likewise, there is no such thing as cultural constructivism—understood as a rigid, blanket privileging of ideology or cultural agency—not because culture doesn't construct ideology and experience, but because it doesn't (and cannot) do so without depending on technologies that are beyond the scope of its intentionality, of the very agency of cultural ideology […] From this perspective, the medium is, from the very onset, a concept that is irrevocably implicated in life, in the epiphylogenesis of the human, and in the history to which it gives rise *qua* history of concrete effects. Thus, long before the appearance of the term 'medium' in the English language, and also long before the appearance of its root, the Latin term *medium* (meaning middle, center, midst, intermediate course, thus something implying mediation or an intermediary), the

[4] Whereas Kittler sees a technological autonomy that resists the McLuhan thesis of the medium as human prosthesis, Stiegler's epiphylogenetic analytic, like Sloterdijk's spherological approach, demonstrates that the supposition of such autonomy is itself ideological. This is not to deny the internal logics of technical objects, as Gilbert Simondon noted, but Kittler's anti-humanism borders on fetishizing as automata that which is fundamentally co-implicated by its relation to the human. "Man is capable of taking upon himself the relation between the living being that he is and the machine he fabricates; the technical operation requires both technical and natural life" (Simondon, 140). As much as he would like to, Kittler can't erase the human from technics any more than we could erase the technicity of the human.

> medium existed as an operation fundamentally bound up with the living, but also with the technical. The medium, we might say, is implicated in the living as essentially technical, in [...] 'technical life'; it is the operation of mediation—and perhaps also the support for the always concrete mediation—between a living being and the environment. In this sense, the medium perhaps names the very transduction between the organism and the environment that constitutes life as essentially technical (Hansen, 299-300)

Like Stiegler, Hansen's destruction of the fiction of an "outside" figures a constant co-implication of that which is separated (self and world, life and technics, etc.) but cannot be defined in any sort of essentialist vacuum. A great philosophical lack of appreciation for this necessary co-implication of beings, I argue, is precisely why Sloterdijk writes that "we must suspend virtually everything that has been said about humans as working beings in order to translate it into the language of practising, or self-forming and self-enhancing behavior" (*You Must Change*, 4). I attempt to model in this dissertation an approach to media and media politics that understands both in terms of the anthropotechnics of "practising, or self-forming," of constructing and conditioning the medial spheres that condition us, the spheres that we're embedded in and that mediate human being. What I interpret as radical politics consists of such spherological attempts to intervene in the media-worlds that mediate the conditions of human alienation and to reshape the medial arrangement of one's world in ways that approach the radical horizon of an-archē, allowing the humanness of being to appear, at last, unalienated from itself

Sloterdijk's spherology can and, I argue, must be taken together with the Stieglerian analytic of epiphylogenesis, as the evolution of the human by and through technics. "The theory of spheres," Sloterdijk writes, "is a morphological tool that allows us to grasp the exodus of the human being, from the primitive symbiosis to world-historical action in empires and global systems, as an almost coherent history of extraversion" (*Spheres, I*, 67). As noted above, this

"exodus of the human being," the epiphylogenetic pursuit of life by means other than life, comprises the medium as the means of creating and connecting to the world in which the human can be that which it is. What Sloterdijk adds in his spherological undertaking is a fundamentally plural and spatial dimensionality of such world-making:

> If humans are there [being-there], it is initially in spaces that have opened for them because, by inhabiting them, humans have given them form, content, extension and relative duration. As spheres are the original product of human coexistence, however—something of which no theory of work has ever taken notice—these atmospheric-symbolic places for humans are dependent on constant renewal. Spheres are air conditioning systems in whose construction and calibration, for those living in real coexistence, it is out of the question not to participate. The symbolic air conditioning of the shared space is the primal production of every society (*Spheres, I*, 46).

From the micro to the macro, Sloterdijk's spherology is, from the beginning, a study of mediation, understood in the sense of "technical life"; that is, an attempt to understand the "anthropotechnical" processes and relations of world-making and "air conditioning" that constitute "real coexistence." "We live, as intertwined beings, in the land of We" (*Spheres, I*, 51). And we are engaged, every day, in the constant renewal of the "atmospheric-symbolic" worlds in which we live. We are, and make, worlds, but worlds also make us. We have evolved, through the epiphylogenetic, anthropotechnical, mediatic processes of world-making, but that evolution comes with the price of constant renewal: the atmospheres we've created contain the oxygen of our living. We cannot simply exist in the World but must survive in worlds (air conditioning systems) that mediate our relation to everything. "Only in immune structures that form interiors can humans continue their generational processes and advance their individuations. Humans have never lived in a direct relationship with 'nature,' and their cultures have certainly never set foot in the realm of what we call the bare facts; their existence has

always been exclusively in the breathed, divided, torn-open and restored space" (*Spheres, I*, 46). Thus, the reality of being-in-the-world is one in which every term (being/in/world) is taken as contingent, processual, atmospheric—mediated.

This may all seem quite (if not too) abstract for a history of "media" and the "left" in Mexico. But, as I hope the following chapters will show, it is entirely necessary. For, in order to approach the study of media and the left not as self-contained entities but, rather, as processes in conversation with the world, "conceptualizations of that vulnerable oxygen-tent called culture in which we exist will be far more cautious, on the one hand, and far more technical, on the other […] Those who want to think no further than the illusion of the lifeworld, who raise no technical questions, and who take no part in analyses about how space filled with motivations is possible, are […] only passengers, only cultural-service consumers, but not cultural theoreticians" (Sloterdijk, *Neither Sun nor Death*, 217).

What will it mean, then, to be far more "technical" in our approximation not only of the "vulnerable oxygen-tent called culture," but of traditional signifiers like "politics" and the "left"? If anything, Sloterdijk's imperative does not require that we rid ourselves of such signifiers, but that their historical-conceptual value be measured in terms of their spherological capacity; that is, their capacity to mediate the conditions of human being. We are looking at the same topics, but differently. Atmospherically. We do not need to necessarily scrap our old concepts and categories, but the hope of this approach (and all the mistakes I will surely make in developing it) is to remove from them their supports of "substance fetishism and metaphysical individualism" and see if they float.

It is within this shift to the atmospheric that Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift attempt to set out on a new course to study the left in its engagement with "the political itself as an active field."

Theirs is a study of tactics as opposed to programs, or what they call "arts of the political." Such a study accepts from the beginning that any attempt to understand what the left is, let alone what it can and should do to combat the world-sized injustice of human alienation, must not be limited to the "substance fetishism" of categorizing ideological allegiances or structured programs for materializing the good life, but must also make space to include a conception of "being on the left [as] mobilizing world-making capacity" and practicing a concerted media politics through which "another world" becomes possible (4). As Amin and Thrift explain, also drawing on Sloterdijk's terminology, "world-making capacity is the ability to produce […] 'atmospheres,' that is, spaces of resonance in which the oxygen of certain kinds of thought and practice seems natural and desirable" (5).

As the following chapters will demonstrate, articulating a radical political program can, indeed, be an essential component in a robust media politics. But what Ash and Thrift demonstrate is that a vision of another world lobbed into the world as it is will bounce and settle like a stone if it is not accompanied by more widespread, organized, and interconnected attempts to make that vision resonant, conceivable, spreadable, and actionable within the historically, locally, and nationally constructed spheres of the people it hopes to mobilize. Such a spherological stance, they argue, "is particularly necessary for the Left, for when it has worked best in the past, it has done so by inventing new worlds out of the present, disclosing that which lies latent, bringing together that which has been dispersed, making explicit that which has lacked form or representation, finding the right openings, and working with a map of the future whose cardinal is rather like the magnetic North Pole in that it is a fixed point but one that constantly moves" (8-9). In the following chapters, it is through this sort of spherological lens that I attempt to study the media politics of the Partido Liberal Mexicano, the Partido Comunista

Mexicano, and the hegemonic forces they attempted to combat in their collective struggles to intervene in and reshape the medial arrangement of the world they were a part of.

Chapter II. "*Regeneración* era el Magonismo"

In his essay on Ricardo Flores Magón, the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM), and its official newspaper, *Regeneración*, historian Armando Bartra makes a bold and provocative claim: "Magonismo did not use *Regeneración*, *Regeneración* was Magonismo" ("Prólogo," 15). Read one way, Bartra's claim could certainly come across as an indictment of *magonismo* as a political movement that existed only on paper; that is, on the pages of *Regeneración* itself. However, as I argue in this chapter, Bartra actually signals the necessity of seeing *Regeneración* as the lively site of medial connection through which the movement itself lived. As Ricardo and the Organizing Junta of the PLM tried to foment and direct the Mexican revolution from exile in the United States, and as their politics developed from their more Liberal reformist roots to an open embrace of anarcho-communism, the transnational, interconnected medial processes, relations, and networks that made it possible to produce, disseminate, and engage with *Regeneración* in the first place took on greater political significance. In order to function as an information-sharing, political education, and organizing network, and in order to survive political repression from forces aligned with Porfirio Díaz's dictatorial rule or from U.S. authorities, this sprawling medial infrastructure required the kind of widespread participation, cooperation, coordination, etc. that gave evidential credence to the PLM's vision for social revolution and for the creation of a more just world without the oppressive forces of capital, clergy, and the state. In this chapter, I examine the diffuse and interconnecting dimensions of a concerted media politics that made up the movement of *magonismo*, from networks of Liberal Clubs throughout Mexico to *Regeneración* itself and the

clandestine, transnational medial infrastructure through which it was produced, disseminated, and engaged with.

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Ricardo Flores Magón and the Organizing Junta of the Mexican Liberal Party have often been footnoted in history as being among the most influential "precursors" of the Mexican Revolution. They earned this designation as much for the roles they played in motivating, organizing, and mobilizing dissenting factions of the Mexican population (and building international support for the rebellious cause) as for their articulation of certain political grievances and principles that would characterize dominant (post-)revolutionary currents and would ultimately be enshrined in the 1917 Constitution (Hodges).

The PLM grew out of a rising tide of Liberal dissent that would eventually culminate in revolutionary inter- and intra-class conflict. At the turn of the 20th century, though, this dissent was primarily directed against the creep of resurgent clericalism and embodied a widespread anger and fear that, under the reign of Porfirio Díaz, the Church had retaken an unjustly powerful position in society (if, indeed, it had ever lost it), operating in open defiance of the 1857 Constitution and the Reform Laws. In August, 1900, when Camilo Arriaga, a mining engineer from a wealthy family in San Luis Potosí, issued his manifesto "Invitación al Partido Liberal" with the support of other local Liberals, he called for the organization of a network of Liberal Clubs across the country and for a foundational national Congress to take place in San Luis Potosí in February, 1901. "The aim of such a meeting would be '… to discuss and decide upon means to effect the unification, solidarity, and force of the Liberal Party, with the end of

containing the advances of clericalism and of achieving, within law and order, an effective application of the Reform Laws'" (Cockcroft, 93). Along with the generally middle- and upper-class makeup of the manifesto's signatories, the limited scope of the manifesto itself belied the Liberal inclination towards a program of political reformism (including Arriaga himself). However, the manifesto's embedded call for "collective action," along with the vital implications that building a Liberal Club network had for organizing a broader national resistance movement, made the Party and the prospective Congress attractive to younger, more left-leaning students like Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama and Juan Sarabia, who helped found the San Luis Potosí Club, which they named "Ponciano Arriaga."

This also caught the enthusiastic attention of Ricardo Flores Magón and his brothers in Mexico City who, along with Antonio Horcasitas, had established the newspaper *Regeneración* during that same year as an "Independent Juridical Journal" focused on "exposing miscarriages of justice, violations of rights guaranteed by the constitution, and corruption in courts under the *porfiriato*" (Cowen Verter, 32). (In 2005, when the Flores Magón brothers and their cadre split from the founding Liberal Party to establish the more radical Junta Organizadora del Partido Liberal Mexicano [PLM], *Regeneración* would become their official party organ.) As Enrique Flores Magón would recall decades later, "Camilo Arriaga's initiative excited Ricardo and me […] the formation of Liberal Clubs provided a basis for socialist organization" (qtd. in Cockcroft, 95). There was a synergistic continuity between the political-infrastructural project of the Liberal Club movement and what would become the project of *magonismo* as embodied in the collective process of producing, disseminating, and engaging with *Regeneración*. As Gloria Villegas Moreno notes, "*Una parte esencial de las tareas de los clubes sería celebrar conferencias de tema histórico y excitar al ejercicio de sus derechos a los ciudadanos, para*

infundir al pueblo el civismo, de tal manera supiera éste, que él «es el amo y no el esclavo, y aquéllos los mandatarios y no los verdugos ni los déspotas»" ("An essential part of the Clubs' duties would be to hold conferences on historical topics and to encourage citizens to exercise their rights, in order to inspire a sense of civic responsibility in the people, so that they would know that they were 'the master and not the slave, and that they were the leaders and neither executioners or despots'") (102). *Regeneración* and *magonismo* as such depended on the Liberal Club network to survive. Each in their own way comprised an "anthropotechnical" process of individual and collective education, of cultivating "resistance cultures" through the political practices and modes of being Villegas Moreno describes, which were needed to envision, desire, and build new futures, new worlds.

The Flores Magón brothers would attend the First Liberal Congress with the intention of pushing the "priest-baiters" towards more militantly anti-Díaz positions and, ultimately, towards a more expansive confrontation with the reigning political and economic system. As Salvador Hernández Padilla notes, Ricardo and the young radicals argued that "*la solución a los apremiantes problemas de la mayoría de los mexicanos no podía reducirse a cuestiones tales como la no-reelección sino que era necesario partir de un programa que contemplara un buen número de reformas socioeconómicas*" (The solution to the urgent problems that the majority of Mexicans faced could not be reduced to such matters as non-re-election but rather that it was necessary to break from a political program that considered a large number of socioeconomic reforms) (22). Indeed, Ricardo's young political star began to rise after he gave a rousing speech at the Congress, during which he unabashedly called out Díaz and his administration as "a pack of thieves" —a proclamation that was shocking enough (and unexpected by reform-minded

attendees) to be greeted with hisses at first, followed by tentative cheers and growing applause as Ricardo repeated it two more times.

While resolutions from the First Liberal Congress stayed within the programmatic framework of anticlericalism and the preservation of civil liberties and bourgeois democracy, the wheels for something much bigger had been set in motion: a growing struggle to confront not only the political rot of the Porfirian regime but the prevailing social and economic order it enforced at the expense of the subjugation and exploitation of the working and peasant classes. From here on out, the very possibility of radicalizing enough sectors of the population to the point of revolution—along with the possibility of guiding the political and ideological motives of would-be revolutionaries—would depend, in large part, on the erection of vast political infrastructures that could provide the operational architecture for a political movement capable of withstanding political repression from Díaz and eventually overthrowing him. From clandestine communication and transportation networks to political education institutions and solidarity-building cultural microclimates ("resistance cultures"), it was vital to establish and fortify such infrastructures through which people could organize and arm themselves with the social, ideological, informational, and material resources needed for a movement—any movement—to grow. Purveyors of the Liberal Club movement understood this, as Javier Torres Parés notes:

> *Las resoluciones del Congreso Liberal, a pesar de situarse en un plano básicamente anticlerical, abrieron la posibilidad de una acción más amplia, en la medida en que se fijaba como objetivos promover el respeto de las leyes, la educación liberal y cívica de la nación, la lucha contra la corrupción administrativa así como la "abolición de toda tendencia personalista en los gobiernos, que pueda juzgarse preferente a la Constitución de 1857 y las Leyes de Reforma". Para propagar los principios liberales, se propuso la organización de clubes a los que se asignó la tarea de realizar conferencias públicas sobre instrucción cívica, establecimiento de bibliotecas y, de ser posible, el establecimiento de escuelas primarias laicas para adultos y niños. Los clubes se plantearon organizar y fomentar "sociedades obreras en las que se instruya a los*

> *asociados sobre sus derechos naturales y deberes civiles y políticos", así como el fomento de "sociedades mutualistas para la defensa de las prerrogativas y derechos de sus miembros, y para desarrollar en el pueblo el espíritu de ahorro y de economía de fuerzas, a la vez que se trabajará por extirpar el alcoholismo del seno de esas agrupaciones y de la sociedad en general". Los liberales le prestaron especial atención a la defensa de la libertad de expresión y la libertad de sufragio* (20-21).
>
> The resolutions of the Liberal Congress, despite being situated within a largely anticlerical framework, opened up the possibility for broader action, insofar as the objectives were to promote respect for the laws, the liberal and civic education of the nation, the fight against administrative corruption as well as the "abolition of all personalist tendencies in governments, which could be deemed preferential to the Constitution of 1857 and the Reform Laws." In order to spread liberal principles, it was proposed that clubs be organized, and that these clubs would hold public lectures on civic instruction, establishing libraries, and, if possible, establishing secular primary schools for adults and children. The clubs set out to organize and promote "workers' societies in which members would receive instruction on their natural rights and civil and political duties," as well as the promotion of "mutual societies for the defense of the prerogatives and rights of their members, and for developing in the people the spirit of saving and of an economy of forces, at the same time working to eradicate alcoholism from the bosom of these groups and from society in general." Liberals paid special attention to defending the freedoms of expression and of suffrage (20-21).

As we can see in this passage, the connective tissue between this early phase of prerevolutionary Liberal dissent and the politics of what would become *magonismo* was as much (if not more) material as it was ideational (or "ideological," narrowly defined). As Torres Parés describes, and as the Flores Magón brothers recognized, the organization of Liberal Clubs was understood to be a vital process that would establish the anthropotechnical infrastructure needed to generate, strengthen, and air condition resistance cultures and "mutualist" social formations wherein workers, through active civic practice, could be and become the kind of political subjects they needed to be. However, where Liberals saw the capacity of such a political infrastructure to conform and condition Mexicans to become subjects who could better exercise their rights and fulfill their duties in a liberal democratic formation (and thus ensure the healthier functioning of

civil society within that political system), the *magonistas*, as I will argue in this chapter, would locate in this infrastructure—and the processes of building, maintaining, and growing it—the capacity for fomenting a true *social revolution*. Because the PLM would come to understand that, no matter how active civil society was, political liberation could not materialize by way of liberal democracies that didn't push for economic liberation and, in fact, depended on the implicit socioeconomic hierarchies that prevented it. As noted in a front-page article in the July 27, 1912 issue of *Regeneración*, under the heading (which spanned the whole page) of "LA REVOLUCION SOCIAL EN MEXICO,"

> *Dado que mientras no exista el bienestar material en el pueblo, no gozará éste de independencia, afirmamos que la realización completa de los principios democráticos es imposible. En efecto, el que nada tiene está obligado á cumplir la voluntad y los caprichos del que le da el salario que necesita para su subsistencia y la de su familia, hasta el grado de verse forzado á abdicar de sus derechos de ciudadano votando en el sentido que se le ordene, En tal virtud la condición de los trabajadores, condenados por la organización social, á no recibir más que lo indispensable para que sus amos no pierdan la fuerza de trabajo que necesitan, no cambiará en lo mas mínimo con las modificaciones que pudiera sufrir el organismo gubernamental* (Mendoza López, "Esclavitud").
>
> Given the fact that as long as the people have no material wellbeing they will not enjoy their independence, we hold that the complete attainment of democratic principles is impossible. Indeed, he who has nothing is obliged to comply with the will and whims of the one who hands him the salary he needs for his subsistence and that of his family, to the extent that he is forced to abdicate his rights as a citizen by voting in the sense that is demanded of him. Consequently, the conditioning of the workers, condemned by society and social organization, to not receive more than what is necessary so that their masters do not lose the work force they need, will not change in the least with the modifications that the government body could suffer (Mendoza López, "Esclavitud").

For the PLM, the struggle for justice, liberty, and dignity demanded more than an institutional blood transfusion; it demanded a revolution in "la organización social," a rewiring of social relations through less hierarchical and more mutualistic arrangements, the full liberatory

potential of which could only be realized insofar as they were able to evade being captured, channeled through, and mediated by the conductors of capital, Church, and state. *Magonismo*'s split with its Liberal roots manifested in the realization that the political and social infrastructures they themselves were helping to build could be more than a civil supplement to the institutions of liberal democracy; they could serve as the structural basis for a mutualistically organized society that could exist, they argued, without such institutions. And, as I argue, we can see how the project of *magonismo* itself—a revolutionary project aimed at bringing such a society into being—developed through, and was embodied in, the collective, infrastructural, resistance-culture-building process of making, disseminating, and engaging with *Regeneración*.

Of course, all of this would take place within the contexts of tectonic historical shifts, domestic and international, that had radically reshaped the country and its political economy over the course of the *porfiriato* (1876-1911), heightening socioeconomic contradictions in ways that would, in turn, amplify cultural, racial, and ideological divisions. Mexico's Porfirian epoch of "modernization," for instance, saw the tremendous development of capitalist production and the emergence of a new industrial workforce (and with it, a growing, if rudimentary, tradition of labor organizing that differed significantly from that of artisan struggles); the greater integration of the Mexican economy into the world market and further penetration of foreign investment and control of labor, natural resources, and capital flows. "By the outbreak of the revolution," Shawn England notes, "private U.S. interests had secured more of Mexico's trade than all the European nations combined. A key element of Mexico's attraction to foreign investment was the Porfirian labor code: workers were forbidden to organize, and the nation's security forces—armed with the latest weaponry from more developed nations—ensured that any unrest would be crushed" (246). (Having built much of Mexico's great "modernization" by further transforming it into a "a

virtual economic satellite" of the U.S., the Díaz government and its powerful northern ally clearly had vested interests in squashing political factions like the PLM, whose political influence on working people threatened to destabilize this forcefully imposed economic arrangement.) Along with these changes, the *porfiriato* was characterized by the expansion of the *hacienda* system and greater concentration of land ownership for exploitative *hacendados*; "the disintegration of the old agrarian communities," which "went hand in hand with the splitting of artisan layers into a few capitalist bosses at the top and a mass of wage laborers at the bottom" (Gilly, 28); and the development of railway, telegraph, and electrical systems, which provided unprecedented means of national integration as well as the permeation and consolidation of federal government power, allowing for information, officials, and troops to reach far and move quickly. However, much like the forces of capital and state repression harnessed this modernizing circuitry to serve their own ends and secure their interests, the forces of revolutionary foment flowed, too.

The PLM and *Regeneración*—indeed, the entire movement we call *magonismo*—participated in the history-shaping, bottom-up response to these equally brutal and awe-inspiring changes to Mexican society—a response culminating in revolution. This response entailed, and depended on, strategies to utilize the social, political, and communicative infrastructures of Mexico's "modernization" and what came before; it also depended on enacting strategies for working with available resources—from mobile people and smugglers to community spaces, printing presses, and communal forms of organization—in order to erect new political networks in which their revolutionary movement could move, grow, learn, and live. This is a story about those strategies.

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With its official newspaper, *Regeneración,* the PLM emerged as an infinitely demanding voice of dissent against the reign of Porfirio Díaz and, ultimately, against the "three- headed hydra" of capital, clergy, and the state writ large. The youthful fearlessness of its leading members had a price, though. After facing repeated harassment by Díaz's police forces, the forcible closing of *Regeneración*, and imprisonment from 1902-1903, Ricardo and his closest collaborators fled across the border to the U.S, where they continued printing invectives against government and Church corruption and the willing submission of Mexican lands and people to the whims of foreign capital. It was in the United States that Ricardo and Enrique would establish themselves as members of the organizing Junta of the newly formed PLM, along with Juan and Manuel Sarabia, Librado Rivera, Antonio I. Villareal, and Rosalio Bustamante. Ricardo would never return to Mexico until after his death in Leavenworth Penitentiary, Kansas, in 1922.

During their political exile in the U.S., especially in the early years, the Junta was often on the move, setting up printing shops in Texas before moving to St. Louis, and then to Los Angeles. Their presence and, especially, their printing operations were followed closely by officials of the Díaz and U.S. governments alike as well as private investigators ("Pinkertons") from the Furlong Detective Agency, who were hired by the former. In a report filed to Díaz outlining Ricardo as a "dangerous anarchist," the Agency noted that "The Flores Magóns, Sarabia, and Villarreal have always appeared […] as men fanatical over one idea and for that reason they are dangerous, as are all persons that one encounters with that obsession […] they are always talking of tyranny […] of the rich classes, in particular the *hacendados* and industrialists, who exploit the workers" (qtd. in Hart, 89). Soon thereafter, David E. Thompson,

the United States Ambassador to Mexico, "informed the United States Department of State that the PLM 'worried' President Díaz, 'harmed United States business interests,' and advocated 'anarchism'" (Hart, 89). At every step of the way, they were harassed and repeatedly imprisoned by the U.S. government under trumped-up pretenses that were the result of political pressure from Díaz's collaboration with U.S. government officials who saw the PLM and their revolutionary fervor for ousting Díaz as a threat to American business and political interests in Mexico (MacLachlan). As Claudio Lomnitz describes, "Ricardo tried to direct the revolution from Los Angeles, but his activity there landed him in prison. He spent the years from 1907 to 1910 in prisons in Los Angeles and Arizona, from 1912 to 1914 at McNeil Federal Penitentiary in Washington state, four months of 1916 again in the L.A. County Jail, 1918 and part of 1919 at McNeil again, and from 1919 until his death, in November 1922, at Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary in Kansas" (*The Return*, xxiii). Even after Díaz had been overthrown, the PLM had become embroiled in a climate of high anxiety over the toxic, "foreign" Other of anarchism in the U.S., especially in the lead-up to World War I. "The United States government initially viewed [Ricardo] as a Mexican problem," Colin MacLachlan writes, "but in the end, it considered him a danger to internal security and responded accordingly" (115). As its political and ideological influence on the Mexican Revolution waned, the PLM's continued persecution by the U.S. government inevitably had more to do with this domestic anxiety than the violation of international neutrality laws that the U.S. had with Mexico, though these neutrality laws—along with the Comstock Law, which "empowered postal inspectors to prohibit 'obscene' material [which *Regeneración* was ultimately deemed to be] from passing through the mail" (Struthers, 55)—remained the most effective legal smokescreen to justify their persecution.

In a 1906 issue of *Regeneración*, published on July 1st while Ricardo and Juan Sarabia were hiding in Toronto, the Junta printed thousands of copies of their "Manifesto to the Nation" alongside their "Program of the Liberal Party." Issues were mailed to subscribers across the U.S. and smuggled into Mexico through all sorts of creative means; as Ethel Duffy Turner wrote years later in *Ricardo Flores Magón y el Partido Liberal Mexicano*, such smuggling operations even came to include sending copies of *Regeneración* in hollowed-out Sears Roebuck catalogues (385). Concluding with the clarion call for "Reform, Liberty, Justice," these documents landed like a bombshell in the carefully and brutally policed "public sphere" that Díaz and his administration had worked hard to purge of dissenting voices. Before this, the PLM's forced retreat to the United States, as Adolfo Gilly notes, "[marked] the peak year of the Díaz era,"

> "social peace" officially reigned in the country. Strikes and labor unions were outlawed, "agitators" punished by conscription, deportation to the plantations, or imprisonment. Peasant revolts had been drowned in blood, and the "pacification" of rebellious tribes seemed complete. Not having to face any organized opposition, apart from the harassed, imprisoned, or exiled groups of Magonistas, the federal government and its army held sway in every region. The peasant and urban population did maintain a silent resistance throughout the country, but without seeming to challenge the official appearance of things (38).

As the issuance and dissemination of the PLM's program showed, however, the surface layer of relative political quietude belied teeming, clandestine networks of political activity, growing worker unrest, and an increasingly robust communicative infrastructure through which dissidents and information could flow and strategies for dissent could be hashed out. "In 1906," John Hart writes, "in the midst of widespread labor strikes, *Regeneración*'s circulation increased to thirty thousand […] Despite full prisons, the Díaz regime failed to significantly compromise the security of the PLM clandestine infrastructure within Mexico" (90). Appealing to expressed principles of "national dignity" and "patriotism," the PLM proposed many reforms that would

resonate with the drafters of the 1917 Constitution and the architects of the institutionalized revolution, including: mass, "secular" education reform; restrictions on the Catholic Church; an 8-hour workday; a livable minimum wage (and the legal prohibition of bosses "paying for work in any other manner than in cash"); the abolition of de facto slavery under the Hacienda peonage system; mass redistribution of lands with special restitution for indigenous populations; restrictions on foreign speculation, etc. ("Programa del Partido Liberal").

For five years, the PLM operated under the aegis of this liberal reformist platform, even as the aspirations of its leading ideologues became more anarchistic and anti-statist in principle: "In 1908 the PLM committed itself firmly, but secretly, to anarchism […] For tactical reasons, however, Ricardo believed the PLM should not publicly announce its new political stance. Behind the liberal banner, he believed he could reach a large audience that otherwise might reject anarchism" (MacLachlan, 6-7). This commitment to outward ideological moderation wouldn't last long. For many, with the eventual overthrow of Díaz in 1911 and the succession of Francisco I. Madero, this platform made the PLM's differences with the *maderistas* more or less indistinguishable. Even among the original members of the Junta, only Ricardo, Enrique, and Librado Rivera truly committed to an anarchist worldview, resulting in splits within the PLM that would leave those who remained to focus more explicitly on an anarchist political project, forging more robust connections with American anarchists like Emma Goldman, William C. Owen, and Voltairine de Cleyre, and European anarchists like Florencio Bazora, Jaime Vidal, and Alfred Sanftleben. Many PLM members, including Ricardo's older brother Jesús, would eventually defect when Ricardo threw down the gauntlet against Madero, whom he declared a traitor to the revolution, "a millionaire who has seen his vast fortune grow through the

sweat and tears of the peons on his haciendas" ("Manifiesto a todos los trabajadores del mundo").

In response to criticisms from Mexico and from leftist factions in the U.S. and Europe, the PLM published in *Regeneración* two successive anarchist manifestos in 1911. In the "Manifesto to the Workers of the World," published on April 3, 1911, the Junta wrote that the "formidable struggle of the two social classes in Mexico is the first act in the great universal cataclysm which very soon will break upon the scene all over the planet, and whose final act will be the triumph of the magnanimous formula of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity which the bourgeois political revolutions have not been able to translate into physical reality, because these revolutions have not dared to break to pieces the dorsal spine of tyranny: capitalism and authoritarianism" (*Dreams of Freedom*, 135). Then in the "Manifesto of the Organizing Junta of the Mexican Liberal Party," published on September 23, 1911, the Junta directly addressed the fighting men and women in Mexico: "Abolishing this principle [of private property] means the annihilation of all political, economic, social, religious, and moral institutions that comprise the ambient within which free initiative and free association of human beings are smothered […] Without the principle of private property there would be no reason for government, which is necessary solely for the purpose of keeping the disinherited within bounds in their quarrels or in their rebellions against those who hold the social wealth" (*Dreams of Freedom*, 138). Without ever saying the word "anarquísmo," the Junta asserted a program of direct action and a declaration for the abolition of the principle of private property, which would, as they saw it, eliminate the need for the State. The thundering refrain of "Reform, Liberty, Justice," had now morphed into the anarcho-communist motto: "Land and Liberty!" This new motto, which would be adopted by the Zapatistas during the revolution, marked the PLM's official rejection of state-

reformism and, instead, argued for a total social revolution—an economic, cultural, and political overhaul of the organization of social life. "Since, in México, land was the basic form of wealth, it must be distributed equally and immediately," as Juan Gomez-Quiñones notes; "that should be the first objective" (45). But the question of land contained a deeper significance in the PLM's vision of social revolution. Based on an admittedly idealized notion of indigenous communality, the redistribution of land signified an effort to revivify a more mutualistic form of living that, in the PLM's eyes, predated the perversion of private property and the institution of European models of statehood. As Shawn England writes,

> *Magonismo* drew its influence in part from agrarian indigenous Mexican cultural values, and for this reason it reflected these values and flourished in the rich cultural soil of agrarian indigenous Mexico. And "Land and liberty" (*tierra y libertad*) were the basic principles for which hundreds of thousands of Mexican people gave their lives during the revolution, and *magonismo* was the revolutionary philosophy that best articulated these goals. It was a unique synthesis of European anarchist thought (with a heavy emphasis on Kropotkin) and an idealized—or imagined—conceptualization of indigenous cultural patterns characteristic of agrarian Mexico (244) […] The continued existence of communal lands in Mexico, even after decades of erosion by Porfirian modernization schemes, appeared to vindicate the anarchist faith in the viability of mutualism and communalism (253).

Taking at face value Magón's idealization of non- or less hierarchical social arrangements of indigenous communality on shared land is problematic.[5] At the very least, though, the fact that

[5] There is, embedded within idealized assessments of the nature of indigenous communality in Mexico, a version of what Roger Bartra has called "tropical kitsch": "This longing for an original savage Eden has caused many to spill tears over what I call tropical kitsch. Milan Kundera wrote: 'Kitsch causes two tears to flow in rapid succession. The first tear says: how nice to see children running on the grass! The second tear says: how nice to be moved, together with all mankind, by children running on the grass! It is the second tear that makes kitsch kitsch.' The specialist in mythical savages could paraphrase this: 'How lovely to see Indians fighting in the tropical jungle! The second tear, which falls from the eyes of progressives in the United States and Europe, tends to be the best substance around for embalming artificial Indians and savages'" ("Tropical Kitsch," 28).

the development of *magonismo*'s political ideology was inextricably tied to the "continued existence of communal lands in Mexico," and to an aspirational conceptualization of social life made possible within such arrangements of communally held land, affirms the unique and uneven development of the *magonista* strain of anarchist politics, which was never a one-to-one effort to implement some fully formed ideological system imported from Europe, but a movement that became what it was in conversation with local contexts, social traditions germane to Mexico, European texts and ideas and the transnational political infrastructure that brought them to Mexico, and more.

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Historians and critics have made much ado about the increased "radicalization" of the PLM's revolutionary ideology. But such assessments, for all their variation, are frequently founded upon two basic premises: (1) that the increasingly radicalized project of *magonismo* was an objective political failure; and (2) that the critique of this radicalization should primarily take place at the level of political philosophy, which will then provide an interpretive frame to explain *magonismo*'s tactical failings. The latter is more of a *de facto* (less of an explicitly stated) premise that emerges in the many critiques of *magonismo* itself. The principal theoretical limitation of *magonismo*'s developed anarchism, Gomez-Quiñones writes, "is its marked primitive philosophical negation: revolution is what society is not. Accordingly, its principal tactical deficiency is its lack of, in fact its disdain for transitional methods" (8). The problem with *magonismo*'s anarchism, Franz Hinkelammert echoes, is its impossible plan (or, rather, its lack thereof) for transitioning from the dismal reality of present subjugation to a liberated future:

> This future is one in which social relations exist without any institutionalization or authority, yet the anarchist has no sense of the mediating forces needed for the transition to said future; between the present and the futures lies an abyss without any institutional bridge. The absolute polarization between oppressors and oppressed is reproduced in this absolute polarization between present and future. The result is a total lack of any idea of how to make the future a reality. Anarchist thought has no concept of praxis (126).

After declaring their more outwardly anarchist opposition to the *maderista* liberals, the PLM's remaining core members aimed to deconstruct the authoritative and hierarchical will of the world, which was organized around the oppressive principle of private property. Yet this primary ontological opposition, according to critics like Hinkelammert and Gomez-Quiñones, lacked a vision of the mediating structures needed to get from Point A to Point B. Likewise, Adolfo Gilly's strong Marxist analysis of the Mexican Revolution ultimately ends up at a resigned acknowledgment that failure was written into the absence of a revolutionary program for controlling the central mediating structure of the state: "the decisive factor, in the end, was not revolutionary land seizures, but control of the centralized state power" (73). As opposed to, say, Bolshevik communism's utilization of the socialist state apparatus as an interim necessity, anarchism's deathly opposition to institutionalization, combined with its fetish for the "immediacy" of direct action, blinded it to the institutional media without which there could be no hope of moving from here to there, from now to eventually. As Bruno Bosteels writes,

> In terms of temporal and historical character, only socialism is here seen as capable of in spirit a long-term agenda for the class struggle, whereas anarchism is said to be limited to punctual flares of insurrectionary violence; in terms of spatial or geographical distribution, socialism would have a national, if not also international, orientation, whereas the anarchic struggle remains local and site-specific; finally, at the level of organizational forms of appearance, anarchism is accused of favoring spontaneous uprisings and attacks as part of its ideology of direct action, to which only a socialist class-consciousness, aimed at state power,

> is said to lend the necessary organization of an enduring political movement ("Mexican Commune," 6)

In sum, anarchists hope for a wormhole to utopia, but what they need are bridges, mediating structures through which one world can transition into another.

Indeed, these were critiques that defined the PLM's posture during the revolutionary period itself. In the *International Socialist Review*, the great American Socialist Eugene V. Debs wrote of the revolution occurring south of the border, "If the land can be taken from the rich in this insurrection, so can also the mills, factories, mines, railroads and the machinery of production, and the question is, what would the masses in their present ignorant and unorganized state do with them after having obtained them? It would simply add calamity to their calamities, granting that this impossible feat were capable of achievement" (qtd. in Castañeda, 126). Ricardo and the Junta disagreed. Regardless of how noble or "well meaning" they were, the state and industrialists could not be entrusted with the task of transitioning Mexico to a more just and egalitarian society. "Indeed," Christopher Castañeda writes, "the anarchist sensibility called for disarming the current power structure, and in this context, Debs seemed to be aligning himself with those who believed the masses were incapable of living without organization and direction imposed upon them" (126).

This "anarchist sensibility," I argue, was neither unfounded nor purely idealistic; it was a sensibility grounded in the material, the tangible. As they saw it, those who participated in the project of *magonismo* had seen, and helped create, the "proof" that a social revolution was possible, that these alternative ways of living were sustainable. Because the fundament of *magonismo*'s political project was characterized by a deep devotion to the building and maintenance of mediating structures that would help actuate the dreamed-of utopia, but these

were the media through which the movement itself lived and circulated; the media of communication, congregation, and cooperation, of being and becoming; the media through which alternative social arrangements could coagulate into routinized ways of living. It was characterized, moreover, by the reshaping or outright destruction of existing mediating structures in order to turn back to a form of social life that had already existed, the PLM argued, and from which modern man had been alienated. "In Mexico," Ricardo reminded his readers, "we have had and we still have hundreds of proofs that humanity does not need a ruler or a government except when economic inequality exists" ("Sin Jefes"). A more expansive, atmospheric understanding of media is essential for grasping just what the project of *magonismo* was and how it worked. It is vital for understanding how—especially through the collective process of making, disseminating, and engaging with the party organ, *Regeneración*—*magonismo* aimed to create media-worlds that not only enabled people to resist the hegemony of authority and private property, but that also embodied an alternative way of living. The anthropotechnical creation and embodiment of these "resistance cultures" *was* the very mediating force that others have seen lacking in *magonismo*'s political project.

Puntos Rojos

Práxedis Guerrero first met Ricardo Flores Magón in November of 1907, while the latter was languishing in the Los Angeles County jail. Over the course of their initial meetings, Guerrero made such an impression on Ricardo that he was made second secretary of the Junta and one of the chief editors of *Revolución* (*Regeneración*'s short-lived, 1907-08 replacement). Guerrero spent the last few years of his short life serving the cause of the PLM until he was

REGENERACION

Puntos Rojos.

Los estudiantes argentinos, reunidos en turba de fanáticos, destruyendo las bibliotecas y periódicos obreros de Buenos Aires, han erigido el mejor monumento á la enseñanza burguesa, cultivadora de las pasiones del bruto.

Pronto desaparecerá Belen. La tiranía se civiliza; está haciendo casa nueva á la barbarie.

Agosto dió la cifra más alta de la emigración de trabajadores mexicanos á los Estados Unidos.

Nuestros patrioteros se alarman y desesperan de no poder evitar el éxodo de los proletarios; porque les disgusta quedarse sin esclavos y pensar que los extranjeros pensarán "que así somos todos los mexicanos"; andrajosos sucios y miserables.

Que haya miseria horrible en México, no importa; lo que si debe evitarse á toda costa es que se crea que en México no hay señores que han sabido hacer fortuna á costa agena y visten bien desnudando á los de abajo.

Alfonso, el asesino de Montjuich, le ha enviado á Porfirio Díaz, el carnicero de Rio Blanco, el Gran Collar de Carlos III que usó el difunto Eduardo VII. Según los neraldos de la Corte, el tal Collar es un tesoro de arte y de honores, traé la inscripción latina "Virtuti et meriti."

La Revolución, que también sabe premiar la virtud y el mérito, prepara otro collar para el Héroe de la Paz, hecho de materiales indígenas: un collar de ixtle.

Cuál sentará mejor al augusto cuello?

Dice Peña, el tiranuelo de la Argentina, que su frase "América para la Humanidad," no tiene ninguna significación agresiva para el gobierno de los Estados Unidos.

Fácil es creerlo. "América para la Humanidad," es tan solo una fraseciila efectista para tapar los masacres, las deportaciones y encarcelamientos humanitaristas de Buenos Aires.

Juan de los Ríos, un joven periodista chileno que se permitió la audacia de escribir en México, un artículo criticando á Taft, fué cogido á media noche por la policía y conducido fuera de la república (?).

Esto es un cumplimiento de reciprocidad y nada más. Cuando el célebre Magoon era gobernador de Cuba, encarceló en la Habana, al periodista obrero Saavedra, por haber escrito irrespetuosamente del Dictador Díaz.

Oh! fuerza del internacionalismo autoritario!

Para cuando se formalice, exclaman los que tienen el delirio del fracaso; para cuando sea una cosa segura, haré esto y aquello. Y se quedan tan frescos haciendo el papel de críticos de los que luchan, esperando que los trabajos por alcanzar la libertad se formalicen, de tal manera que ya no tengan ellos otra cosa que hacer que abrir la boca para saborearla.

Los burgueses franceses, de las minas de El Boleo, en la Baja California, explotan y azotan á los obreros mexicanos á su antojo, y estos por falta de elementos con que pagar su pasaje para salir de la península, estan viendo morir de hambre á sus hijos.

Pero es fuerza amar la paz; el nuevo Saturno de los patrioteros.

Son esfuerzos inútiles. Son sacrificios estériles. No os movais. Quietos. Eso es; así estais bien, bípados amaestrados; coméos vuestras amarguras con el pan de la mansedumbre, que al fin no moriréis de hartos.

Se anuncia el próximo reconocimiento del gobierno de Juan Estrada, por el de la Casa Blanca, como si hubiera menester de las aparatosas declaraciones diplomáticas para saber que Estrada es el instrumento de la política de Taft, en Centro América.

Ahora es Bonilla el que hace la guerra á Dávila, en Honduras.

Las multitudes siguen con más facilidad á los ambiciones que las sacrifican, que á los principios que las emancipan.

Hace un año que una descendiente de Hidalgo, murió de hambre en México; donde hay tal sentimentalismo patriótico que se permite al gobierno gastar millones en hacer dignamente la fiesta del Centenario y excluir de los parajes aristocráticos á todos los que se muestran rehacios á gastar lujos.

Hoy el gobierno de Michoacan, acaba de pensionar á Soledad Rábago Hidalgo y Costilla, con la suma de .....3 centavos diarios.

De la Huasteca Potosina y de Yucatán, se siguen arrancando numerosas personas acusadas de sospechosas de participación ó simpatía con la Revolución; los cuarteles y las cárceles se estan llenando literalmente.

La tiranía es el mejor propagandista de la rebelión; facilita el campo á los organizadores. Adelante!

Las tropas de guarnición en la frontera, compuestas de los elementos más leales al tirano, merman con-

Figure 2.1. "Puntos Rojos" column by Práxedis Guerrero, from *Regeneración*, 17 September 1910.

killed in 1910 in Janos, Chihuahua, leaving his post as revolutionary author and editor to join the fighting in Mexico that was just getting underway. Guerrero's poetic and erudite writings were featured and reprinted in a number of radical newspapers, including issues of *Revolución*, *Regeneración* (once it began its "third life" in L.A. in 1910), and in the paper *Punto Rojo* (*Red Dot*), which Guerrero himself established in El Paso, Texas. Guerrero selected El Paso as a strategic communicative point where existing networks of moving trains, bodies, postal routes, and telegraph lines could carry *Punto Rojo* north, south, east and west while keeping him plugged into the news from the other side of the border. As Ward Albro describes, "The first issues were small four-page, 'digest' size papers printed on a small press in the home of William Lowe, an El Paso socialist" (54).

Punto Rojo was a considerably small operation with limited resources and a short

production life, but it was enough to draw the ire of the Mexican government. The Mexican consul in El Paso forwarded issues to the Foreign Relations office in Mexico City along with memos that the publication was being "sold profusely" and had every intention to "increase agitation" and, thus, must be pressured into submission. As Armando Bartra writes, "In the middle of April 1910, *Punto Rojo* was accused of 'criminal libel' and Práxedis was hounded by the Secret Service under the charge of 'violating the neutrality laws'; the Díaz government, on its end, offered $10,000 for his capture" ("Prólogo," 48). Feeling the pressure in El Paso, Guerrero left the paper in the hands of Lowe and a small retinue of comrades and fled.

AÑO I.—1ª ÉPOCA. MÉXICO, OCTUBRE 23 DE 1900. TOMO I.—NÚM. 11

Regeneración.

PERIÓDICO JURÍDICO INDEPENDIENTE.

La libertad de imprenta no tiene más límites, que el respeto á la vida privada, á la moral y á la paz pública. (Art. 7.º de la Constitución.)

Cuando la República pronuncie su voz soberana, será forzoso someterse ó delinquir.

GAMBETTA.

DIRECTORES:

Lic. Jesús Flores Magón.—Lic. Antonio Horcasitas.—Ricardo Flores Magón.

Oficinas: Centro Mercantil, 3er. piso, núm. 20. (México, D. F.) Teléfono 264.

Administrador: Ricardo Flores Magón.

CONDICIONES.

"REGENERACIÓN" sale los días 7, 15, 23 y último de cada mes, y los precios de subscripción son:

Para la Capital, trimestre adelantado..... $ 1.50
Para los Estados, id. id. 2.00
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Números sueltos 15 cvs. Números atrasados 25 cvs.

Se entenderá aceptada la subscripción, en caso de que no se devuelva el periódico y se girará por el importe de un trimestre.

A los agentes se les abonará el 15 por ciento.

No se devuelven originales.

Para los anuncios en el periódico, pídanse tarifas.

El asunto de "El Hijo del Ahuizote"

No pocos obstáculos hemos vencido, ni pocos esfuerzos gastado, para procurarnos datos de este negocio que, quizá por lo monstruoso, se guarda con el mayor sigilo; pero el deseo de complacer á nuestros lectores y el de procurar que la justicia venza, cuando la intriga y el apasionamiento la conducen á la bancarrota, nos han animado para salvar esos obstáculos y gastar esos esfuerzos.

Pocas observaciones haremos, porque al escribir estas líneas, nos falta espacio. En nuestro próximo número daremos á conocer otros detalles.

OBSERVACIONES AL PROCESO.

I.

Caía una denuncia contra los redactores de «El Hijo del Ahuizote» sobre el bufete del Juez Pérez de León, y éste, sin la comprobación previa del delito, ordenaba la clausura de la imprenta y el aseguramiento de los útiles tipográficos y litográficos. Si el Juez estima que esa imprenta y esos útiles constituían el instrumento del delito, tenía que comprobar previamente, á riesgo de tachársele de ligero si no lo verificaba, que existía un delito, y que á ese delito servía de instrumento tal ó cual cosa. El Juez pasaba sobre esa comprobación. En la denuncia de Arturo Paz, por ejemplo, desde luego, sin llamar á los procesados para que declarasen, sin más elementos que la acusación y la inofensiva caricatura denunciada como injuriosa, el Juez mandó clausurar la imprenta.

El procedimiento, aunque arbitrario, satisfacía compromisos amistosos.

II.

En cada clausura de imprenta, en cada aseguramiento de útiles tipográficos y litográficos, el Juez nombraba un depositario. No sabemos, ni el Juez lo sabe, en qué disposición legal se funda ese nombramiento de depositario. La ley penal no lo autoriza para ello, y cuando la ley no autoriza á hacer algo, el Juez debe abstenerse de efectuar actos faltos de fundamento legal.

Pero es muy probable que el Juez haya aplicado al caso la ley civil. Tenía la obsesión de que lo que efectuaba era un *embargo*. Así lo repite en autos muchas veces. Y guiado por esa obsesión, nombraba un depositario de los bienes *embargados*. Pero en este caso, el Juez no ha cumplido ni

Figure 2.2. Original format of *Regeneración*'s *primera época*. Front page, 23 October 1900.

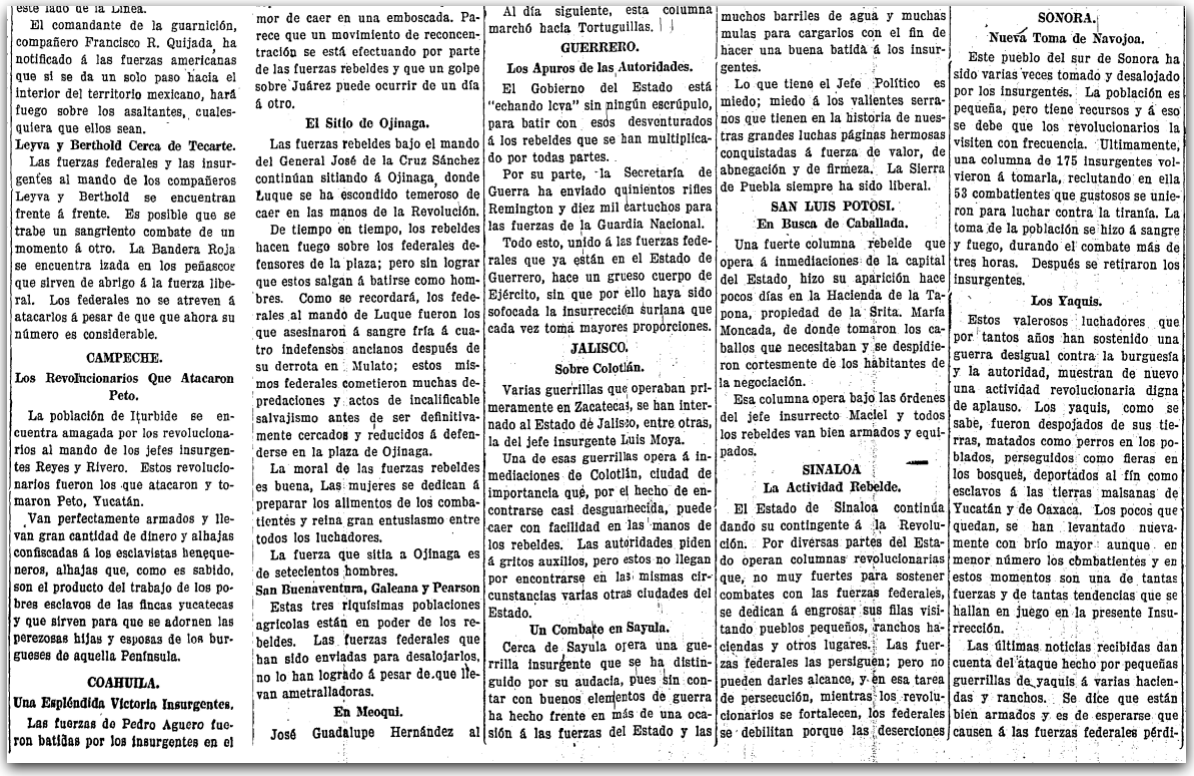
Virtually no copies of *Punto Rojo* exist today, but the ephemeral publication did have a significant effect on *Regeneración* back in Los Angeles. In the beginning of its fourth stage ("cuarta época"), *Regeneración* included a "Puntos Rojos" column authored by Guerrero, in which he compiled rapid-fire descriptions of struggles in Mexico, aphorisms, stories of valor, and other relevant pieces of news (Figure 2.1). Moreover, after Guerrero's death and the

defeat of armed Liberal forces in Chihuahua in 1911, the influence of his *puntos rojos* lingered with *Regeneración* recasting its entire front-page format. "From then on, the first page was regularly dedicated to reporting brief news of the revolution's advance from all states of the Mexican Republic. The idea was to produce an image that Práxedis might have called *puntos rojos*—multiple flash points of revolution through the entire nation. Internal pages then supplemented the image of a massive, spontaneous revolt—which was, in fact, really occurring—and attempted to provide it all with ideological direction and coherence by way of thematic pieces" (Lomnitz, *The Return*, 344). The Junta in Los Angeles remediated the format of Guerrero's column and antecedent publication, believing that its form effectuated an anthropotechnical strategy consistent with its own. Short bursts of information covering the front page of every issue reported on revolutionary action in locales across Mexico. This editorial approach was well suited to the formatting changes previously made to *Regeneración* in its second and third épocas, which converted the early form of the "Periódico Jurídico Independiente"—characterized by a more formal, juridical layout with 16 smaller-sized pages containing two large columns of text—into the "Periódico Independiente de Combate"—composed of four large pages containing much more text (six columns per page) in smaller print (Figure 2.2). As Liliana Paola Avila Meléndez writes, "*Es probable que el formato grande fuera más adecuado para el público al que se dirigían, en la época anterior era más entendido en cuestiones legales, ahora la denuncia era para los trabajadores en general y como no todos sabían leer, acostumbraban a reunirse en grupo para escuchar al que sí sabia*" (The large format was likely more suitable for its target audience, in the previous era it was associated with legal matters, but now the report/complaint was meant for workers in general and since not all of them could read, they used to meet in groups to listen to the one who did know) (25). Within this

more populist format, then, the *puntos rojos* created an intentionally atmospheric effect, a kind of air conditioning that made local struggles collectively visible to one another, imbuing them with a mutually reflective, ideological consistency and resonance, amplifying readers' sense of the movement's (real and imagined) *presence* in the swarm effect all around them.

It is possible to see how this format played into the PLM's very conception of their own position as ideologues of the revolution (Figure 2.3). The Junta (Ricardo especially) was ruthlessly criticized at the time for staying in Los Angeles to print *Regeneración* instead of joining in the fighting across the border. But Ricardo's faith in *Regeneración*'s role as a medium, not only for communicating revolutionary ideology, but enacting revolutionary movement, far outweighed everything else. In the PLM's adoption of Práxedis Guerrero's concept of *puntos rojos*, the editors of *Regeneración* attempted to create, in the very layout of the newspaper, a

Figure 2.3. Front page from *Regeneración*, 25 March 1911.



este lado de la Línea.

El comandante de la guarnición, compañero Francisco R. Quijada, ha notificado á las fuerzas americanas que si se da un solo paso hacia el interior del territorio mexicano, hará fuego sobre los asaltantes, cualesquiera que ellos sean.

Leyva y Berthold Cerca de Tecarte.

Las fuerzas federales y las insurgentes al mando de los compañeros Leyva y Berthold se encuentran frente á frente. Es posible que se trabe un sangriento combate de un momento á otro. La Bandera Roja se encuentra izada en los peñascos que sirven de abrigo á la fuerza liberal. Los federales no se atreven á atacarlos á pesar de que que ahora su número es considerable.

CAMPECHE.

Los Revolucionarios Que Atacaron Peto.

La población de Iturbide se encuentra amagada por los revolucionarios al mando de los jefes insurgentes Reyes y Rivero. Estos revolucionarios fueron los que atacaron y tomaron Peto, Yucatán.

Van perfectamente armados y llevan gran cantidad de dinero y alhajas confiscadas á los esclavistas henequeneros, alhajas que, como es sabido, son el producto del trabajo de los pobres esclavos de las fincas yucatecas y que sirven para que se adornen las perezosas hijas y esposas de los burgueses de aquella Península.

COAHUILA.

Una Espléndida Victoria Insurgentes.

Las fuerzas de Pedro Aguero fueron batidas por los insurgentes en el mor de caer en una emboscada. Parece que un movimiento de reconcentración se está efectuando por parte de las fuerzas rebeldes y que un golpe sobre Juárez puede ocurrir de un día á otro.

El Sitio de Ojinaga.

Las fuerzas rebeldes bajo el mando del General José de la Cruz Sánchez continúan sitiando á Ojinaga, donde Luque se ha escondido temeroso de caer en las manos de la Revolución.

De tiempo en tiempo, los rebeldes hacen fuego sobre los federales defensores de la plaza; pero sin lograr que estos salgan á batirse como hombres. Como se recordará, los federales al mando de Luque fueron los que asesinaron á sangre fría á cuatro indefensos ancianos después de su derrota en Mulato; estos mismos federales cometieron muchas depredaciones y actos de incalificable salvajismo antes de ser definitivamente cercados y reducidos á defenderse en la plaza de Ojinaga.

La moral de las fuerzas rebeldes es buena, Las mujeres se dedican á preparar los alimentos de los combatientes y reina gran entusiasmo entre todos los luchadores.

La fuerza que sitia a Ojinaga es de setecientos hombres.

San Buenaventura, Galeana y Pearson

Estas tres riquísimas poblaciones agrícolas están en poder de los rebeldes. Las fuerzas federales que han sido enviadas para desalojarlos, no lo han logrado á pesar de que llevan ametralladoras.

En Meoqui.

José Guadalupe Hernández al

Al día siguiente, esta columna marchó hacia Tortuguillas.

GUERRERO.

Los Apuros de las Autoridades.

El Gobierno del Estado está "echando leva" sin ningún escrúpulo, para batir con esos desventurados á los rebeldes que se han multiplicado por todas partes.

Por su parte, la Secretaría de Guerra ha enviado quinientos rifles Remington y diez mil cartuchos para las fuerzas de la Guardia Nacional.

Todo esto, unido á las fuerzas federales que ya están en el Estado de Guerrero, hace un grueso cuerpo de Ejército, sin que por ello haya sido sofocada la insurrección surlana que cada vez toma mayores proporciones.

JALISCO.

Sobre Colotlán.

Varias guerrillas que operaban primeramente en Zacatecas, se han internado al Estado de Jalisco, entre otras, la del jefe insurgente Luis Moya.

Una de esas guerrillas opera á inmediaciones de Colotlán, ciudad de importancia que, por el hecho de encontrarse casi desguarnecida, puede caer con facilidad en las manos de los rebeldes. Las autoridades piden á gritos auxilios, pero estos no llegan por encontrarse en las mismas circunstancias varias otras ciudades del Estado.

Un Combate en Sayula.

Cerca de Sayula opera una guerrilla insurgente que se ha distinguido por su audacia, pues sin contar con buenos elementos de guerra ha hecho frente en más de una ocasión á las fuerzas del Estado y las muchos barriles de agua y muchas mulas para cargarlos con el fin de hacer una buena batida á los insurgentes.

Lo que tiene el Jefe Político es miedo; miedo á los valientes serranos que tienen en la historia de nuestras grandes luchas páginas hermosas conquistadas á fuerza de valor, de abnegación y de firmeza. La Sierra de Puebla siempre ha sido liberal.

SAN LUIS POTOSI.

En Busca de Caballada.

Una fuerte columna rebelde que opera á inmediaciones de la capital del Estado, hizo su aparición hace pocos días en la Hacienda de la Tapona, propiedad de la Srita. María Moncada, de donde tomaron los caballos que necesitaban y se despidieron cortesmente de los habitantes de la negociación.

Esa columna opera bajo las órdenes del jefe insurrecto Maciel y todos los rebeldes van bien armados y equipados.

SINALOA

La Actividad Rebelde.

El Estado de Sinaloa continúa dando su contingente á la Revolución. Por diversas partes del Estado operan columnas revolucionarias que, no muy fuertes para sostener combates con las fuerzas federales, se dedican á engrosar sus filas visitando pueblos pequeños, ranchos haciendas y otros lugares. Las fuerzas federales las persiguen; pero no pueden darles alcance, y en esa tarea de persecución, mientras los revolucionarios se fortalecen, los federales se debilitan porque las deserciones

SONORA.

Nueva Toma de Navojoa.

Este pueblo del sur de Sonora ha sido varias veces tomado y desalojado por los insurgentes. La población es pequeña, pero tiene recursos y á eso se debe que los revolucionarios la visiten con frecuencia. Ultimamente, una columna de 175 insurgentes volvieron á tomarla, reclutando en ella 53 combatientes que gustosos se unieron para luchar contra la tiranía. La toma de la población se hizo á sangre y fuego, durando el combate más de tres horas. Después se retiraron los insurgentes.

Los Yaquis.

Estos valerosos luchadores que por tantos años han sostenido una guerra desigual contra la burguesía y la autoridad, muestran de nuevo una actividad revolucionaria digna de aplauso. Los yaquis, como se sabe, fueron despojados de sus tierras, matados como perros en los poblados, perseguidos como fieras en los bosques, deportados al fin como esclavos á las tierras malsanas de Yucatán y de Oaxaca. Los pocos que quedan, se han levantado nuevamente con brío mayor aunque en menor número los combatientes y en estos momentos son una de tantas fuerzas y de tantas tendencias que se hallan en juego en la presente Insurrección.

Las últimas noticias recibidas dan cuenta del ataque hecho por pequeñas guerrillas de yaquis á varias haciendas y ranchos. Se dice que están bien armados y es de esperarse que causen á las fuerzas federales pérdi-

cognitive map and a printed sense of belonging for rebels in Mexico and Chicanos along the border. Such a map was intended to rewire readers' spatiotemporal consciousness while subverting the communicative restrictions on the media ecology under Porfirio Díaz, transmitting to (potential) rebels in disparate parts of Mexico and the U.S. an image of a swarm and a message that fighting factions were not alone. In the sections of this chapter, I am attempting to recreate such an image, punctuated by *puntos rojos*, the purpose of which is to re-spatialize the history of the PLM's political development, which was by no means a straightforward result of key political subjects' instrumental use of media objects for their own political ends, but, rather, an uneven collection of dispersed contexts, acts, and self-constituting negotiations with changing media ecologies.

Resistance Cultures

> When an 'entire society,' i.e., almost everything around you, seemingly to the smallest detail, reflects assumptions contrary to your most deeply held convictions about what the world is and can be—namely, the assumption that hierarchy, domination, violence, and injustice are the natural, necessary, and permanent characters of existence—then merely to persevere in imagining and acting on the assumption of the possibility of another kind of world is in itself a monumental and continual effort of resistance – Jesse Cohn, *Underground Passages* (8).

"Resistance culture" can mean many things. The term *culture* in this context, depending on how narrowly one defines it, can signify products and practices within the extra-normal realms of "art and learning" (R. Williams, *Keywords*, 91); that is, some special form of expression beyond the habitual processes of everyday life (art, literature, performance, etc.). Or, in the tradition of the Birmingham School, the emphasis can shift from the material expressions

of "high culture" to the signifying or symbolic systems of popular culture and people's complex efforts to make meaning within such systems (Hall, *Representations*). Without imposing a strict either-or binary, though, Raymond Williams' definition of culture in the more flexible terms of "customary difference" is more enduring and analytically useful. Custom, as Francis Mulhern writes, "or anything understood as custom, takes precedence over other modes of social validation, and its currency is difference. Thus, culture is what differentiates a collectivity in the mode of self-validating direct inheritance—whose value, in return, is precisely that it binds the collectivity in difference" (39). Culture, in this sense, is that to which one "collectivity" is accustomed that others are not: "the idea of a fundamental social process which shapes specific and distinct 'ways of life' is the effective origin of the comparative social sense of 'culture' and its now necessary plural 'cultures'" (R. Williams, *Marxism & Literature*, 17).

Likewise, as with terms like "the left," "leftist," or "radical," the modifying term *resistance* is not nearly as clear as it may initially seem. What criteria—for intent or effect—qualify an action, practice, product, or "social process" as resistant (or disqualify it as a true form of resistance)? What is being resisted—and does that matter? Does resistance in the construction "resistance culture" imply a certain "minor" or "alternative" position in relation to a hegemonized status quo? Or, put another way, does resistance specify the "pure" form of a certain recalcitrant, oppositional relation to power as such, or does it depend on a substantive political and ideological division that qualifies certain actions by certain people as resistance and others, performed in perhaps the same manner but for different ends, as reactionary? This reflexively opens back onto the problem of defining the left by terms as nebulous and seemingly unclaimable as "resistance" in the first place. The left, it goes without saying, has never had dibs on resistance, in the sense that an oppositional pose and disobedient action are not sufficient as

self-defining characteristics of the left and only the left. Resistance, understood in such terms, is not a "customary difference" that sets the politically and ideologically left identity apart from others.

But anarchism occupies a soft space where "resistance" and "culture" depend on each other in a uniquely symbiotic, mutually affirming way. Other political collectivities may have, within their systems of customary difference, social processes, practices, and productions embodying targeted efforts to resist; that is, aspects of their culture that are called upon specifically for the purpose of mounting a resistance to encroaching forces. For anarchism, though, resistance culture is not so much an aspect or branch of an existing system of customary difference; it *is* the system. As Jesse Cohn writes, "the anarchist conception of 'resistance' is […] something different and broader, aimed not only at one particular oppressive regime but at all forms of domination and hierarchy, whether these are constituted through the formal institutions of violence and property or the infinity of informal power relations through which we form our sense of ourselves and our world" (7). There is no other anarchist culture than that of resistance. Resistance is, and must be, the primary way of understanding and practicing one's "role" within a society that is fundamentally based on the principles of inequality and authority.

Life as an anarchist is a constant practice of resistance. And anarchist resistance culture is not only a culture that resists, but a culture that, in its very creation and continuation, is itself a form of resistance. At the time of Ricardo Flores Magón and the PLM's most fervent political efforts, their drift towards anarchism embodied a political movement that outright denied the legitimacy of the very defining features of the twentieth-century landscape: nation-states and the bourgeois facade of liberal democratic governance; organized religion; the hierarchical organization of production and consumption; white supremacy, patriarchal customs, and even

gender norms (though Ricardo and others were certainly not always able or willing to escape their own residual prejudices) [6]. In a 2012 missive in *Regeneración*, Ricardo writes, "I tell you the rich scream to high heaven when they hear the redemptive cry: 'Death to Authority!' They have good reason, because if authority disappears the privileges of capital will fall into the same grave, never to rise again. Authority is necessary to social inequality; it guarantees that the rich will live in idleness while it condemns the poor to hard labor and abject misery" ("¡Muera la Autoridad!").

To say that the PLM and other anarchists embodied a movement is not a euphemism. For denial of the legitimacy of hierarchy was not simply an argument made, an opinion voiced, but a resistance lived. Within the anarchist fusion chamber, where theory and practice collide, the creation of a resistance culture must be understood as a co-constitutive, anthropotechnical process of self-fashioning and (or through) world-making—an effort to engender a prosthetic environment in which one can finally be and become oneself—a micro-climate of customary difference without which the very thing itself, the anarchist life form, could not sustain itself. The defining characteristics of this climate of customary difference were as varied as the term "culture" itself, involving: the production of aesthetic and educational material while also promoting alternative reading and communication practices consummate with an anarcho-communist view of the world; the enactment of communal styles of living and working; the forging of social networks (through Liberal Clubs, newspapers, workers' collectives) in rural areas and cities connected primarily by the draw of political solidarity; the reliance on intimate

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[6] See, for instance: Jason Oliver Chang, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico, 1880-1940*; Benjamin Abbot, "'That Monster Cannot Be a Woman:' Queerness and Treason in the Partido Liberal Mexicano"

circles of friendship, loyalty, and devotion to the cause, which was also coupled with an often destructive fervor for calling out and ousting "traitors"; etc.

In the imperial age of industrial capitalism, anarchists like Ricardo Flores Magón lived within overlaying spheres that demanded subjective complicity by dominating the most basic staples of survival. Food, water, shelter, clothing, medicine—all required multiple and intersecting forms of submission to hierarchical systems of work, government, class, gender, race, ethnicity, etc. To live was to be bound by the necessities of the surrounding world, to participate in systems whose principles were fundamentally in opposition to the anarchist life. But it was still a necessity. Similar to what some feminist theorists have traditionally referred to as "double duty" or the "second shift" (Donovan), anarchists like Ricardo exhausted themselves on multiple fronts, performing work that contradicted their most deeply held beliefs so as to sustain the work they were doing in the name of those beliefs. As Enrique Flores Magón noted, writing soon after his brother's death, "I've had a constant pain in my heart for about a month now […] Disappointments, disillusions, miseries, great anxieties, and deep sorrows in my twin struggle for the cause and for the loaf of bread—excessive labors, for the master by day, for the slave by night" (qtd. in Lomnitz, *The Return*, xxxiv).

The anarchist's efforts "to simply continue to exist in [this] radically false world" depend on forms of cultural creation that air-condition his more immediate micro-climates in order to sustain a life lived in perpetual exile, like a space suit sustaining a body on Mars. For Ricardo Flores Magón and the organizing Junta of the PLM, however, this exile was more multifaceted. Claudio Lomnitz has explored in remarkable detail, for example, the PLM's transition from a student group founded on the legal defense of liberalism in Mexico to a combative organization in physical exile in the U.S. promoting an anarchist worldview. This slide towards anarchism

exiled the PLM's revolutionary vision not only from more popular Liberal fronts involved in the Mexican Revolution, but from the political mainstream of the Left in the United States as well. Moreover, as Ricardo himself noted, and as Chicano historians and activists later in the 20th century would cite frequently, to be a Mexican in the U.S. was its own form of ethnic, racial, and linguistic exile: "We are revolutionaries and our ideals are very advanced, but we are Mexicans. That is our flaw. Our skin is not white, and not everyone is able to understand that underneath a dark skin there are nerves, there is a heart, and there are brains" (*Obras Completas*, 499). Not only as an anarchist attempting to create and embody a communally focused life operating beyond the bounds of authoritative hierarchies at a time of national revolution, but also as a Mexican living in the United States, Ricardo's belief system and his daily subsistence relied on cultivating a resistance culture that could air condition and fortify his revolutionary efforts while protecting him and his comrades from being stamped out by the many institutional forces to which they appeared as dangerous outsiders.

Of course, the growth and development of any political project, the will to rewire hearts and minds for the propagation of such projects, also requires varied and creative techno-spherological forms of air conditioning. In each instance, there are always complex and specific atmospheric conditions that such projects must work within, work to change, and work to harness for their own aims. At the same time, though, the agents behind each project rely on, and help create, cultural immune systems that can sustain the effort. Human existence, as Sloterdijk writes, "never simply adjusts itself to fit into what, using a modern and overly smooth term, we call its 'environment': rather, this existence creates its own surrounding space through which and in which it appears. *Every social form has its own world house, a bell jar of purpose, under which human beings first of all gather, understand themselves, defend themselves, grow and*

dissolve boundaries" (*Spheres, I*, 57) (emphases added). These "world houses" constitute immune systems, interior spheres, within which actors can "advance their individuations" while reproducing and validating the generational processes of customary difference.

There are always multi-directional interactions within and between spheres—individual, tribal, ethnic, imperial, etc. This is why, following Sloterdijk, my approach evaluates the cultural, political, and communicative activity of historical subjects as forms and levels of *mediation* between said spheres. Under such an approach, what we're referring to here as resistance culture must be understood as the techno-spherological inheritance and creation of processes of customary difference that mediate between an individual and her so-called "environment." But spherological media are also, as already mentioned, the media of personhood itself, the technicity of the human, which is always, from "the start," a dual, technical being (a being-in-technics) working outwards. "The theory of spheres is a morphological tool that allows us to grasp the exodus of the human being, from the primitive symbiosis to world-historical action in empires and global systems, *as an almost coherent history of extraversion*. It reconstructs the phenomenon of advanced civilization as the novel of sphere transference from the intimate minimum […] to the imperial maximum" (Sloterdijk, *Spheres, I*, 67) (emphases added). The history of *magonismo*, as with any other political movement, is the history of an exodus, of an extraversion that, through complex and repeated processes of mediation, attempted to (successfully or unsuccessfully) move outward from the most intimate spheres of its operatives to restructure ever larger, more encompassing ones.

In some cases, as with the EZLN in Chiapas, the immunological function of resistance cultures may take precedence, developing and protectively insulating radical collectivities from encroaching mediatic forces while they are, at the same time, participating in and trying to shape

larger spheres—often out of necessity rather than choice. In other instances, as with the Communist Party's emphasis on cultural propaganda, the function of resistance cultures may be more imperial, concentrated, actively directed towards societal air conditioning and restructuring broader social, political, cultural, "ethnotechnic" spheres. Again, though, this is not an either-or matter; it is more a question of degree for processes that mediate between multiple spheres, in multiple directions. However, what sets anarchism and the PLM apart from these other political projects is the fact that all these spherological factors are knotted together in a single "history of extraversion," a history of mediation that is, itself, the political project of *magonismo*. The creation of the PLM's anarchist resistance culture was, on one end, an effort to build an immediate sphere in which lives lived in perpetual exile could sustain themselves and their worldview. To quote Jesse Cohn again,

> [the] main body of the cultural production to emerge from the anarchist movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries […] can best be understood as a response to [the] question ['how to live?']—not quite a 'solution' or an 'answer' so much as a way of living with the problem for as long as it lasts, a means of inhabiting history until it stops hurting. Anarchists practice culture as a means of mental and moral survival in a world from which they are fundamentally alienated" (14).

What Cohn emphasizes here is that the necessity driving anarchist cultural production at the time of the PLM was an immunological—that is, biopolitical—one.[7] Resistance cultures formed

[7] I approach the concept of "biopolitics," the forms of medial-immunological resistance to it, and its application to the political reality of modern Mexico in the vein Gareth Williams describes in *The Mexican Exception*. Building on the concept's articulation in the work of Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben, Williams writes, "Biopolitics is therefore the name for new mechanisms and calculations of power that emerged with the transition from the classical territorial—or police—state to the modern time of capital. If the police state is grounded in the unity of political and economic domination, biopolitics is the diffusion of technoscientific knowledge throughout the social sphere. In *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault defines biopolitics as the treatment of the population 'as a set of coexisting living beings with particular biological and pathological

protective spheres of social recognition and existential validation that made it easier for anarchists to "live with the problem" of the hierarchical and oppressive social order that dominated the world around them. This has also been the object of critique from historians like Gomez-Quiñones who see this immediate, immunological relationship to resistance culture as part of anarchism's attitude and style of "uncompromising individualism and permanent opposition to the way things are […] anarchists affirm in their principles, and often in their individual lives, a central humanist aspect of revolution—free men and women devoted to making art out of life" (8). The assumption for both Cohn and Quiñones, though, is that such cultural production was more about managing symptoms on an individual level while planning to treat the root causes (finding a "solution") in other areas, saving "answers" for another day.

However, Quiñones does at least come closer to acknowledging that, while perhaps a necessity on the daily level of the individual, the ways of living that embody the anarchist's resistance culture—the ways of "making art out of life"—do have a greater significance for the movement itself. The PLM's production and embodiment of a resistance culture was not only an immunological effort to protect its members from the always-encroaching forces of normalized hierarchical domination; it was a political effort *to erect from within* a world dominated by those forces spheres of resistance in which alternative social relations could develop, grow, and move outward. The two efforts were one in the same: one implicated the other, and vice versa. These

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features, and which as such falls under specific forms of knowledge and technique' (2007, 367). Biopolitics therefore refers to forms of power that perhaps do the state's work for it but that are not necessarily the result of decisions taken at the heart of the state apparatus […] Biopolitics is the distribution and diffusion throughout society of the liberal laissez faire political, social, institutional, and economic regularization that administrates the acquiescence and consent of collectivities, the functional distribution of social powers, the systematized allocation of places and roles and the institutional procedures for legitimizing those distributions from beyond the specific political decisions taken by the state apparatus" (7, 11).

created spheres of resistance—spheres made manifest in, and buttressed by, the medial cocoons one built around oneself—were chambers of human conditioning within which people could become different kinds of political subjects, thinkers, community members, etc. The *magonist* project of social revolution, then, was as much a matter of militantly dismantling the institutional architectures of capital, clergy, and state as it was a matter of expanding and fortifying spheres of resistance, bringing more people in, conditioning oneself and others to become who they needed to be to take on the world—and to build and maintain a mutualistic society that could replace it. For *magonismo*, the personal was political insofar as the mediated chambers their resistance culture created were where personhood was meant to be crafted into something capable of destroying the hierarchical, exploitative, and *de*-humanizing system built around the golden principle of private property. As mentioned in the previous chapter, to study the anthropotechnical dynamics of such chambers is to see the dialectics of self- and world-making flow through the media and medial relations that connect one to the other; to study these spheres of human conditioning is to study the human condition, which is to say, the medial condition. As John Durham Peters writes,

> the human condition is recursive; it is a conditional condition: our actions change the conditions they act in, especially since they change us; we speak and act, and as we do we change the conditions in which we speak and act […] The crossroads of humans and things defines the domain of media studies. We are conditioned by conditions we condition. We, the created creators, shape tools that shape us. We live by our crafts and conditions. It is hard to look them in the face. In the grandest view, media studies is a general meditation on conditions […] It seeks nothing less than to sketch what Heidegger called a "poetic outline of [our] being, drawn from its extreme possibilities and limits" (51)

Essentially, we are distinguishing here between two conceptualizations of human beings as political actors: on the one side, a presumption of self-contained beings who live and work

autonomously within the boundaries set by (and sedimented in) the material and immaterial conditions of the external world; in this conceptualization, to act politically is to act upon the institutional bulwarks upholding those boundaries, expanding (or contracting) the terrain and scope of permissible living. On the other side, self and world are fundamentally entangled in the process of the other's becoming, enmeshed in overlapping networks of mediated connection (the "crossroads of humans and things [that] defines the domain of media studies"). In this conceptualization, to act politically is to engage in "a technical praxis of [intervening in] the enlivened circuitry mediating human and world as they make, un-make, and re-make each other" (Alvarez, 92); it is to act upon and shape the world as a means of acting upon and shaping oneself, and vice versa (conditioning the conditions that condition us, to paraphrase Durham Peters).

The sphero-technical creation and embodiment of resistance cultures was thus an indispensable formalization of the anarchist political project of living differently and collectively creating spaces to do so (providing the model for what Hakim Bey would later call "temporary autonomous zones"). These resistance cultures mediated between individual political actors and their oppressive environment while also providing the potential pathways to restructuring the basic coding and operations of that environment from the most intimate levels up to the most expansive, like a virus changing the DNA sequencing of a host. While experienced differently and serving various functions on personal and communal levels, the individual facets of a resistance culture are nevertheless "produced specifically and consciously as the expression of an organized resistance movement" (Cohn, 7). Printed organs like *Regeneración* were essential to that project, as the sphero-technical media of the PLM's resistance culture. In its pages, *Regeneración* advocated for the adoption of such a resistance culture, but in its very production,

circulation, consumption, and promotion of new social and subjective relations (traditionally termed "media effects"), *Regeneración* expressed and embodied the very culture, the anarchist project, it advocated. "Magonismo did not use *Regeneración*," Armando Bartra writes: "*Regeneración* was Magonismo" ("Prólogo," 15). The medium, in the immortal words of Marshall McLuhan, was the message.

Spores and Networks

But *Regeneración*, of course, was not alone: it was a central node in a much larger network of publications, people, relations of solidarity, political organizations, communication channels, and more. Studying the under- and above-ground facets of such networks, as David Turcato has argued, is vital to grasping the dynamic, robust, and truly international infrastructure of anarchism as a political and intellectual movement. To quote Turcato at length:

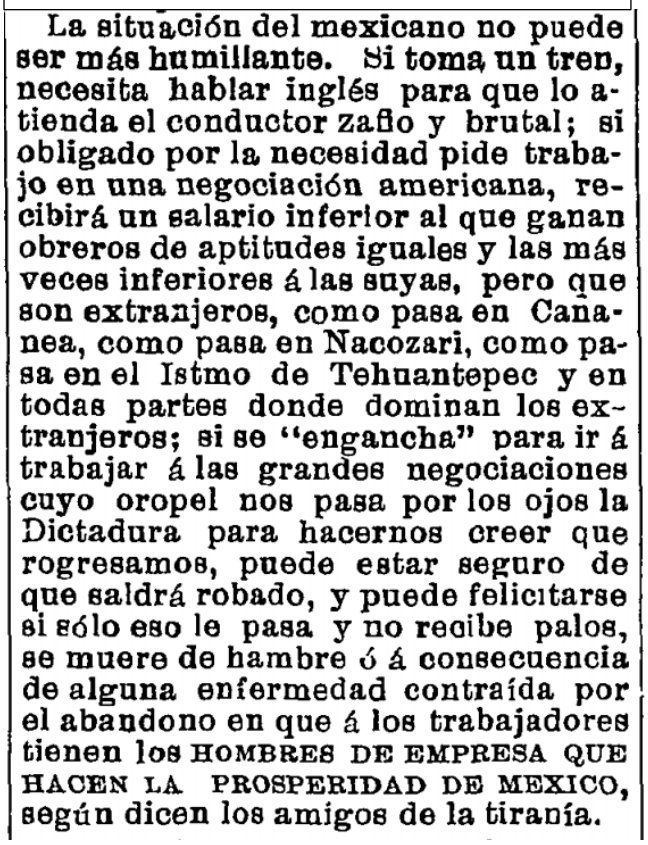
> As E.P. Thompson has argued for Luddism, there was an intentional side to the opacity of anarchist organization, for this was the very precondition of effective action. The counterpart of the opacity of organization was the spontaneous semblance of popular agitations. One cannot assume that behind any seemingly spontaneous 'mob' there lay anarchist organization. But where such work did take place, the image of a spontaneous mob was an indicator of its effectiveness. That an agitation appeared to be carried out by a mob speaks to the popular participation to it; and that the agitation seemed spontaneous speaks to the ability of anarchists to work underground. Neglecting anarchist opacity and limiting one's scope of analysis to what rises to the surface, attempting to simply connect public events, is likely to provide distorted interpretations […] Thus, the historian cannot simply look for congresses, party programs, and party structures, but rather has to look also at the dense network of links between individuals and groups to study how anarchism functioned as a collective movement. In the sustained and multi-directional personal links between individuals and groups one can find the coordination and continuity that is usually looked for in the impersonal structure and fixed roles of formal organizations (247-248)

This is not to say that the "surface" manifestation of "pubic events"—from the first Liberal Congress held in San Luis Potosí to the political manifestos published in *Regeneración*—is any less important for the study of *magonismo*'s development. Rather, it is to acknowledge the need to study these as the concretized expressions of vast, complex, and less visible networks of communication, cooperation, transportation, and influence in which anarchism, as an international movement, lived.

The Cananea strike of 1906 is one critical example in PLM history that highlights the dynamic Turcato describes between the deep and opaque organizational networks undergirding significant events that erupted onto the surface of public view. In the state of Sonora, the majority of Mexican workers at the Cananea Consolidated Copper Company, which was co-owned at the time by the U.S.-based Anaconda Copper Company and the beleaguered businessman "Colonel" William D. Greene, went on strike on June 1. What appeared at first to be a protest action by workers demanding the removal of particularly infamous foremen spiraled into days of rioting and a deadly armed conflict between Mexican mine workers and a posse of nearly 300 American volunteers and Arizona Rangers sent across the border by Greene. It was only when a contingent of *rurales* dispatched by Rafael Izabal, then Governor of Sonora, and Mexican federal troops arrived that the bloody strike ended. Along with making demands for better pay and an eight-hour workday, the workers forcefully called for *justicia* and *igualdad*, giving voice to long-simmering resentments over systematic racial discrimination in the mines and the company town. For too long, as Philip Mellinger writes, "Mexican and Spanish immigrants, Spanish Americans, and Italian immigrants were being treated as the ethnic inferiors of English-speaking workers, and they resented it" (64). While non-American and non-English-

speaking workers dealt with everyday acts of discrimination and verbal harassment, these formalized racial hierarchies also kept them from earning compensation equal to their counterparts or holding senior positions, among other injustices. According to Leopoldo Rodríguez Calderón, a teacher at the Escuela Municipal de Cananea at the time, the miners "*solicitaron de Mr. Greene, presidente de la Compañía Principal del Mineral, que se les redujera a ocho horas el tiempo diario de trabajo, que se les pagara cinco pesos como se les paga a los mineros americanos y se cambiaran algunos de los capataces americanos, que por su odio al pueblo mexicano, trataban de una manera muy dura a los pobres trabajadores que dependían de su mando*" (made the request of Mr. Greene, President of the Compañía Principal del Mineral, that their workdays be reduced to eight hours a day, that they be paid five pesos like the American miners, and that the company replace some of the American foremen who, in their hate for the people of Mexico, treated the poor workers who depended on their leadership too harshly) (qtd. in Hernández Padilla, 39). The disparity between the stations and treatment of Mexican mine workers and Anglo *extranjeros* was stark. Esteban Baca Calderón, one of the labor leaders of the Mexican mine workers and co-founder of la Unión

Figure 2.4. "La situación del mexicano no puede ser más humillante…" from *Regeneración*, 1 May 1906.



La situación del mexicano no puede ser más humillante. Si toma un tren, necesita hablar inglés para que lo atienda el conductor zafio y brutal; si obligado por la necesidad pide trabajo en una negociación americana, recibirá un salario inferior al que ganan obreros de aptitudes iguales y las más veces inferiores á las suyas, pero que son extranjeros, como pasa en Cananea, como pasa en Nacozari, como pasa en el Istmo de Tehuantepec y en todas partes donde dominan los extranjeros; si se "engancha" para ir á trabajar á las grandes negociaciones cuyo oropel nos pasa por los ojos la Dictadura para hacernos creer que rogresamos, puede estar seguro de que saldrá robado, y puede felicitarse si sólo eso le pasa y no recibe palos, se muere de hambre ó á consecuencia de alguna enfermedad contraída por el abandono en que á los trabajadores tienen los HOMBRES DE EMPRESA QUE HACEN LA PROSPERIDAD DE MEXICO, según dicen los amigos de la tiranía.

Liberal Humanidad, which shared many explicit affinities with the PLM, described the brutal contrast:

> *El número de barreteros y adentadores mexicanos era insignificante comparado con el de extranjeros. El cargo de capataz y mayordomo estaba reservado a los extranjeros, por excepción recaía este empleo en un mexicano; y en cuanto a los empleos superiores en talleres, oficinas, etcétera, diremos que todos los jefes eran extranjeros y todos percibían magníficos sueldos. Jamás vi un solo mexicano desempeñar funciones intelectuales como ingeniero, contador, etcétera […] Los extranjeros ocupaban residencias decorosas, alcanzaban un alto nivel de vida y disponían de fuertes sumas de dinero, que enviaban al país vecino, en tanto que el aspecto de la población mexicana y su condición económica ofrecía un contraste lastimoso* (qtd. in Hernández Padilla, 31).
>
> The number of Mexican *barreteros* y *adentadores* was insignificant in comparison to those from abroad. Overseer and foreman positions were reserved for foreigners, and only in exceptional circumstances would such posts fall to a Mexican; as for the higher positions in workshops, offices, etc., we shall say that all the bosses were foreigners and all received excellent salaries. I have never seen a single Mexican take on intellectual roles such as engineer, accountant, etc. […] Foreigners lived in dignified residences, attained a high standard of living and had large sums of money, which they sent to their neighboring country, while the appearance of the Mexican population and their economic conditions were pitiful in contrast (qtd. in Hernández Padilla, 31).

The convergence of these heavily racialized forces of exploitation, discrimination, humiliation, foreign capital (and the militant protection thereof by governmental and extra-governmental entities), etc. brought to a head many of the social contradictions that the PLM was attempting to wage war against—and that the Junta described and agitated over in the pages of *Regeneración* (Figure 2.4). While tapping into a base sense of *desigualdad* on the job that Cananea mine workers could feel on the most visceral and material levels, the transparent injustice of the racialized hierarchy that devalued their labor and belittled their humanity on a daily basis laid bare the violent, inefficient, and *arbitrary* nature of such formalized social and economic systems. From there, as the PLM knew (and, indeed, as any good political organizer and agitator

will know), what needed to follow was a communicable assurance that such systems were also, in fact, replaceable. As one flyer that was circulated during the strike (the producer of which is unknown) stated: "Mexican people: rise up! Learn what has been forgotten. Organize yourselves and determine your rights. Demand the respect you deserve. Each of us Mexicans are despised by the foreigners, but we can be equal to them if we unite and demand our rights" (qtd. in Akers Chacón, *Radicals in the Barrio*).

While it would be inaccurate to claim that the Cananea strike was the expressed result of a direct, coordinated PLM strategy—in the vein of, say, their short-lived military seizure of Mexicali in 1911—the PLM and *Regeneración* nevertheless had built up a significant and influential presence among the workers in Cananea, providing much of the human conditioning (agitation, education, organization, community building, etc.) that would prove necessary for the uprising. Underneath the floorboards where this historical event took place, behind the violent worker struggle that captured national attention, signaled the illusory nature of the *porfiriato*'s seeming labor peace, and sparked a string of subsequent strikes, a subterranean hive had been teeming with transnational organizational and agitational activity in which the PLM played a pivotal role.

Again, the growing Liberal Club network established critical and strategic nodes of this transnational network in places like Cananea, fortifying the political infrastructure through which the tools, people, and relations needed to build a revolutionary movement could connect, circulate, resonate, and grow. "The Club Liberal 'Libertad,'" as Rodolfo Acuña writes, "circulated propaganda throughout Arizona and Sonora in 1905. Clubs also operated in Hermosillo, Cananea, Nogales, and Sahuaripa. In the spring of 1905, the Douglas club sent Antonio P. Araujo, Enrique Bermúdez, and José López to Cananea. Plácido Ríos made frequent

trips to Douglas to buy arms and spread propaganda. […] By May 1906 Enrique was in Cananea, publishing the radical newspaper *El Centenario*, which reprinted material from *Regeneración*" (127). In fact, while they were attempting to find a footing and build trust with the mine workers, one of the first things that the PLM organizers dispatched to Cananea did when they got there was disseminate copies of *Regeneración* and encourage workers to communicate with one another about them (and to read articles to illiterate coworkers). As Hernández Padilla writes,

> *Eran 'los agentes de la revolución' que la corriente magonista anhelaba, pero que aún no tenía una idea muy clara de cómo desarrollarla junto con los obreros y campesinos de México. Los primeros pasos en esa dirección los estaban dando aquellos tres activistas al dar a conocer* Regeneración *entre los obreros mineros de Cananea, discutir con ellos algunos de los artículos contenidos en el periódico y hablarles no de grandes teorías sino de sus propios y agobiantes problemas cotidianos. Muy pronto, esa efectiva forma de comunicación fue plenamente compartida por un buen número de trabajadores en Cananea* (30).
>
> They were 'the agents of the revolution' that the Magonista current had longed for, but they didn't yet have a very clear idea of how to advance the revolution alongside the workers and peasants of Mexico. Those three activists were taking their first steps in that direction by disseminating *Regeneración* among the mining workers of Cananea, discussing some of the newspaper articles with them, and speaking about their own overwhelming daily problems instead of grand theories. Soon afterward, this effective form of communication was taken up by a large number of workers in Cananea (30).

Things progressed relatively quickly from there. In the spring of 1906, Lazaro Gutíerrez de Lara established the Club Liberal de Cananea and served as club president, communicating and collaborating with the Unión Liberal Humanidad, which was founded in January the same year and run by would-be strike leaders Esteban Baca Calderón, Francisco Ibarra, and Manuel Diéguez. As previously mentioned, the expansion of the Liberal Club network was vital for building out the political infrastructure for organizing anticlerical and anti-Díaz dissent and engaging citizens in practices of civic education, community building, etc. And the networked

skelature connecting different Clubs across Mexico and parts of the U.S. functionally established lines of communication and cooperation between them. Like *Regeneración*'s incorporation of Práxedis Guerrero's *puntos rojos* into its editorial format to visually create a swarm-like picture of revolutionary activity around Mexico, the multiplication and interconnectedness of Liberal Clubs generated a similar sense of a robust, sophisticated, and widespread operation—an operation whose continued functioning signaled the health of a growing movement that sympathizers in their own locales could be confident in, knowing that it required coordinated, dedicated action across regions by many seen and unseen actors connected by a common cause. That is to say, the Liberal Club network itself was, in its own way, a mediatic functionary of a resistance culture that was not limited to that of the PLM; in its political operations, it communicated, embodied, and further generated a culture of dissent that drew people in, conditioned them, and was conditioned by them. Such a communicable culture, and the confidence it engendered in the broader political operation of the movement, was also, by necessity, baked into the organizational structure of individual Clubs. As John Hart writes,

> By 1906 the PLM had forty-four clandestine guerilla units and Liberal clubs operating within the five zones into which they had divided Mexico. The northern sector, zone three, aided by intense activity on the American side of the border, was the best organized and comprised the states of Sinaloa, Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas. A *camarada de confianza* who carried the title of *delegado* commanded in each zone. A national commander-in-chief who reported to the Junta in the United States directed the five zone *delegados*. Beneath the zone *delegado* was the guerilla unit commander (*jefe de guerilla*) and his assistant, the *subjefe*, the only two members of the local units who knew the identity of the zone *delegado*. Urban and rural working-class volunteers primarily comprised the guerilla units, which varied in size, some as large as two hundred to three hundred members, but averaged somewhat under fifty. The volunteers elected the *jefe* and *sub-jefe* from among their own numbers. In that manner the PLM built a popular mass following, gave the members a sense of full participation, and maintained organizational security (90)

As much as it was needed to secure the day-to-day safety and functioning of the Clubs, this formalized organizational structure was integral to the mediatic process of human conditioning. Even today, successful political and labor organizers understand that getting people *involved* and engaged in such participatory practices is important for the purposes of spreading work around manageably and accomplishing tasks. More than this, though, the performative qualities of such participation mediate a kind of political subjectivity and belonging that those same people embody *in the act*; it activates them, draws them into the collective process of building power, and changes them in the process. As American union organizer Jane McAlevey notes, this approach to organizing "places the agency for success with a continually expanding base of ordinary people, a mass of people never previously involved, who don't consider themselves activists at all—that's the point of organizing […] Individual campaigns matter in themselves, but they are primarily a mechanism for bringing new people into the change process and keeping them involved" (10). It was this model of organization that the PLM hoped—but did not have enough time or capacity—to establish in the Club Liberal de Cananea before workers went on strike. In late May, shortly before the strike erupted, a PLM delegation that included Gutiérrez de Lara, Juan Sarabia, and Librado Rivera met in secret with worker leaders from the mines, urging them to build up their organizational capacities before walking off the job. Their entreaty was not heeded, and the strike began soon after. Nevertheless, that the workers were agitated and organized enough to strike in the first place is a testament to the clandestine activity taking place in the shadows of the daily grind of the mineworks—and to the robust, transnational political infrastructure that connected and helped to facilitate these activities.

Beyond circulating and encouraging discussion about *Regeneración*, PLM members also supported worker struggles and utilized their contacts with workers across the border regions of

the U.S and Mexico, helping to shuttle them to other strategic sites and to create in them mediatic nodes of their growing resistance culture. "*Aparte de utilizar sus excelentes contactos con grupos chicanos establecidos a lo largo de ciudades y pueblos fronterizos del sur de los Estados Unidos*," Hernández Padilla notes,

> *el trabajo inicial de Araujo, Bermúdez y López en aquellos campos mineros era continuamente reforzado por otros activistas, quienes con su militancia ampliaban el área de influencia del PLM en los centros mineros de Nuevo México y Arizona. Hacia allá se trasladaba, en determinadas épocas de cada año, un buen número de trabajadores mexicanos que después de trabajar una corta temporada en "el vecino país del norte" regresaba a México labraba la tierra durante otra temporada y mientras llegaba el tiempo de "levantar la cosecha", se empleaba en las minas cananenses. Surgía así—como justamente lo ha señalado un historiador—"un nuevo tipo de trabajador semindustrial, semiagrícola", mismo que en la mayoría de los casos brindaba una ayuda invaluable a la organización magonista pues durante su estancia en "el otro lado" entraba en contacto con las ideas socialistas y anarquistas de los militantes de la Western Federation of Miners y al cruzar de nueva cuenta la "frontera nómada" propagaba dichas ideas entre sus compañeros de "acá de este lado"* (33).
>
> the initial work of Araujo, Bermúdez and López in those mining fields was continually bolstered by other activists, who, in their militancy, expanded the PLM's sphere of influence in the mining centers of New Mexico and Arizona. At certain times of the year, a good number of Mexican workers would move to those centers, work for a short season in "the neighboring country to the north," then return to Mexico to cultivate the land for another season; while they awaited the time "to reap the harvest," they were employed in the Cananea mines. Thus there arose—as one historian has just pointed out— "a new type of semi-industrial, semi-agricultural worker," who, in most cases, provided invaluable support to the magonista organization, since during the worker's stay on "the other side," he came into contact with the socialist and anarchist ideas of the militants of the Western Federation of Miners and, by crossing the "nomadic border" again, he spread these ideas among his comrades from "here on this side" (33).

As with the expansion of railway networks, the increased industrialization of Mexican economic production, etc., the structural changes to Mexico's political economy that characterized Porfirian "modernization" also created conditions for the movement of people, ideas, and

resources that radical groups like the PLM would attempt to harness for their own political purposes. The emergence of this "new type" of "nomadic," "part-industrial, part-agricultural worker" moving across the U.S.-Mexico border and back is a case in point. While working in the U.S., such workers came into contact with PLM organizers and ideas in *Regeneración* circulating in the Southwest as well as more militant anarchist and socialist strains of the Western Federation of Miners (WFM). As Justin Akers Chacón notes,

> Radical and magonista papers were distributed on both sides of the border, but began to reach a wider audience among Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the US. Through a network of militants and PLM-affiliated clubs, the paper spread from Los Angeles to Texas, with subscriptions also scattered throughout the Midwest […] The paper was used as a means to educate, organize, and make occasional calls to action, through regional transmission belts that included railroad workers, miners, small farmers, farmworkers, and sympathetic intellectuals. Through this expanding base of proletarian media, radical journalists began to not just focus on Mexican events, but to pay closer attention to the realities facing Mexicans in the US and the mechanics of US capitalism (*Radicals in the Barrio*).

Coming into contact with this "expanding base of proletarian media," engaging with other workers through them, discussing their content—these were significant experiences that punctuated the workaday toil and that also helped workers rationalize the very changes to society and economic production that shaped their lives in the early 20th century while providing social and conceptual avenues to think and (re-)act politically. They carried such experiences with them back to Mexico and, in turn, mediated them through the social relations they built with other workers in industrial and agricultural settings and even on the boxcars they rode across the otherwise lonesome desert landscape. These social bonds, through which experiences, ideas, and "influence" became communicable—not just verbally articulable, but communicable in the sense of a "communicable disease" (Guillory, 331)—were among the critical, lively media that

connected working people to a resistance culture that worked on and through them. “In the sustained and multi-directional personal links between individuals and groups,” to recall David Turcato, “one can find the coordination and continuity that is usually looked for in the impersonal structure and fixed roles of formal organizations” (248). Cananea didn’t just happen. From these interpersonal links to the expansion of Liberal Clubs and the circulation of copies of *Regeneración* therein, much of the groundwork for the agitation and organization that culminated in the Cananea strike was done through—and through the construction of—a transnational political infrastructure of dissent, a complex mediatic network that the PLM harnessed to support, guide, and condition the Mexican mine workers with the hope of steering their uprising towards more revolutionary ends. “The discourse of the revolution knew no boundaries,” as Emma Pérez notes. “Language, words, *corridos*, and concepts crossed back and forth along the Mexico-U.S. border as easily as the renowned revolutionary Francisco ‘Pancho’ Villa” (56).

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Like an air-conditioning system connecting disparate spaces (spheres) throughout a large building, humming with activity behind the walls, these networks teemed with the flow of news, knowledge, personal communications, political connections, books, guns, money, etc. In certain exceptional cases, perhaps, we can determine the direct impacts of the transmission of any one object, idea, etc. through such networks on people and political groups; more frequently, though, the contingencies of their circulation, along with the presumptuous baggage that comes with measuring “influence,” create an after-the-fact illusion of a smooth sequence of influence. For

example, when it comes to measuring the influence of socialism and anarchism on the Mexican revolution, as Bruno Bosteels notes,

> On one hand, such interpretations tend to judge the situation from the point of view of the (lack of) direct knowledge or influence of ideas reaching the country from abroad—whether from Soviet Russia or from Western Europe. This holds for socialism and for communism, which are then frequently equated with their definitions in the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, or Trotsky; as well as for anarchism, which is then typically studied in terms of the influence of ideas from Proudhon, Bakunin, or Kropotkin. In both cases, influence is supposed to be one-directional, from center to periphery, and tied to easily identifiable texts and traditions. On the other hand, the ideological and political traditions in question, ready to be imported from abroad, often tend to be described as becoming confused or overly eclectic in Mexico, but only because their corresponding sources are usually presumed to have reached a principled maturity in Europe ("Mexican Commune," 4-5)

The process of influence is (and was) much messier. Engaging with radical works and traditions from Europe was undeniably a critical factor in the political and ideological development of the purveyors of *magonismo*. As Arnaldo Córdova writes, "*Es verdad que Flores Magón conocía ya desde los primeros años del siglo diversos escritos anarquistas y comunistas europeos […] conoció obras de Kropotkin, Bakunin, Malatesta y Marx […] como muchos otros, se interesó en la llamada 'novela social' (Gorki y Zola) y en el socialismo ético a la manera de Lammenais y Tolstoi*" (It is true that Flores Magón, from the initial years of the century, was familiar with various European anarchist and communist writings […] he knew works by Kropotkin, Bakunin, Malatesta and Marx […] like many others, he became interested in the so-called 'social novel' (Gorki and Zola) and in ethical socialism in the manner of Lammenais and Tolstoy) (177). By their own personal testimonies, engaging with these and other works was a formative experience for the founding members of the PLM, one that shaped their own respective processes of intellectual and political development. And while these works left many visible traces of their

influence in the articles published in *Regeneración*, not to mention in the personal correspondence of PLM members, attempting to intellectually and temporally map out causal connections between one and the other can be treacherous for a number of reasons, including the fact that it would impose a schematically flat rendering of individual selves, ideas, and how they converse with each other by way of eschewing "an ontological understanding of the human as a fundamentally open-ended thing whose being is always, necessarily, a *being-in-process,* mediated by changing worlds in and through which it can become what it will be" (Alvarez, 88). Rather than concepts- and beings-in-process shaping each other in uneven and unpredictable ways as they inhabit different spheres, each is presumed to be a self-contained entity producing or inhabiting the other. Perhaps it is less important, then, to find conjectural, one-to-one correlations of influence than to acknowledge the significance of the very presence of these texts in Mexico at the turn of the century, as well as the role they played as lively sites for intellectual engagement and debate, community building, and connecting with a transnational infrastructure that gave weight to the perceived transcendence and universality of the radical vision for the world Ricardo and others were developing. It was, after all, this very transnational infrastructure that helped to bring the many radical works of theory and literature that PLM members read, discussed, and thought with to Mexico in the first place.

As previously mentioned, Camilo Arriaga, the wealthy Liberal from San Luis Potosí, played a pivotal role in sparking the collective processes that materialized in the first Liberal Congress in 1901 and the Liberal Club movement. Arriaga was also a friend and an intellectual and financial benefactor to many young Liberal dissidents like Juan Sarabia, Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama, Rosalío Bustamante, Ricardo Flores Magón, "and a score of others who lent numerical weight and vocal support to his crusade for Liberalism […] This new generation of young

idealists met with Arriaga regularly in his home behind the Arriagas' Hotel Jardín, 'to read and comment upon works by the most advanced revolutionary authors of the time'" (Cockcroft, 67). Scenes like these were commonplace for this retinue of young radicals who, in most cases, would go on to become revolutionaries. Along with a shared political fervor, one of the central magnetic forces that drew them together was Arriaga's renowned library, which was stocked with works of radical literature and theory, including seminal texts of anarchist thought from authors like Proudhon, Bakunin, Malatesta, Tolstoy, and more. "*La presencia de Arriaga en México*" (The presence of Arriaga in Mexico), Florencio Barrera Fuentes writes,

> *no sólo determinó una mayor cohesión en el grupo liberal de la capital, sino que significó por otra parte, tal vez más importante, la iniciación en la cultura revolucionaria de los militantes del liberalismo. La generosidad de Arriaga, consecuente con su fortuna personal, le permitió hacer llegar a manos de sus correligionarios obras como* La Conquista del Pan y la Filosofía Anarquista *de Kropotkin,* El Catecismo Revolucionario y Los Principios de la Revolución *de Bakunin,* El Manifiesto Comunista y El Capital *de Marx y lo mejor que sobre temas sociales se editaba entonces* (116).
>
> not only established greater cohesion amongst the liberals in the capital, but also meant, perhaps more importantly, the induction of the militants of liberalism into revolutionary culture. Arriaga's generosity, consistent with his personal fortune, allowed him to deliver into the hands of his fellow believers works such as Kropotkin's *The Conquest of Bread*, Bakunin's *The Revolutionary Catechism*, Marx's *The Communist Manifesto* and *Capital*, and other important works on social themes that were published at that time (116).

Arriaga deployed a not-insignificant chunk of his family wealth to assemble this extensive library, voraciously ordering titles whenever and wherever he could find them; he also personally bought and arranged for the transport of a large collection of titles during a trip to France in 1900. As John Cockcroft notes, "The 'Librairie Stock' was a prominent publishing house and library in Paris which, through its 'Bibliothèque anarchiste,' distributed the works of Europe's leading Anarchists, and through its 'Bibliothèque cosmopolite' assembled the works of

noteworthy authors (Tolstoi, Ibsen, Hugo, Kipling and others). It was there that Arriaga obtained much of his collection of revolutionary works" (70). By way of complex, transnational systems of travel, translation, printing, commerce, and transportation, these works made their way to San Luis Potosí. There, in their own way, they became nodes of those systems, not only connecting the Mexican dissidents to a deep anarchist intellectual tradition but expanding that tradition to further include (and be shaped by) Mexico. Recalling Bosteels, the processes of transporting, disseminating, and thinking with these works was never a question of wholesale, unidirectional transmission of knowledge from the White European center to the periphery. To pick up any title off of Arriaga's shelves was not to download—and attempt to implement—a fully formed ideological system (is any literary encounter ever that simple?); it was to engage in one's own sphere, tangibly and conceptually, with transnational efforts to reorient the foundations of political possibility, to participate in broadening the collective scope of political imagination. In their very presence, circulation, and mediatic functions, these books, as Florencio Barrera Fuentes notes, helped to give radical ideas the vibrant social content of a radical movement: "*La propagación de libros revolucionarios hecha por Arriaga, al parecer intrascendente, determinó, sin embargo, que a partir de este tiempo se diera al movimiento liberal más amplio contenido social y que se iniciaran en el anarquismo todos sus prosélitos, porque anarquistas lo fueron entonces todos, y que de ahí partiera la limpia trayectoria anarquista de Ricardo Flores Magón*" (While seemingly unimportant, the dissemination of revolutionary books undertaken by Arriaga established that, from this moment on, the liberal movement would be given the broadest social content and that all its proselytes were initiated into anarchism, because from then on they were all anarchists; and from that point one could trace Ricardo Flores Magón's sharp anarchist trajectory) (116).

That is to say, inasmuch as the text within each book served as an always-imperfect, never-totalizing medium for conveying thought and history and experience, the book itself functioned as an always-imperfect, never-totalizing medium connecting disparate continents, people, points in time, and more. *As media*, books become temporary middle grounds: sites of convergence and connection, conductors channeling energy flows back, forth, and beyond. And their mediatic functions overlap and intertwine. Because, at the same time that they served as middle-points of connection between the young Mexican radicals and the infrastructure of a transnational anarchist tradition, these books also served as points of engagement between the members of their growing community, points of cohesion and camaraderie as they gathered together to discuss (a mediatic function that *Regeneración* would try to replicate), conductors of common cause, shared experience, even friendship. As Patricia Romyna Báez Rentería writes,

> *Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama afirmó que antes de 1901 ya se encontraban leyendo literatura anarquista en San Luis Potosí. Santiago R. de la Vega, por su parte, rememoró aquello en un discurso que dio en 1932, donde expresó las siguientes palabras: "[Arriaga] ponía en nuestras manos a Carlos Marx. Por el conocí yo al dulce príncipe Kropotkin […] gracias a Camilo—Camilito, como lo llamábamos—toda la biblioteca Stock de París formó parte de nuestros equipajes en las prisiones"* (99).
>
> Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama confirmed that even before 1901 people were reading anarchist literature in San Luis Potosí. Santiago R. de la Vega, for his part, recalled as much in a speech he gave in 1932, where he expressed the following words: "[Arriaga] put Carlos Marx in our hands. Through him I met the sweet Prince Kropotkin […] thanks to Camilo—Camilito, as we called him—we carried the entire Stock library in Paris into prison with us (99).

Even as his friends and comrades languished in prison, Arriaga sent them books to read and think with and pass the time. Bringing the books was more than an attempt to encourage the political education of others; it was an act of friendship that tied the members of the group

Biblioteca Sociologica de "REGENERACION"

A 30c cada tomo:

El Individuo y el Estado. La Burguesía y el Proletariado. La Sanción Moral. Fuerza y Materia. Los Anarquistas. El Colectivismo. Los Hijos del Amor. Las Mentiras Convencionales de la Civilización. Campos Fábricas y Talleres. Las Prisiones. El Mal del Siglo. Federalismo Socialismo y Antiteologismo. Las Ruinas de Palmira. La Religión Natural. Matrimonios Morganáticos—2 tomos. La Conquista del Pan. Reforma y Revolución Social. El Unico y Su Propiedad—2 tomos. El Sindicalismo. La Atmósfera. Palabras de un Rebelde. Jesucristo Nunca Ha Existido. La Religión al Alcnce de Todos. La Comedia del Sentimiento. Nieves Ríos y Lagos. Pobreza y Descontento. Crónicas Demoledoras. La Indigencia Espiritual del Sexo Femenino. ¿Qué es la Propiedad? Progreso y Miseria —2 tomos. Nuestro Planeta. Las Fuerzas Subterráneas. El Estado y la Dignidad Personal. Evolución y Revolución. La Sociedad Moribunda y la Anarquia. Conflictos entre la Religión y la Ciencia. Sindicalismo y Anarquismo. Pobres y Ricos. El Oceano. La Vida en la Tierra. El Prejuicio de las Razas.

A 15c cada tomo:

El Estado. La Humanidad Futura. Los Tiempos Nuevos.

A 10c cada tomo:

En el Café. Entre Campesinos. El Patriotismo. La Anarquía. Desenvolvimiento de la Humanidad. Antes del Momento. Un Siglo de Espera. La Moral Anarquista. Educación Burguesa y Educación Libertária.

A 5c cada tomo:

Nuestro Programa. Las Guerras. El Individuo y la Masa. La Burguesía y el Proletariado. ¿Dónde Está Dios? Dignidad. Inmoralidad del Matrimonio. Lo Inevitable.

Todos estos libros y muchos otros más, lo mismo que periódicos anarquistas y revolucionarios, también se encuentran de venta en la Librería Mexicana "La Aurora," dirección postal P. A. Robledo, Box 1666, Los Angeles, Cal., y en Oxnard, Cal., con la siguiente dirección: Jesús Silva Martínez, Box 256.

Todo pedido acompañado de su importe, se despachará á vuelta de correo

Esta Administración, de esta fecha en adelante, á cada persona que pague un año de subscripción, obsequiará una obra de á 30c, 2 de á 15c, 3 de á 19c, ó 6 de á 5c.

Figure 2.5. "Biblioteca Sociológica de Regeneración" from *Regeneración*, 21 October 1911.

together, a mediatic gesture connecting them inside and outside the prison walls, reminding the prisoners that they weren't alone—that the movement lived, and they were part of it. Even more locally—but no less expansively—Arriaga's books were mediatic sites of self-articulation: a means for each young radical to continue their own political becoming; platforms through which who one was could reach who they'd become; pathways in time connecting individuals like Ricardo to the many past, present, and future iterations of their being. (Without acknowledging the self- and world-making dynamics of these delicate mediations, to discuss the intellectual and political "radicalization" of Ricardo Flores Magón—or anyone else—is to impose conceptual limitations on the full human experience of becoming through the media-worlds he helped make, and that helped make him.)

Arriaga's library, of course, was not the only example of the convergence of such numerous and intersecting mediatic functions, but it was a salient one for Ricardo and the founding members of the PLM, who would attempt to create in *Regeneración* itself a similar, lively site of transnational connection, political education, community building, and self-articulation. One development that was particularly reminiscent of Arriaga's expansive collection, which had

brought the Mexican radicals together a decade prior in San Luis Potosí, was the *Biblioteca Sociológica de Regeneración*, the founding of which was announced in the pages of *Regeneración* in the October 21, 1911 issue, in a column that listed a litany of titles in unbroken succession, divided only by their price (Figure 2.5). As the column advertised, the curated titles that comprised the *Biblioteca Sociológica de Regeneración* were marketed at special prices for subscribers to the newspaper, providing a means for expanding readers' engagement with topics related to anarchism, syndicalism, class struggle, religion, and more. Based in Los Angeles, the *Biblioteca Sociológica* was an idea that grew out of conversations between Ricardo and the well-known Spanish-language bookseller Rómulo Carmona, who owned the "La Aurora" bookshops in Los Angeles and Oxnard. Although, the selection of titles included—87 books and pamphlets in total—suggests that Ricardo also consulted with William C. Owen, who was then editing *Regeneración*'s English backpage: "*por un lado Henry George y Max Stirner y, por el otro, Clarence C. Darrow, el abogado liberal norteamericano defensor de los miembros de la Industrial Workers of the World y promotor de una reforma penitenciaria, tema que interesaba particularmente a Owen*" (on the one hand Henry George and Max Stirner and, on the other, Clarence C. Darrow, the liberal American defense lawyer who represented members of the Industrial Workers of the World and who promoted prison reform, a subject that particularly interested Owen) (Barrera Bassols, 12). The tradition of "bibliotecas sociológicas" was prominent in hispanoamerican anarchist publications and publishing houses such as the Biblioteca Sociológica in Buenos Aires, which published works by the Italian anarchist Pietro Gori as early as 1898, and the famous Biblioteca Sociológica Internacional in Barcelona. It is signifcant that the announcement of the *Biblioteca Sociológica* was published one month after the PLM's September "Manifesto of the Organizing Junta of the Mexican Liberal Party," which,

in a sharp divergence from the *maderista* Liberals, declared *magonismo*'s open embrace of anarchist politics. As Jacinto Barrera Bassols writes,

> *El contenido de la Biblioteca Sociológica es un reflejo de ese momento: ya que además de ofrecerse escritos de los clásicos ácratas: Bakunin, Kropotkin, Prohudon, Nordau, Malato, Grave y Reclus, entre otros; incluía algunos títulos de la "Escuela Moderna", mismos que, tras la ejecución de Francisco Ferrer y Guardia, habían incrementado su demanda. Un lugar especial guardan en ella los textos sobre asuntos religiosos, todos ellos desde una perspectiva anticlerical; los panfletos a favor del control de la natalidad y un par de textos sobre el sindicalismo revolucionario. La novela estaba representada por Emilio Zola y los reportajes políticos por Volney, la poesía libertaria por Miguel Rey y el teatro por Louis Massot y el evolucionismo por Denoy, y, por supuesto, Darwin* (11).
>
> The contents of the Biblioteca Sociológica are a reflection of that moment: in addition to offering writings from classical anarchists—Bakunin, Kropotkin, Prohudon, Nordau, Malato, Grave and Reclus, among others—it also included several titles from the "Modern School," those that, after the execution of Francisco Ferrer y Guardia, were increasingly in demand. Reserved within the library was a special place for texts on religious matters, all of them written from an anticlerical perspective, pamphlets in favor of birth control, and a couple of texts on revolutionary unionism. The novel was represented by Emile Zola and political reports by Volney, libertarian poetry by Miguel Rey and theater by Louis Massot and evolutionism by Denoy, and, of course, Darwin (11).

The creation of the *Biblioteca Sociológica de Regeneración* and the titles offered therein reflect one of many modes through which anarchist resistance cultures developed as a means of human conditioning. Along with *Regeneración* itself, the *Biblioteca Sociológica* aimed to create microclimates of resistance that would help readers navigate and bear their daily experiences of unjust social and economic hierarchies in their own spheres; they helped comprise the medial chambers in which readers could become the kind of political subjects they needed to be—not only by developing their own political consciousness, expanding their political imagination, etc., but by doing so in ways that connected them, conceptually and practically, to a sense of intellectual community and a communal sense of political purpose. Along with *Regeneración*

itself, readers were encouraged to engage with the books on offer in the *Biblioteca Sociológica*, discuss them with others, write to the PLM to share their thoughts, etc.; they were encouraged, that is, to explore the medial relations these books offered, relations that aimed to formalize the social revolution by formally mimicking the same mutualism professed within many of the books themselves. As with the 'Librairie Stock' titles Arriaga brought to Mexico, the titles included in the *Biblioteca Sociológica* were as much a source of political and ideological education that could supplement the radical propositions made in the PLM's Manifesto as they were mediatic nodes of a networked political tradition that traversed centuries, aimed to transcend national borders, and that connected those who entered Rómulo Carmona's bookshop to a transnational political infrastructure that gave anarchism's ostensibly universalist principles the meat and weight of a political movement.

This world-shaping sense of transnational connection was not limited to one newspaper or bookshop. Nodes of this expansive mediatic network were more immediately visible and tangible in the spheres of everyday experience for many of the same people that the PLM hoped to reach. Newspapers for sale in an array of different languages, material from said newspapers regularly translated and reprinted on one another's pages, articles referring to news, people, and places around the world—for working people among many different ethnic groups in pockets around the U.S. (mainly in the Southwest and along the border) and in Mexico, these provided daily reminders of their connection to, if not a transnational "community," then at least to a world in which people, personhood, and political struggle were not defined by national borders. Even with *Regeneración*, the physical newspaper was always a lively site of medial connection to a movement and a political infrastructure that was often visible in the party members hawking copies on the street, in the discussions engendered by the content on its pages, in its printed

presence in other publications and vice versa. In many ways, as I've argued, the erection and maintenance of this political infrastructure embodied the political and mutualistic substance of *magonismo*; insofar as it transported through its circuits messages of a growing political struggle for social revolution, it also constituted the medial architecture for the type of resistance culture in which such a social revolution could take root and grow. At its height, *Regeneración*'s subscriptions reached over twenty thousand (Struthers, 53), but while not accounting for the reach of reprinted articles in other publications and copies that were passed around or read to others out loud, these numbers also belie the opaque network (to use David Turcato's terminology) of frenzied political action that made this distribution possible. "A main function of being a magonista was distribution of the party organ," Akers Chacón writes,

> Members sold the paper on street corners throughout the Mexican communities of Los Angeles, the outlying districts, and throughout *barrios* and *colonias* in the Southwest. The papers were read in individual homes, in discussion groups in club meetings, and whatever sympathetic groups of Mexican workers gathered. *Regeneración* and other aligned papers were also circulated on both sides of the border, creating a mass-readership of PLM-affiliated press from the southwest to Mexico City. They also reprinted other's articles, cross-fertilizing radical discourse. (*Radicals in the Barrio*)

Even the seemingly dull bureaucratic nuances of this distribution network contained within them hints of a concerted political strategy, one that relied heavily on volunteer action by members and sympathizers whose success necessitated building social relations that actuated the political ethos conveyed in the pages of *Regeneración*. For instance, as David Struthers notes, "Publishers of anarchist publications offered bundle orders for purchase to allow supporters to carry through the communities, selling the paper and spreading the word" (53). This was the case for *Regeneración*, with single-order annual subscriptions in the U.S. costing two dollars in 1910, individual copies costing five cents, bundle orders of 100 copies costing three dollars, $12.50 for

500 copies, $20 for 1,000. In the commercial world, such a pricing model for buying in bulk and reselling is called wholesale; in the anarchist world, it's called organizing.

Beyond individual distribution, *Regeneración*, along with other anarchist publications, was also part of a vast media ecology in which political causes and ideas flowed through different communities and languages. David Struthers, for instance, describes some facets of the complex, multi-lingual and intercommunal distribution network that connected *Regeneración* to a wide range of other radical publications, political groups, and public institutions:

> In addition to individual subscribers and bundle orders, the editorial staffs of other newspapers received copies of *Regeneración*, which further extended the paper's reach. This was most often part of formal news exchanges between papers that worked to expand the coverage of all the papers involved. The socialist *California Social Democrat*, IWW-affiliated *El Rebelde*, in addition to the *Daily Tribune Reporter* and *Pacific Press*, received copies of *Regeneración* in this fashion. The Russian-language *Velikij Okean* and *Chung Sai Yat Po*, a Chinese-language paper in San Francisco, also participated in the exchange. Moreover, the Pacific News Agency in San Diego, *American Economist*, the *Seattle Herald*, and the *Seattle Star* subscribed. The Los Angeles Public Library and Columbia University's library in New York both received weekly issues of *Regeneración* (55-56)

For anarchist outfits like the PLM, the organizational significance of these mediatic connections becomes even more apparent when compared to the production and circulation of party organs that were attached to more bureaucratically robust and hierarchically organized institutions, like with the Partido Comunista Mexicano (PCM) and their publication, *El machete*, which I will examine in the following chapter. In the absence of more rigidly formalized transnational political infrastructures connecting Communist Party operations to one another, and connecting all back to the Comintern, these sorts of exchange networks between publications, institutions, political groups, etc. became critical components of the load-bearing support system that kept *Regeneración*, the PLM, and *magonismo* afloat.

This support system also extended to the fungal network of independent and affiliated publications that, like spores, spread, expanded, and enriched the movement. As Clara Lomas writes, "The principal propaganda organs of the PLM in Los Angeles were *Revolución* (Revolution) in 1907 and *Libertad y Trabajo* (Freedom and Work) and *Regeneración* (Regeneration) from 1910 through 1918" (53). Outside of L.A., though, a considerable number of political actors and groups in locales dotted around the country, like *puntos rojos*, primarily in the southern states, took it upon themselves to "spread the word" by contributing to *Regeneración* and creating and disseminating their own publications. None of these respective operations has received the historical and analytical attention that *Regeneración* has—nor, to be fair, did they attain the political significance of *Regeneración*—but those that were directed by women have, until recently, been particularly understudied. One critical exception is Emma Pérez's *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (1999). "Many women wrote for the Partido's newspaper, *Regeneración*, on both sides of the border, but mostly in Los Angeles," Pérez notes,

> Women such as Sara Estela Ramírez in Laredo, Texas, the Villarreal sisters in San Antonio, and Blanca Moncaleano, Teresa Arteaga, and Maria Talavera in Los Angeles all contributed to the revolution's agenda as revolutionists, activists, and journalists. The revolution, then, created a kind of renaissance during which women wrote essays and edited their own magazines, newspapers, and journals. Many of these women, who sought political exile in the southwestern United States, wrote prolifically, criticizing the dictator Porfirio Díaz and championing the revolution as a revolution for women (56).

By writing articles for and providing intel to *Regeneración*, these women made vital contributions to fortifying and expanding the mediatic network in which the *magonist* project of social revolution lived. By producing political writing for other publications and creating their

own propagandistic organs to "[champion] the revolution as a revolution for women," they expanded the meaning of *magonismo* itself.

"By fully participating in the PLM and other radical groups," Sonia Hernández writes, "women proved critical in carrying the message of the Revolution and acting on it" (87). Such was the case with Sara Estela Ramírez and Andrea and Teresa Villarreal, two sisters from Nuevo León who migrated to Texas and played a pivotal role in disseminating revolutionary ideology, writing not only for *Regeneración* but for publications like *La Crónica*, *El Démocrata Fronterizo*, *La Mujer Moderna*, and *El Obrero*, which Villarreal founded in San Antonio in 1909 (Hernández, 88). Such writing and publishing efforts by radical women affiliated with, or sympathetic to, the PLM were as impressive for the challenges they posed to the oppressive norms of patriarchal and racial hierarchy as they were for jockeying for position in local media ecologies dominated by pro-Díaz (or at least anti-revolutionary) publications. As Clara Lomas describes,

> Out of approximately two hundred newspapers that were published in the Southwest during the period between 1900 and 1920—the majority of which supported the dictatorship of Mexico's President Porfirio Díaz—more than thirty were founded by PLM members or sympathizers. *La Voz de la Mujer*, founded in El Paso in 1907 under the directorship of Isidra T. de Cárdenas, published, as U.S. Consul Ellsworth contended, "inflammatory articles intended to educate" the public about the oppressive and exploitative regime of Porfirio Díaz. *La Voz de la Mujer* also attempted to show through its publication that women were intellectually and morally engaged in the revolutionary effort against the Díaz dictatorship (53).

Women writers and publishers affiliated with the PLM regularly employed gendered issues and terminology to simultaneously engage women in the revolution-building process; to advocate for women's civic, social, and labor rights; and to communicate to men and women that both were integral to the project of creating a social revolution worthy of the name, one that would "disrupt

the social formation" (Hernández, 88) and liberate all from the shackles of hierarchical domination. "*La Voz de la Mujer*," for example, "employed the concept of the family, and, as one editorial in that newspaper stated, 'women are an integral part of the great human family; therefore, it is their duty and right to demand and struggle for the dignification of their country'" (Hernández, 88).

Along (and in conversation with) the Liberal Club network and the *Biblioteca Sociológica de Regeneración*, these PLM-affiliated or sympathetic writers and publications were vital components in a broad, vibrant, human-conditioning resistance culture that was, in effect, *magonismo*. They functioned as nodes of a complex mediatic network through which the movement itself lived and grew, a transnational political infrastructure that connected people to the cause of social revolution—and that, in the process of making these medial connections, aimed to change them into the kind of people who could, in turn, change the world

Remediation as Revolutionary Practice

In *Orality and Literacy*, Walter J. Ong writes against the tendency of scholars, and of contemporary "literate society" in general, to privilege texts and text-based practices of reading. Such a tendency, Ong argues, has made the "purely oral tradition or primary orality" (11) of past cultures all but inconceivable for us. Our capacity in this regard is so limited that our modes of studying oral traditions automatically translate them into the hegemonic regime of textual hermeneutics (hence academic terms like "oral literature," or "preliterate," or the "text" of an oral utterance). One of the reasons that orality is difficult to grasp is its lack of graspable material substance. "Writing," according to Ong, "makes 'words' appear similar to things because we think

of words as the visible marks signaling words to decoders: we can see and touch such inscribed 'words' in texts. Written words are residue. Oral tradition has no such residue or deposit. When an often-told oral story is not actually being told, all that exists of it is the potential in certain human beings to tell it" (11). Notwithstanding the Derridean analysis of *arche-writing* and the complexification of the orality-writing binary, Ong's rendering of textuality (as residue) and orality (as potential) makes the mediatic project of the PLM all the more fascinating.

Ricardo and his brother Jesús published the first issue of *Regeneración* in Mexico City on August 7, 1900. Even though *Regeneración*'s success was made possible by increasing literacy rates in Porfirian Mexico, its audience consisted of a significant contingent of illiterate populations. According to census data, which must always be taken with a pinch of salt, literacy rates in Mexico were at 17.9% in 1895 and began to climb to 22.3% in 1900, and to 27.7% in 1910 (INEGI, "Educación"). Greater increases occurred after the revolution and the drafting of the 1917 Constitution, which mandated mass education reform, including the proliferation of public schools. But, as Anne Rubenstein writes, "literacy, like everything to do with education, was a vexed political issue, which renders government statistics somewhat suspect. Among other problems, literacy was defined generously: for example, while the 1930 and 1940 censuses distinguished between literate people who could read and those who could also write, as late as 1970, less than 10 percent of the total population had studied at the high school level or beyond" (14-15). The point stands, though, that, at most, 1/5 of the population was literate by the time the first issue of *Regeneración* was published. And, as was the case for radicals in other developing nations attempting to foment a revolutionary literacy at the turn of the century, the very masses of oppressed workers, peasants, and indigenous people that the PLM was trying to educate and incite were often the most ill equipped to access their written messages.

This very condition of worker and *campesino* illiteracy, however, initially created, if not a favorable atmosphere, then at least a temporarily permissible one for the new generation of Liberal dissidents in Mexico. "Government forbearance toward the press was greater than for free association in public spaces," Lomnitz notes, because "many fewer people could join a paper's readership than could a mob a public square. Plus, the timing of news reporting and newspaper circulation loaned itself to a more nuanced strategy of regulation" (*The Return*, 82). The Díaz administration and its supporters were initially much more wary of the unpredictability, unruliness, and affective potential of the crowd than they were of a few student publications. The anger and electricity of a crowd did not require literacy. Nevertheless, similar to the explosion of dissenting magazines and newspapers permitted by Czar Nicholas II during the 1905 Russian Revolution, which was followed by a swift and violent wave of oppression, the police force under Díaz realized relatively quickly that such publications were dangerous and responded accordingly. Within a year and a half of publishing their first issue of *Regeneración*, Ricardo and Jesús were imprisoned. "Indeed," Lomnitz continues, "one indication of the effervescence around printing and its connection to organizing is the high number of Liberal newspapers closed down and journalists jailed when the government decided to react against the movement" (*The Return*, 88).

As a testament to the mutual forms of dependence and influence that characterize a given media ecology, the materiality (residue) of print and the immateriality (potential) of oral culture were always and necessarily considered together for the PLM. The authors of *Regeneración* did not only see illiteracy as a problem to overcome in order to convey a message; for the Junta, and for PLM members, the overcoming was itself the message. As Gomez-Quiñones describes, a resistance culture was created in and through the communicative acts of printing, reading, sharing, and responding to *Regeneración*:

> Important in maintaining the vibrancy of the organization was the physical act of communication. Receiving *Regeneración* and other periodicals was a pleasurable event and sure proof that the movement lived. A letter from Vidal Garza Pérez of Laredo to Flores Magón stated "*No tienes una idea lo que aprecian a Regeneración por estos lugares; todos se ponen muy contentos el día que viene*" (You have no idea what *Regeneración* means to these places; everyone is happy on the days when it arrives). Particularly pleasing was to find local news commented upon by the large newspaper or to read the exchange of letters by local partisans (often joint letters) with the editors, an exchange intense by all parties involved. On the day of delivery a group formed and the literate read to the non-readers. Discussion followed lasting hours, praise and criticism mixed; this would repeat itself for days. The word spread (28).

The spreading of the word was as integral to the PLM's attempt to instill political and economic change as the word itself. The air conditioning of *Regeneración*'s messages of legal and political resistance depended on the techno-spherological creation of a resistance culture that could be embodied (incarnated) in the deed of communication between the Junta, Liberal Clubs, workers, and students. As the correspondent Pérez attests to here, the very arrival and tangibility of *Regeneración* was a sign, a material trace, of the fact that the movement was alive and well. Pérez's statement implies faith not just in the labor of the Junta, but in a whole, transnational political infrastructure consisting of mechanical, spatial, discursive, etc. components that were put to work in order to bring the ephemeral product, *Regeneración*, into being, to transport its messages to all corners of Mexico, and to connect those who received it to the resistance culture of a movement whose collective power and promise was embodied in the mediatic network that made that resistance culture manifest. Comrades and sympathizers from all over the country (as Pérez himself is doing here) had mailed in letters to the Junta informing them of political unrest, of injustices suffered at the hands of common oppressors (the church, state, factory bosses, etc.), of events in their areas, etc. This was, in fact, *Regeneración*'s primary means of keeping abreast of what was happening in Mexico. Likewise, devoted party loyalists (like Práxedis Guerrero, Lázaro

Gutiérrez de Lara, Juan Sarabia, Librado Rivera and many others) were constantly risking their own lives and freedom by traveling by railroad to towns all along the U.S.-Mexico border and even farther south to communicate with Liberal Clubs, labor groups, other newspaper staffs, etc. Many hands participated in smuggling *Regeneración* into Mexico and disbursing copies throughout the land. In the fourth volume of his *Lecturas Históricas Mexicanas,* for instance, Ernesto de la Torre Villar describes a young Franciso J. Múgica—who would go on to become an influential military revolutionary and politician who would participate in the drafting of the 1917 Constitution and serve in President Lázaro Cárdenas's cabinet—secretly reading *Regeneración* and smuggling it under his shirt, pressed against this stomach:

> *El periódico* Regeneración—*que publica 28,000 ejemplares, que son distribuidos bajo sobre—inunda lenta pero eficazmente el país. Llegan unos ejemplares a Zamora, Michoacán y nadie sabe cómo llega a manos de algunos alumnos del Seminario, Franciso J. Múgica entre ellos, que lo lee con avidez, y va conociendo los principales puntos del programa del futuro Partido Liberal Mexicano: no reelección, inconveniencias y peligros del servicio militar obligatorio, clausura de las escuelas del clero. Lo guarda debajo de su camisa, hecho cuatro dobleces; el periódico le quema el pecho y le enciende dentro una llama que no se le apagará jamás. Sigue enterándose: salarios mínimos, jornadas de ocho horas, abolición de deudas de los campesinos para con sus señores, obligación de éstos de no tener improductivas sus tierras, cesión de éstas a los campesinos* (249).
>
> The periodical *Regeneración*—publishing 28,000 copies that are then distributed by envelope—slowly but effectively floods the country. Copies arrive in Zamora, Michoacán, and nobody knows how the periodical gets into the hands of some Seminary students, including Franciso J. Múgica, who reads it avidly, and gets to know the main points of the future Mexican Liberal Party's program: no re-election, the inconveniences and dangers of compulsory military service, the closure of clergy schools. He keeps it hidden under his shirt, folded in quarters; the newspaper burns his chest and ignites a flame inside him that will never go out. His discoveries continue: minimum wages, eight-hour workdays, the abolition of the peasants' debts to their lords, their obligation to continually cultivate their lands, the transfer of those lands to the peasants (249).

To participate in this politicized act of clandestine circulation—of individually working to fortify and maintain the functionality of the collective mediatic network of *magonismo*—was to become more invested in the cause, more conditioned by it, and to become, in turn, more of a conditioning agent oneself, helping to spread not just the word but the social revolution.

Moreover, it was both expected and encouraged that literate readers would recite whole articles aloud to the non-readers, and then discussions would ensue. All of this—the practices of oral remediation, the PLM's reliance on a more horizontal information-sharing network from readers, the efforts of party members, Club organizers, and sympathizers to disseminate copies of *Regeneración*—is part of what Quiñones refers to as the "physical act of communication" that was so crucial for keeping the coals of the movement burning. The "physical act," the deed of communication, was a performance of the cooperative, mutualistic ethos of *magonismo*, an interpersonal embodiment of the resistance culture that, for the PLM, enacted the social revolution

Figure 2.6. *"Men Reading El Machete" (1924*). Photograph by Tina Modotti.

the Junta was calling for, a resistance culture that was mediated as much through the pages of *Regeneración* as the social relations formed between those who read and listened to it.

The image of workers and *campesinos* clustered around a single copy of a newspaper while one member of the group reads passages aloud became ingrained in popular consciousness (for revolutionaries and reactionaries) as the visible work of social movements in action. What Ong describes as the potential of oral transmission was tied together with the materiality and transportability of writing to hot-wire an engine of unrest and cooperation. So culturally ingrained had this image become that by the time it was immortalized in Tina Modotti's photograph "Men Reading *El Machete*" (Figure 2.6) it was thickly laden with history and meaning that resonated far beyond the political narratives of the Communist Party (for which *El Machete* was, by 1925, the official organ in Mexico).

Because of the residual thickness that images like this have for revolutionary history, it's easy to take this kind of communicative relay for granted, to assume it just happened. But it must be remembered that the government of Porfirio Díaz and its surrounding milieu of *cientificos* (the privileged, elite state intellectuals, government officials, etc.) claimed themselves to be the inheritors of the Liberal tradition that brought Mexico its independence and would bring it into the modern world. This apparatus of intellectual power, which pandered to the power of (foreign and domestic) capital, thrived by maintaining a (racialized, gendered, class-hierarchical) grip on the circuits of knowledge production and dissemination. At the turn of the century, the state was not the all-seeing, ever-present monster that the PLM made it out to be, but it was still the primary institutional arbiter of a larger class division in which literacy and knowledge-value were

Figure 2.7. *Regeneración*'s instructions for literate readers to read aloud to their illiterate comrades during work breaks. From *Regeneración*, 1 March 1910.

mexicano que deje de asistir á la cita que les ponen sus compañeros extranjeros.

No se desanime Ud. porque sus compañeros de trabajo no sepan leer: reúnalos en los ratos de descanso y léales REGENERACION. La verdad será mas fuerte que su ignorancia involuntaria: les hará comprender sus derechos y los excitará á defenderlos.

En vez de MATALOS EN CALIENTE, ahora ordena Porfirio Diaz: MATALOS EN FRIO Y DE HAMBRE

overwhelmingly the privileged territory of the social, racial, and gendered elite. The mediatic project of *magonismo* that was embodied in *Regeneración* attempted to educate the masses while also breaking through the dominant spherological arrangement of the *porfiriato*, which concentrated power in the knowledge economy to literate elites. Thus, on the front page of *Regeneracion*'s October 1st issue in 1910, the Junta gave the kind of instruction to its literate readers that was meant to aid in the PLM's political project of breaking this knowledge economy (Figure 2.7): "Don't be discouraged that your labor comrades can't read: gather them together during breaks and read REGENERACION to them. The truth will overpower their involuntary ignorance: they will understand their rights and will be moved to defend them" ("No se desanime").

It is also crucial to note that the PLM's encouragement and expectation of this kind of communicative relay may very well have had a recursive effect on the ways that they articulated (perhaps even conceived of) their political ideology. As previously mentioned, the process of getting *Regeneración* into and spread throughout Mexico was complex and tiresome. Moreover, it goes without saying that, for illiterate workers and *campesinos*, having copies of *Regeneración* lying around to reference would not do much good. The Junta was well aware of the fact that, as Ong puts it, "When an often-told oral story is not actually being told, all that exists of it is the

potential in certain human beings to tell it" (11). Thus, it was of critical importance that the textually transmitted messages on the pages of *Regeneración* could be remediated easily into the mnemotechnical practices of oral culture. In order to maintain the potential of oral transmission when a physical copy (or a reader) wasn't present, the rhetoric of *Regeneración*'s articles needed to be memorable, its ideas repeatable. "And indeed it was true that the magnification of print culture by oral transmission was at the very heart of revolutionary popular culture," Lomnitz writes,

> what matters is that there was a deep heterogeneity among followers of *Regeneración* and of the other radical papers and that a segment of those papers' public was made up not of readers but of tellers and listeners. For this reason, the poetic abilities of a Práxedis Guerrero, of a Ricardo Flores Magón, or of a Juan Sarabia mattered quite a lot […] It was not only a matter of keeping readers interested, but also a question of writing material that could be remembered and then reported or retold—not necessarily in the exact same words, but sometimes exact words were useful, and their repetition could be achieved through the rhyme and meter of closed poetic forms such as the *décimas* and the *octavas* that are typical of *corridos* (*The Return*, 241).

Working within the heterogeneous conditions of local spheres (shaped by local languages, dialects, performative conventions, oral traditions) while maintaining a collective sense of the PLM's resistance culture was a fundamental obstacle for (but nevertheless the mission of) *Regeneración*. Thus, establishing networks and practices of communication by way of employing such creative techno-spherological media strategies was more than just a means to an end. The very resistance culture that *magonismo* envisioned as a counter to, first, the *porfiriato* and, later, to the oppressive will of capital, clergy, and state was incarnated, embodied, by the mediatic project of *Regeneración*.

Between Two Worlds

An unavoidable component in studying the conditions of possibility for *Regeneración* and/as *magonismo* is the fact that this is a fundamentally transnational story. As Gomez- Quiñones notes, "*Regeneración*'s statements reflected the process of the social movement in México and the experience in the United States" (46). Gomez-Quiñones and Lomnitz alike bring to the fore the important fact that, in moving across the border, the Junta's hopes for enjoying political freedom and democratic institutions in America were duly (and rather quickly) dashed. "In the face of exile," Lomnitz writes, "mainstream Mexicans were turned into minor figures" (*The Return*, xxxix), relegated to political obscurity in the public sphere, suffering economic hardships, and experiencing all the frustration and humiliation of being part of a second-class race in America. As previously noted, Ricardo's letter from prison to his lover, María Brousse, reflected the melancholy and frustration experienced by the Junta, given their minor status even among leftist groups in the U.S.: "we are poor Mexicans. We are revolutionaries and our ideals are very advanced, but we are Mexicans. That is our flaw. Our skin is not white, and not everyone can understand that underneath a dark skin there are nerves, there is heart, and there are brains" (*Obras Completas*, 499).

The experience of and protest against this minor position was, in fact, part of what turned Flores Magón and the PLM into central characters for Chicano political movements later in the 20th century and for Chicano historians like Quiñones himself. Moreover, it was this issue that made the PLM a bigger threat in the eyes of the U.S. state. As Colin MacLachlan writes, "The United States government initially viewed [Flores Magón] as a Mexican problem, but in the end, it considered him a danger to internal security and responded accordingly" (115). There were important reasons why the U.S. government found the anti-Porfirian bent of the PLM problematic

(primarily insofar as it had the potential to interfere with U.S. economic interests in Mexico). But what truly made the Junta dangerous for U.S. officials was their capacity to corral the anger of exploited Chicanos and Latino immigrants in the U.S. and spread the word of revolution against all forms of racial, ethnic, and economic authority.

The PLM's lived experience in the U.S. had a significant impact on their livelihoods, their printing operations, and their political and philosophical trajectory. Inasmuch as the U.S. government came to see the PLM as more than a Mexican problem, the PLM, during its time in the U.S., came to see the revolution as more than Mexican movement:

> Revolutions cannot be made without an everyday reality to sustain them—a structure of labor, a social world, a personal network. The anarchist revolution was the most radical revolution that the Enlightenment spawned. It was a concerted attempt to build a world founded on human cooperation, with no state and no private property. The social conditions that were needed in order to imagine such a possibility and, just as importantly, to strive for it, were rather peculiar, and in the case of the Mexican anarchists, very much shaped by traffic across the U.S.-Mexican border (Lomnitz, *The Return*, 211).

Lomnitz's massive study can be seen as an exercise in exploring more of these conditions of possibility for the PLM's imagination of a political ethos. What I argue for here is the need to examine the conditions of possibility for the PLM's communication of their political ethos, with the further caveat that the communication *was* a condition of possibility for said ethos itself. And a major facet to this story is the fact that, while the great bulk of their efforts were devoted to becoming ideological crafters of the revolution by maneuvering within heterogeneous Mexican media ecologies, the PLM's primary media ecology was in the U.S.

From their offices in El Paso, St. Louis, and Los Angeles, the PLM relied heavily on mailed-in correspondence from Mexico and along the U.S.-Mexico border. This, in itself, was both a vital and flawed form of communicativity: the kinds of correspondence that the PLM received

gave them a skewed view of just how "ready" Mexico was for a revolution and for that revolution to have anarchist goals. Nevertheless, the blood of the movement flowed through the mediatic veins and arteries of Liberal Clubs and U.S. and Mexican postal systems; it was smuggled into Mexico by train in hollowed-out Sears catalogues, in the intense spaces of word-of-mouth conversation, and in the bags of *compañeros* hopping boxcars or riding horses through the desert lands. The kinds of living/working conditions that plagued PLM members in the U.S. thus mixed together with this will to communicate in ways that only fueled their convictions. As Ethel Duffy Turner recalled,

> The lives of the leaders of the Liberal Party were all marked by this combination of precariousness of existence and vast freedom of movement, with agitators such as Blas Lara, Fernando Palomares, Enrique Flores Magón, Práxedis Guerrero, Tomás and Manuel Sarabia, and practically every other leader that one can name or think of moving between, say, agricultural work in the Imperial valley, construction, work for utilities companies, in lumber mills, mines, on railroads, and more. The combination of precariousness and mobility made for a peculiar kind of sociability, oriented toward establishing relations of support and solidarity between strangers, based on anything from ethnic identification, to politics, to simple 'sympathy' (212).

This "peculiar kind of sociability," facilitated by peculiar atmospheric assemblages of communication and their enactment of a revolutionary resistance culture, did not just allow the PLM and its sympathizers to transmit an anarchist ethos—it helped make that ethos what it was. It was because of this that the kind of "agitation" that the PLM advocated for in their seemed possible:

> Agitation! This is the supreme resource of the moment. Individual agitation of conscious workers; collective agitation of workers' and freethinking societies; agitation in the street, in the theater, in the streetcar, in the meeting places, in the home, in all places where there are ears to hear, consciences capable of indignation, hearts which haven't been hardened by the injustice and brutality of the environment; agitation by means of letters, manifestoes, flyers, conferences,

> meetings, by as many means as possible, making understood the necessity of working quickly and with energy in favor of the radical revolutionaries of Mexico ("Manifiesto a todos los trabajadores del mundo").

Later in the "Manifesto," the Junta also pleads for a communicative relay, a communal effort of remediation, "Comrades, reprint this manifesto, translate it into all languages, and make it circulate across all the borders of the Earth." The Junta's injunctions to spread the word express, again, an implicit awareness of and faith in not only the nomadic communication that they experienced daily on farms, in cities, factories, mail, etc., but also in the expanding political infrastructure, a mediatic network that embodied the PLM's resistance culture.

Moreover, the PLM directly relied on the existing spherological media networks and practices in the United States, even if those networks embodied power relations that were anathema to the culture of *magonismo*. For example, the details of the political trials of Ricardo and other Junta members in the U.S. judicial system would manage to achieve a certain degree—impressive for its time—of coverage in the media streams of the U.S. left and parts of Europe and Latin America. But even this coverage rose and fell with the tides of world war and the changing winds of the Mexican revolution. At one point the cause to release the Mexican prisoners had gained such traction that seminal leftist figures like Mother Jones and Eugene V. Debs pushed for it loudly and publicly in the U.S. press. But even this support stalled soon after the revolution began. The international advocacy for leftist political prisoners, owing much to globalizing networks of mass communication, would reach unprecedented levels only a few years later with the trials and execution of Italian-American anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti (1921-27). As Lisa McGirr explains,

> The movement spread as widely across the globe as it did as a result of another great development of the age: mass communication. Turn-of-the-century

> revolutions in print and communications technology enabled far-flung communities to follow the twists and turns of the case. International telegraphic communication had enabled elites to stay abreast of global developments in the last third of the nineteenth century, but now the communications revolution had filtered down to the working classes […] The democratization of access to knowledge facilitated collective mobilization (1100-1101).

The trials of the PLM members, and the calls for their exoneration, demonstrate a late-middle stage of this intertwining of the "proletarianization" of mass communication and international political mobilization. One could focus on many factors, though, that could have led to the failure of the PLM's trials to reach the level of international solidarity that the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti would a decade later (World War I, the Mexican and Russian revolutions, etc.). The path that the Mexican revolution was taking while the PLM was dealing with imprisonment, factional infighting, economic troubles, etc., contributed to *Regeneración*'s waning influence. Along with these various political and geopolitical factors, though, there are other aspects to the U.S. media ecology that contributed to the PLM's troubles.

Firstly, the public sphere in the U.S. was dominated by a retinue of newspaper moguls and franchises that worked to sediment public opinion within the bounds of the status quo. In the years before Díaz was overthrown, the Mexican government, and its consulate officials in the U.S., did what it could to sway U.S. officials into pressuring the PLM into silence. More importantly (and more effectively), Díaz devoted significant resources to buying off the U.S. press. As Lomnitz writes,

> It is difficult to assess whether consuls in fact did much purchasing of the American press—consulates generally had limited resources and probably did not influence opinion that much—but it is certain that the Mexican government became convinced that money was critical to gaining favorable coverage in the United States, just as it was in Mexico. That is why Porfirio Díaz gave juicy concessions to key owners of major U.S. media chains: William Randolph Hearst

> owned over two million acres of land in Chihuahua, and Harrison Gray Otis owned about half a million acres in Baja California (*The Return*, 210).

Even if papers under the Hearst and Otis umbrellas made critical remarks about the Díaz government, they still painted a picture for the American public that was favorable to the aims of the *porfiriato*. They depicted Mexico as a backward country in the early growing pains of modernization, a country that was thus in need of a strong-handed ruler and that couldn't abide troublemakers like the members of the Junta. Things would get even worse for what was left of the Junta later in the decade when they became one of many targets of red-baiting campaigns in the American news media, especially after Ricardo published criticisms of the U.S.'s entry into the war and the military draft.

The anarchist hunt was already well underway, but Ricardo's political stance was marked with a bull's eye in the press and in the eyes of the U.S. government after news spread of the Zimmermann telegram in 1917. As MacLachlan describes, "With the United States' entrance into the world war imminent, the government became increasingly concerned with internal security, especially after the discovery and publication of the Zimmermann telegram, which promised to return Mexico's northern territories in exchange for Mexico's cooperation with Germany against the United States" (73). The final charges that would mark the death knell for Ricardo Flores Magón were fueled by the anxiety over anarchism in the U.S., but the release of the Zimmermann telegram brought that anxiety to a new height. And even though it's very unlikely that any officials in the Mexican government at the time seriously considered the offer in the Zimmermann telegram (Mexican state officials were well aware of the stability that needed to be maintained with their neighbor to the North), the U.S. popular press spread this anxiety like wildfire.

Lastly, if one is discussing the significance of the U.S. media ecology for the fate of the PLM, it is impossible to overlook the role of the postal system. The same system upon which the Junta had depended so heavily, the same system that helped make much of their dissemination of *Regeneración*—and, thus, their mediatic project writ large—possible was itself part of the apparatus of power that would issue a de facto death sentence for Ricardo. "Federal Officials considered the monitoring of mass communications the most effective way to control suspected subversive elements," MacLachlan explains.

> Radical newspapers and periodicals seldom had sufficient local support to survive; consequently, they had to appeal to a national audience, inevitably involving use of the United States mails. Although the penal code by itself proved to be a formidable weapon, wartime hysteria demanded even more control. With great satisfaction, the Postmaster General reported that the Espionage Act, together with the Trading with the Enemy Act, gave his department a way of dealing with seditious material and other 'more or less disloyal' publications that attempted to utilize the mails (80).

The history of the struggle over free speech and political dissent in America has a special place for Ricardo Flores Magón and the PLM Junta. In their 1916 Los Angeles trial, Ricardo and his brother Enrique became the first individuals to be convicted under section 211 of the amended Federal Penal Code of 1910. The amendment in question concerned the extension of federal laws against circulating "obscene" material in the U.S. postal system to include "material that tended to incite arson, murder, or assassination." "By declaring *Regeneración*'s editorials to be 'vile and filthy,' the government effectively suppressed freedom of speech under the guise of obscenity control" (MacLachlan, 116).

Chapter III. "El Machete Sirve para Cortar la Caña"

> *Dicen los seudomarxistas y demás ideólogos de la democracia burguesa dentro de las filas de la clase obrera: el proletariado no puede ni debe estar en contra de la revolución Mexicana, en primer lugar, por todos los beneficios que le acarrea; y en segundo, porque la consumación de los fines de dicha revolución representa la etapa previa del desarrollo histórico que permitirá a la clase obrera plantearse, después de realizada tal etapa, la lucha por el poder y por el establecimiento del socialismo.*
>
> *Si se toma en sus términos literales el enunciado: la clase obrera no debe estar en contra de la revolución mexicana, aquél resulta, en verdad, inobjetable. La clase obrera no puede ni debe estar en contra de la revolución democrático-burguesa* — José Revueltas, *Ensayo sobre un proletariado sin cabeza* (211-212)

> The pseudo-Marxists and the rest of the ideologs of bourgeois democracy within the ranks of the working class say: that the proletarian cannot and should not be against the Mexican revolution; firstly, for all the benefits they will reap from it; secondly, because the consummation of the ends of said revolution represents the previous stage for the historical development that will allow the working class to fight, once that stage is complete, for power and for the establishment of socialism.
>
> If the statement—the working class should not be against the Mexican revolution—is taken literally, then it truly becomes unobjectionable. The working class cannot and should not be against the bourgeois-democratic revolution — José Revueltas, *Essay on a Headless Proletariat* (211-212)

It was originally my intention for this chapter to create a historical portrait of the Partido Comunista Mexicano (PCM) and its newspaper, *El machete*, that mirrored the portrait of the PLM and *Regeneración* I presented in the previous chapter; a portrait, that is, of the multiform and interconnecting dimensions of the concerted media politics the PCM developed in the early postrevolutionary period in the hopes of actuating its vision for the dictatorship of the proletariat. I do present such a portrait in the second half of this chapter, but I devote a greater deal of attention to analyzing the hegemonic medial arrangements in which Mexican society, including the PCM and its members, was entangled. If we are to understand politics as the collective

struggle to intervene in and reorient such hegemonic medial arrangements, one cannot hope to fully appreciate, let alone judge, the media politics of the communists in the 1920s without understanding the dynamic and complex infrastructure of hegemony that they were up against.

As I show in the following sections, while the revolution presented a radical possibility for dismantling or repurposing that infrastructure by breaking the continuum of bourgeois rule, it ended up providing the conditions and symbolic justifications for "the perfect [bourgeois] dictatorship" to emerge, one that would be embodied in the ur-medium of the Mexican state. Thus, at the very moment that war-torn societies in Europe and North America were experiencing proletarian revolutionary fervor, catalyzed by the success of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, the situation in Mexico proved to be quite different. The revolution was coming to a close and a postrevolutionary state was emerging that would claim itself to be the rightful inheritor of "the people's" revolutionary will, and that would, in turn, regularly deploy that will to justify building and fortifying the medial infrastructure for a revolutionary nationalism that would absorb social tensions into itself and manage them in a perpetual bourgeois synthesis. In this chapter, I explore the medial dimensions through which that postrevolutionary hegemonic order took shape, and I do so, by necessity, in order to better analyze the contexts in which the PCM and its media politics developed in conversation with this changing world—and to better evaluate their struggles to intervene in it.

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"Comrades! A Russian Bolshevik who took part in the 1905 Revolution, and who lived in your country for many years afterwards, has offered to convey my letter to you…" So begins

Vladimir Lenin's famous 1918 "Letter to American Workers." The "Russian Bolshevik" in question—the one entrusted with smuggling Lenin's letter beyond the Allied blockade surrounding the newly established Soviet state and making sure said letter found its way to workers in the United States—was none other than Mikhail Markovich Gruzenberg, better known by his revolutionary alias, Mikhail Borodin.

The letter would make it across the Atlantic before Borodin did. While making preparations to carry out his own critical mission in the New World, assigned to him by Lenin himself, Borodin traveled to Oslo, Norway, where he met an old friend from his Chicago days: the would-be legendary American poet Carl Sandburg. It was in Oslo that Borodin handed Lenin's letter over to Sandburg along with a $10,000 check, which was meant to support Communist efforts in the United States but was seized by suspicious U.S. Customs officials when Sandburg landed in New York (Klehr, 101; Callahan, 66). Undeterred, "The Illinois Poet Laureate in turn" still managed to smuggle the letter "into the United States for publication in Max Eastman's *The Liberator* (1918), the successor to *The Masses*" (Kalaidjian, 27).

By way of formally introducing himself and the radical Bolshevik project to the American working class, Lenin appeals to his readers' deeply embedded cultural memory of their own radical history: "The history of modern, civilised America opened with one of those great, really liberating, really revolutionary wars of which there have been so few compared to the vast number of wars of conquest […] caused by squabbles among kings, landowners or capitalists over the division of usurped lands or ill-gotten gains. That was the war the American people waged against the British robbers who oppressed America and held her in colonial slavery" ("Letter to American Workers"). With characteristically brutal wit and biting prose, Lenin deftly moves to contrast the liberatory spirit and promise of America's revolutionary past

with the labored injustice of its present: “About 150 years have passed since then […] America has taken first place among the free and educated nations […] At the same time, America has become one of the foremost countries in regard to the depth of the abyss which lies between the handful of arrogant multimillionaires who wallow in filth and luxury, and the millions of working people who constantly live on the verge of pauperism” (“Letter to American Workers”).

As highlighted above, it took a not-insignificant amount of planning, clandestine maneuvering, and harnessing of interpersonal relations and transnational medial networks (of translation, transportation, communication, and information sharing) to get Lenin’s letter past the physical military blockade and into the hands of American readers. On top of that, it took these skilled, though seemingly effortless, rhetorical moves to allow Lenin himself to maneuver his way through an informational and ideological blockade that he imagined—rightly, for the most part—would have been responsible for giving many of his potential readers a decidedly skewed vision of himself and the Bolsheviks. (“This very day, the Anglo-French and American bourgeois newspapers are spreading, in millions and millions of copies, lies and slander about Russia…”) By establishing a series of value-laden binaries—America’s past and present, revolutionary wars and wars of conquest, “arrogant multimillionaires” and “millions of working people who constantly live on the verge of pauperism”—Lenin splits reality like wood, creating an opening for him and his imagined reader to connect while simultaneously implicating their common bourgeois oppressors in an effort to suppress a truth they embody together (even if they didn’t know it until now). In the same, swift motion, he gives his readers reason to doubt the motivations of the “bourgeois newspapers” and reason to believe what he is telling them. He invites them to do so, moreover, in a way that is flattering, galvanizing, and grounded in the “proof” of the orchestrated inequality that they can see and feel all around them: the history he

describes, after all, is one that imputes to himself, the Bolsheviks, and to his reader the shared righteousness of the have-nots. Thus, Lenin interpellates his readers, calling them forth ("Comrades!") to step into a subject position that already feels familiar, and fits snugly, because it has been tailored by the material conditions of a political economy whose injustice is their lived reality—and whose repudiation is their shared destiny.

The point of driving this wedge—of establishing that he, Lenin, is speaking to those who, like the Bolsheviks, are treated with disdain by the bourgeois forces to which they pose a threat—is to frame the unfolding of history readers were witnessing in terms of the "fierce resistance to the socialist revolution on the part of the bourgeoisie"; to emphasize, in turn, the need to counter that resistance by spreading the revolution, like spores, far beyond the borders of Russia; and to enjoin workers in the United States to invest in this struggle by directly linking the machinations of their daily exploitation to the same system that would smother the Soviet project in its cradle. "We know that fierce resistance to the socialist revolution on the part of the bourgeoisie is inevitable in all countries," Lenin writes, "and that this resistance will *grow* with the growth of this revolution. The proletariat will crush this resistance; during the struggle against the resisting bourgeoisie it will finally mature for victory and for power." His assured confidence in the inevitability of proletarian victory is infectious; at the same time, his letter belies a frank desperation. The occasion of Lenin's letter, after all, was not merely to celebrate the success of the October Revolution, but to implore others around the world to help the Bolsheviks—war weary, surrounded by Allied powers, vilified (especially by Great Britain), and

in desperate need of material support that their "backward," still-primarily-agrarian society could not generate on its own.[8] To keep the Revolution from dying, they needed reinforcements:

> We are now, as it were, in a besieged fortress, waiting for the other detachments of the world socialist revolution to come to our relief. These detachments *exist*, they are *more numerous* than ours, they are maturing, growing, gaining more strength the longer the brutalities of imperialism continue. The workers are breaking away from their social traitors—the Gomperses, Hendersons, Renaudels, Scheidemanns and Renners. Slowly but surely the workers are adopting communist, Bolshevik tactics and are marching towards the proletarian revolution, which alone is capable of saving dying culture and dying mankind ("Letter to American Workers").

Of course, it was not unexpected that the Bolsheviks would be in this position. Quite the opposite, in fact. In a way, you could say it was proof of concept, and it spoke precisely to the reasons that Lenin, Trotsky, et al. had come to believe they could actually achieve a successful socialist revolution and short-circuit the teleology of orthodox Marxism in the first place.

In the first edition of *Capital, Volume 1* (1867), Marx writes, "The country that is more developed industrially shows, to the less developed, only the image of its own future" (qtd. in Tomba, 404). The economic and social conditions of industrially developed countries, that is, are

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[8] Allied forces were able to use containment of Germany as a smokescreen to maintain their naval blockade and cut off vital trade to Russia. "It was largely thanks to Allied fear of infection," Patrick Wright notes, "that the 'iron wall of partition' raised against Bolshevik Russia took the form not just of exaggerated political rhetoric, but of an economic blockade enforced by naval power […] Though not formally declared, the Allied blockade was first imposed against Germany (and rapidly extended to neutral countries involved in provisioning the Central Empires) at the beginning of the war in 1914. The aim, as an overconfident Allied press reported, had been to starve the enemy into surrender within six months" (171). Beyond the blockade, however, Allies also made a concerted but ultimately failed effort to intervene in Russia's ongoing civil war in favor of the Whites. As the avowedly anti-Communist Harvard historian Richard Pipes writes, "Of the three powers most directly involved—Britain, France, and the United States—only Britain made a serious commitment to the Whites […] And Britain's involvement was due primarily to Winston Churchill, who earlier than any other European statesmen understood the threat that Russian Communism posed to the West" (67-68).

what less developed countries have to look forward to—they are merely farther along the teleological path of historical development that every country will (and must) follow on their way to socialist revolution. While Marx would tweak the phrasing in later editions to qualify his assertion and premise it on slightly less abstract and universalist terms, the thesis articulated in this first edition very much became reified not only in the different constituencies and aims of the First and Second Internationals, but in a Marxist intellectual culture that permeated late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century socialist parties in the West, a culture that more or less took the "laws" of historical development as a given. Whether the passing from bourgeois democracy to socialism in developed countries would be hastened by parliamentary parties and legislation, militant uprisings, the cooperative federation of local, worker-governed organizations of producers in different industries … that was another question. As George Lichtheim (whose knack for clarifying synthesis always makes him worth quoting at length) writes,

> But Marx, unlike Bakunin and his anarchist progeny, did not place his trust in mere agitation. He was enough of a Hegelian to believe that history had its own logic and that this logic pointed obscurely in the direction of communism […] Like Hegel, Marx envisaged freedom concretely, as the overcoming of obstacles to the fulfillment of man's historic destiny; unlike Hegel, he thought in terms of going beyond bourgeois society (not to mention the Prussian state, whose official apologist Hegel became in his later years). […] Bourgeois society had "alienated" the worker from the instruments of his toil. It had thereby opened up a gulf between the classes, but at the same time it furnished the means for transcending its own contradictions. The industrial proletariat—reduced to servitude by the operation of the economy—was the predestined instrument of human emancipation. […] For what kept the system going was an economic mechanism that subordinated the elementary needs of human beings—specifically the material needs of the exploited class—to the interests of capital. The class conflict inherent in this situation would eventually reflect itself in a political revolution whereby the bourgeois limitations of freedom and equality would be overcome. This revolution would in principle serve the needs of all men, but only the working class could bring it about (78-79).

This was the path that industrially developed countries like England, Germany, and France were on, as was the conviction of many a socialist around the turn of the century, and it was the path that underdeveloped countries like Russia would inevitably have to follow. "Marx's followers," Lichtheim notes earlier, "transformed his theory of history into what the Germans call a *Weltanschauung* [worldview], and Lenin's successors eventually turned it into something even more grandiose, namely a state religion" (76). By all accounts, then, Russia—a primarily agrarian, "technologically and socially backwards" society—could not expect to move directly from tsarism to socialist revolution without first passing through the necessary historical phase of bourgeois revolution followed by increased industrialization of the country's economic production, proletarianization of its workforce, an exposing of the inadequacies and limitations of bourgeois democracy, generation of material abundance, and the consolidation of wealth and power in the hands of a ruling class just itching to be overthrown. But it did. And it was Leon Trotsky, writing from prison after the defeated 1905 Russian Revolution, who formulated one of the key reasons for thinking it could.

"It is possible for the workers to come to power in an economically backward country sooner than in an advanced country" Trotsky wrote in his *Results and Prospects* (1906). "In 1871 the workers deliberately took power in their hands in petty-bourgeois Paris—true, for only two months, but in the big-capitalist centres of Britain or the United States the workers have never held power for so much as an hour. To imagine that the dictatorship of the proletariat is in some way automatically dependent on the technical development and resources of a country is a prejudice of 'economic' materialism simplified to absurdity. This point of view has nothing in common with Marxism" (*Results and Prospects*). Not only was it *possible* for a country like Russia—and a people like the Russians—to leapfrog its way to the socialist revolution stage of

historical materialist societal development, but according to Trotsky, it was actually a *corruption* of Marxism to think otherwise.[9] In many ways, the problems facing Russia—agrarian feudalism, tsarist despotism, etc.—*were* those typically facing societies preceding bourgeois revolution. But such societies never exist in a vacuum. Insofar as every country's unique cultural characteristics, along with their particular social and economic arrangements, develop independently of other countries (and insofar as their respective rates of development are unevenly distributed), all exist within an expansive medial network of global interconnection, a world system, in which the development of one country can and will shape that of another in "combined and uneven" ways. For instance, it was for this very reason that, according to Trotsky, global trade systems along with imported technologies from more developed Western countries could accelerate industrialization in Russia's urban centers while the Russian bourgeoisie remained relatively weak and disorganized, thus opening an opportunity for the allied forces of the urban proletariat and peasantry to seize power and "supersede" the "bourgeois-democratic programme of the Revolution," pushing "the temporary political domination of the Russian working class […] into

[9] What Trotsky would develop into his theory of *permanent revolution* was steeped in a close reading and major expansion of related sentiments from Marx and Engels, which expressed the need for the revolution to not make compromises that would ultimately hinder its capacity to spread worldwide. Perhaps the most prominent example was articulated by Marx in his 1850 "Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League" in London: "the democratic petty bourgeois want better wages and security for the workers, and hope to achieve this by an extension of state employment and by welfare measures; in short, they hope to bribe the workers with a more or less disguised form of alms and to break their revolutionary strength by temporarily rendering their situation tolerable […] While the democratic petty bourgeois want to bring the revolution to an end as quickly as possible, achieving at most the aims already mentioned, *it is our interest and our task to make the revolution permanent* until all the more or less propertied classes have been driven from their ruling positions, until the proletariat has conquered state power and until the association of the proletarians has progressed sufficiently far *– not only in one country but in all the leading countries of the world –* that competition between the proletarians of these countries ceases and at least the decisive forces of production are concentrated in the hands of the workers" (emphases added).

a prolonged Socialist dictatorship" (Trotsky, "Preface"). It was also for this reason, however, that Trotsky, Lenin, and the Bolsheviks understood that their revolution could not survive on its own:

> Without the direct State support of the European proletariat the working class of Russia cannot remain in power and convert its temporary domination into a lasting socialistic dictatorship. Of this there cannot for one moment be any doubt. But on the other hand there cannot be any doubt that a socialist revolution in the West will enable us directly to convert the temporary domination of the working class into a socialist dictatorship […] Left to its own resources, the working class of Russia will inevitably be crushed by the counter-revolution the moment the peasantry turns its back on it. *It will have no alternative but to link the fate of its political rule, and, hence, the fate of the whole Russian revolution, with the fate of the socialist revolution in Europe* (*Results and Prospects*) (emphases added).

The grand and terrible payoff of the Bolsheviks' un-orthodox revolution was not merely eliminating capitalism in one country but striking a blow to a global capitalist system where it was particularly vulnerable—the counter-revolution was coming, and they knew it. Russia's interconnectedness with the counter-revolutionary powers that dominated this system was now a serious weakness, which is why Allied forces, particularly Great Britain, saw an opportunity with the naval blockade to squeeze the medial points of connection with the outside world upon which the Russian economy depended. At the same time, it was exactly this interconnectedness that bound the fate of the Bolshevik Revolution with revolutionary movements in the rest of Europe and beyond. "Problems would disappear in the larger context of a federated socialist Europe," as Geoff Eley writes: "the more advanced economies delivered the missing developmental resources, compensating the proletariat's Russian isolation with the international solidarity of broader-based workers' states to the west. This was vitally enabling for the Bolsheviks: if seizing power was to be justified before the court of history, revolution in the West had to occur" (149).

These were the circumstances in which Lenin penned his "Letter to American Workers." These were the reasons Mikhail Borodin embarked on his urgent trip to the United States before

setting off for another country that he and Lenin believed would also have a critical role to play in the battle for world revolution. On October 4, 1919, as the stamps on his passport show, Borodin crossed the border into Mexico (Spenser, *Stumbling Its Way*, 48).

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When Borodin arrived in Mexico City, he found himself walking into a political milieu that, on the surface, may have appeared quite similar to the one he had witnessed in the United States: the convening of a fraught National Congress (August-September 1919) called by a Socialist Party looking to redefine its political strategy; a left wing that, inspired in part by the bold actions of the Bolsheviks (or what they [mis]perceived to be the guiding aims and nature of the Bolshevik Revolution), saw participation in parliamentary politics as a dead end and sought to affiliate with the Communist International; two factions emerging from that left wing, each eventually making a claim to be the true Communist Party in their country (and each, by extension, hoping to be officially recognized by the Comintern and dispatched to Moscow and St. Petersburg to attend the Second Congress of the Communist International in July 1920). But that is pretty much where the resemblance ended. Under the surface, the leftwing political scene in postrevolutionary Mexico was quite different from that of the postwar United States—and the parties in question were much (much) smaller. It is easy to see, though, how Borodin and the comrades who would re-found the Partido Socialista de México (PSM) to become the Partido Comunista Mexicano (PCM)—few of whom were actually Mexican—saw an opportunity for Mexico to figure into what, at the time, felt like a widespread shift away from left parliamentarism and toward internationalist revolutionary worker action.

More than anything, the Revolution in Russia had served as a catalyst for revolutionary fervor and more militant, non-parliamentarian left-wing movements that had been developing well before the Bolsheviks stormed the Winter Palace. And, given the speed with which history had been moving in those years, the formation of the Communist (Third) International was a long time coming.[10] After all, the war had broken the Second International apart. In the wake of the 1914 July Crisis, as the jaws of the Great War opened wide, the leadership of Europe's socialist parties confronted the biggest challenge to the spirit of internationalism upon which their association was founded. Their choice was simple—and, thus, anything but: to do whatever was in their collective power to prevent the ensuing bloodshed, or to splinter into competing national chauvinisms and throw their support behind their respective countries. "Party leaders in the belligerent countries agonized" William Smaldone writes,

> but [they] ultimately decided to support their respective governments: first in Germany and then in France, Austria-Hungary, Britain, and Belgium, they turned away from internationalism and voted to grant war credits to their respective governments. Only Serbian and Russian socialists (both Mensheviks and Bolsheviks) said "no." The impact was profound. The International effectively collapsed, and its leading force, the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), lost its credibility. Europe's ruling classes had expected resistance, but their concern

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[10]"There are decades where nothing happens, and weeks where decades happen" – This oft-cited quote is regularly attributed to Lenin; sadly, it is very likely apocryphal (the sentiment, nevertheless, still applies). The closest approximation is in an article published in *Izvestia* on March 12, 1918 in which Lenin writes, "It has been Russia's lot to see most clearly, and experience most keenly and painfully the sharpest of sharp turning-points in history as it swings round from imperialism towards the communist revolution. *In the space of a few days we destroyed one of the oldest, most powerful, barbarous and brutal of monarchies. In the space of a few months we passed through a number of stages of collaboration with the bourgeoisie and of shaking off petty-bourgeois illusions, for which other countries have required decades*" ("The Chief Task of Our Day") (emphases added). It is also possible that Lenin had a sticky memory of a similar line from a letter penned by Marx to Engels in 1863: "Only your small-minded German philistine who measures world history by the ell and by what he happens to think are 'interesting news items,' could regard 20 years as more than a day where major developments of this kind are concerned, though these may be again succeeded by days into which 20 years are compressed" ("Marx to Engels in Manchester").

> proved unwarranted as workers' parties patriotically rallied around their respective flags (145-146).

All did not rally behind the war effort, however—multiple anti-war resolutions had been proposed within the Second International, and party executives (even in the SPD) agonized over the decision, many ultimately determining that, given the unfolding of events, there was nothing the socialist parties could do to stop the war (and putting themselves in the way of widespread nationalistic fervor would mean getting run over and potentially losing whatever political gains they had made in the previous decades).[11] To some, the party leaders' actions marked a profound betrayal of socialism, of the labor movement, and the spirit of internationalism. This betrayal, and the lessons it had to teach, would serve as an instructive force behind the formation and guidance of the Third International. While the national papers were spreading the news that the SPD had capitulated to the German government and voted for the war credits, Lenin and his wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya, were living in exile in the small Polish town of Poronin, where they stayed with Grigori Zinoviev and his wife, Zlata Lilina, along with the Polish couple Sergiusz and Natalia Bagocki (J. White, 103). On 5 August 1914, Zinoviev brought Lenin a copy of the SDP party organ, *Vorwärts,* which reported that the Reichstag had unanimously approved the

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[11] As noted by Smaldone, only the parties in Serbia and Russia dissented from the wave of patriotic resignation and "national defenseism" that swept socialists in Germany, France, Belgium, Britain, Austria and Hungary, etc. But there were also notable antiwar leftwing contingents within the rank and file of these parties and beyond, including, as Susan R. Grayzel notes, a significant number of women: "Even in the confusion of August 1914, the horrors of what a sustained war might bring seemed abundantly clear to several groups of women: those on the left; those feminists for whom pacifism or anti-militarism were central to their beliefs; and those who simply could not sanction sending their beloved sons, husbands, lovers, brothers and friends to fight. It required a good deal of courage to counter the prevailing waves of patriotism that emanated from almost every institution, above all the governments of belligerent nations, during the early, optimistic phases of the war, and so the very existence of a women's anti-war movement is significant" (79).

war credits, to which Lenin reportedly responded in somber tone: “This is the end of the Second International […] From this day on, I cease to be a Social-Democrat and become a Communist” (qtd. in Clark, 225).

As the war carried on, Lenin and the Bolsheviks certainly did what they could to foment a decisive break with the Second International, to regroup the European left in a more revolutionary posture and reclaim the abdicated mantle of internationalism, and to tangibly fuse the cause of peace with the triumph of socialism. But they were very much in the minority, as was embodied in the undertakings at the Zimmerwald Conference in Switzerland (September 1915), which brought together 38 delegates from Socialist parties representing 11 countries—Bulgaria, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, Poland, Russia, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland—and smaller, antimilitarist groups. Even if its concrete achievements were overstated at the time, Zimmerwald was still a momentous event, if only for providing a space for leftists to begin patching the wounds of internationalism’s 1914 collapse, for giving rise to the International Socialist Commission (ISC), and for bringing together delegates from countries on opposing sides of the war in the name of peace. Under the politically moderate guidance of Robert Grimm of the Swiss SPS, though, it became clear that the contours of this peace would be limited by a commitment to pacifism over staunch antimilitarism, to restoration of the principles of the Second International over revolution. “The domination of the moderate line represented by Grimm assured that Zimmerwald would remain limited to an extraordinary action for peace,” R. Craig Nation writes. Grimm’s aim, he continues,

> was to rescue the premises of social democracy from the distortions of defensism rather than to move beyond them. Under his direction the Zimmerwald movement's goal was restoration rather than transformation; in Agnes Blansdorf's summation, "to revive the Second International upon the old principles of prewar Marxian socialism." Lenin was unwilling to accept such limits. It was precisely

> the theory and practice of the Second International, he felt, that had led it to default in an hour of world historical significance. Zimmerwald represented an opportunity to begin anew […] creating the foundations for a third International that would defend revolutionary principles "not in words but in deeds" (92).

Lenin's left faction "remained small and unrepresentative" throughout the proceedings. Nevertheless, the fault lines of the coming split had emerged—and they would be widened as the war dragged on.

Another crucial reason that socialist parties didn't commit more forcefully to opposing the war was that, in the beginning, a lot of working people were for it. In stressing social solidarity and providing measured support for the war effort on the governmental side, and perhaps seeing organizational opportunities that accompanied the expanded labor needs (and tighter labor market) of domestic wartime production, labor leaders of a more reformist bent in countries like Great Britain, Germany, France, and the United States saw a chance to advance their interests in the halls of power, pushing for greater trade unionism, worker protections, and social safety nets (Kennedy, 28; Horne 261). There was merit to this strategy. Within the bounds of a wartime "civil truce" between labor, the bosses, and the government—built on nominally shared allegiances to social responsibility, common sacrifice, and patriotic community—workers had a considerable amount of leverage: insofar as the domestic engines driving the war effort depended on their patriotic toil and sacrifice, issues of labor (in)justice were elevated to the level of national defense. As Eley writes,

> Patriotic consensus bent not only to the insistent pressure of trade union pragmatists for a reformist payoff but also to popular ideals of social justice. Placing themselves inside the consensus freed working-class advocates to demand a more equitable distribution of the war's burdens, often via militant direct action, secure in the moral justifications that government appeals to common sacrifice delivered. War enthusiasm gave the Left vital leverage once hardships started to pinch, because grievances could employ the very language that official patriotism

> approved. Class inequities aggravated by the scarcities of the war economy were an obvious ground for populist complaint (131).

And pinch these hardships did. As military carnage on a scale hitherto unseen in the modern world ripped bodies and countries apart, as families were hurting from food and supply shortages, coupled with rising inflation rates and costs of basic commodities (and black-market extortion), as working conditions deteriorated and opportunistic (even draconian) exploitation of workers at home increased amid state efforts to maximize production, the tenuous wartime bonds holding the civil truce together were quickly fraying. What's more, it became clearer by the day that, even though different sectors of the *polis* may have been in the same storm, they were by no means in the same boat. "Thus," in the United States, as Joseph A. McCartin writes, "although real wages had risen between 1914 and 1916, wage gains by the end of 1917 began to lag behind inflation. A trip to the market or a glance at newspaper reports on the profiteering of munitions manufacturers punctured any illusion that Americans were sacrificing equally to win the war and undermined simplistic appeals to patriotism. Indeed, inflated price tags and rising stock dividends made it easy for strikers to fend off attacks on their Americanism by blaming 'the poor patriotic profiteer who must work his help at least sixteen hours a day in order to clean up his millions'" (40). Lastly, an undeniably critical factor in channeling these rising social discontents on the home front into concerted, even militant, political action was the changing political economy of war-production industries accompanied by shifts in the sociological makeup of workforces. As production demands grew but labor pools were missing scores of able-bodied men who had been shipped to the front, these demands were met by an influx of women—some entering the paid workforce for the first time, many transitioning from other sectors of the economy like textiles, housekeeping, etc.—young people, army conscripts, and immigrants

(including those residing in war-torn countries as well as temporarily conscripted foreign laborers and imported colonial subjects) (Xu, 38; Dumenil, 155; Plascencia, 237-241; T. Proctor, 44). Along with the increasing interconnectedness of industries producing for the war effort—and, consequently, the linkage of labor struggles across previously disparate sectors and the expanded sense of power that came with workers' temporary indispensability—these changing demographics provided new blood and explosive energy for a labor movement that was confronting growing wartime class tensions at the same time that the workforce was swelling into something that could not be as easily heeled by existing gender roles and hierarchies in unions, political parties, and on the shop floor (Olsson, 161-164; Eley 132).

As early as 1915, these tensions gradually began to boil over into robust civil disobedience in places like Glasgow—where tenants, mostly women, launched widespread rent strikes in response to untenable rent hikes, and trade unions threatened industrial strikes in solidarity—and Berlin—where citizens, predominately women, protested food shortages and price hikes, especially in regards to dairy (butter) and meat fat rations (Currie, 5-6; B. Davis, 76). These actions, in turn, boiled over into even bigger actions, marking 1917-18 as the years when patriotic consensus combusted: "food riots" in response to shortages in Austria-Hungary roiled the empire from 1916-1917 and, combined with other interceding factors (including the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty), erupted into the 1918 "Jännerstreik" ("January strike"), which saw close to a million workers participating in strikes against political and economic injustices imposed by the war (Chernev, 82); in August 1917, an anti-rationing protest in Turin, Italy, burst into a working-class riot, barricades and all, against the state's wartime rule, before government troops brutally quashed the uprising, leaving dozens dead; in Germany, a combination of military defeat, wartime hardship, heightened class tensions, and a merging of shop floor and consumer

activism prompted mass protests, a wave of strikes (primarily in war-production industries), a complex mixture of radical campaigns for the seizure of state power and others more focused on socialization and worker control of industries, and what ultimately amounted to a failed socialist revolution (1918-1919) (Nolan, 119-120). In the United States, the virulently anticommunist Wilson government had repressed antiwar tendencies in the labor movement but had rewarded unions—like the Samuel-Gompers-led American Federation of Labor (AFL)—that supported the war effort. "Government agencies like the National War Labor Board recognised unions, raised wages, and shortened the working week," Jacob A. Zumoff notes (34). As a result, by 1920 union membership had effectively doubled what it had been in 1915. This was a problem for the upper classes:

> After the war, capitalists wanted to reverse these gains, attack unions and enshrine the 'open shop'. In 1919, more than four million workers struck, including meat packers, telephone workers, steel workers, streetcar conductors, shipyard workers, and workers in many other trades and industries. Against the backdrop of Russia, the strikes seemed to indicate to eager socialists, as well as fearful capitalists, that Bolshevik-style revolution was approaching (Zumoff, 34-35).

Perhaps nowhere was this socialist hope (and capitalist fear) about labor's growing power made more apparent than in the Seattle general strike of February 1919 (followed three months later by the Winnipeg general strike in Canada). After two years of wartime sacrifices—including, crucially, economic inflation and imposed wage controls—workers in Seattle sought to capitalize on the end of the war and increased membership in local unions as well as the AFL and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) to fight for higher wages. More than this, though, many organizers had been duly inspired by the Bolsheviks—one circulated pamphlet famously opened, in bold lettering, with "RUSSIA DID IT"—and sought to demonstrate labor's collective power to not only shut capitalist industry down but to provide an alternate model of political economy

and social sustenance. As Paul Buhle writes, "The Seattle General Strike, a massive display of the labor movement's capacity to organize public order and welfare (and the only strike in American history waged expressly with that demonstration in mind), offered the most convincing American argument for great changes to come" (115).

And it did, indeed, seem like such changes were coming. The success of the Bolsheviks in November 1917 sent shockwaves around the world, spurring the more radical leftwings of these and other movements—within and beyond existing socialist parties—to throw in with the cause that a marginalized Lenin had stressed years prior at the Zimmerwald Conference. It is crucial to note, of course, that, when it comes to the amplified social, economic, and cultural tensions described above, which reached their breaking points during and immediately after the war, and the increasing militancy of rank-and-file workers in countries across Europe and North America, wheels were very much in motion before the Bolshevik Revolution. When the latter combined with the former, however, it provided a remarkably tangible catalyst for more radical, youthful, internationalist, and rank-and-file elements to break away from what they perceived to be the outmoded strategies of entrenched socialist parties, to catch up with history by fashioning a new political vehicle that could accelerate where the Second International had stalled: "it was the mass strike wave of 1919 which made the very essence of the old movements evidently archaic and the prospect of something new, the Russian Soviets, convincing—especially for the young […] Meanwhile, the confusion and timidity of Socialist leaders on everything but the war issue deprived their Party of any alternative or even a constructive contribution to the emerging proto-communism" (Buhle, 115). It was at the moment that this irreparable chasm had opened up between the old socialist guard and the proto-communist wing that Mikhail Borodin, the Soviet emissary, landed in the United States, hoping to establish trade relations that could provide

economic succor to a beaten-up Russia and to execute the Bolshevik strategy of scooping off these energized leftwing elements from existing socialist movements that had lost credibility during the war. The beginning of the war, Borodin and his sympathizers believed, had exposed the limits of Second-International-era socialism to surmount the entrenched forces of national chauvinism, let alone to overthrow capitalism through parliamentary means; the end of the war had seemingly unveiled a chance to course correct by way of a new vanguardist party and international working-class revolution. To join this cause, many didn't need a whole lot of convincing. Change was already in the air:

> The Bolsheviks' own phenomenal success, the central European upheaval of fall 1918, and radicalization in Italy and elsewhere, fueled the sense of an impending world-historical break. Even in the face of immediate disaster—like the German repression and the murders of Luxemburg and Liebknecht preceding the Congress—the new Communists saw contradictions moving inexorably in their own favor. The drama of the occasion, and the sense of revolutionary anticipation, of being on the cusp of a new era, was palpable […] European revolutionary advance was thought to be imminent. The new International would soon be headquartered in the West, in Berlin or Paris, depending on where the breakthrough occurred (Eley, 180-181).

Once again, it was this temporarily unshakable belief that the proletarian revolution would spread—and, for the sake of the Bolsheviks, *had to* spread—to the rest of Europe and beyond that justified the whole theory behind the viability of the Bolshevik Revolution. And Borodin's trip to, and mission in, the New World was premised on this being true. In Mexico, it was not.

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> Sin embargo, la Revolución fue un estallido de mitos, el más importante de los cuales es precisamente el de la propia Revolución. Los mitos revolucionarios no fueron, como en otras naciones, levantados sobre biografías de héroes y tiranos,

> sino más bien sobre la idea de una fusión entre la masa y el Estado, entre el pueblo *mexicano* y el gobierno *revolucionario* — Roger Bartra, *La jaula de la melancolía* (227).
>
> However, the Revolution was a shattering of myths, the most important of which is precisely that of the very Revolution. The revolutionary myths were not, as in other nations, held up by biographies of heroes or tyrants, but by the idea of a fusion between the masses and the State, between the Mexican people and the revolutionary government — Roger Bartra, *The Cage of Melancholy* (227)

In Mexico, the Revolution had already happened. Within a year of Borodin's arrival in October 1919, Venustiano Carranza, who had assumed the presidency of the "pre-constitutional government" in May 1915, would be run out of office, temporarily replaced by Adolfo de la Huerta, and eventually succeeded by General Álvaro Obregón in December 1920. The sun was setting on a decade of bloody struggle and a "new" political order was groaning into being, one built around the principles enshrined in the 1917 Constitution and a government that proclaimed itself to be the embodiment of "the people" and their revolutionary will. As a battle-weary Mexico trudged into the 1920s, so the official story went, "Economic and social conditions improved in accordance with revolutionary policies, so that the new society took shape within a framework of official revolutionary institutions" (Womack Jr., 79).

Under Carranza's rule, the promise of revolutionary change had seemingly stalled—or, at best, it had apparently "settled" into an institutional form that was underwhelming in light of all the bloodshed. By the time Carranza had assumed control of the Executive Branch, the country had been torn apart, hunger and illness were widespread, commercial and supply chains had been seriously disrupted, communication infrastructures damaged or destroyed. To make matters worse, there was the ever-pervasive threat of U.S. intervention. The U.S. would emerge from World War I an imposing global power, and containing the turmoil and securing "stable" economic and political relations with the "mongrel" nation to its south had taken on even greater

importance over the course of the 1910s; throughout the duration of the Revolution, powerful business owners and investors in the U.S. lobbied the Taft and Wilson administrations to intervene in the name of the Monroe Doctrine and protecting American economic interests.[12] And, in fact, U.S. forces did penetrate Mexico's borders, first with the naval seizure and seven-month occupation of the port of Veracruz in 1914, followed by the nearly yearlong vengeful effort ("punitive mission") by General Pershing's troops to hunt down Pancho Villa and his men in the north after their raid of Columbus, New Mexico on 8 March 1916 (Knight, "U.S. Anti-imperialism," 103; Eisenhower, 228-252). Moreover, an entire cottage industry had emerged in the U.S.—in film, postcards, word of mouth, fantastically editorialized reporting, etc.—that consisted of mediated sensationalizing of the revolutionary fighting south of the border, which served to further dehumanize and mongrelize the Mexicans at war with one another, to draw a sharper contrast and impose a broader cultural distance between Anglo-American civilization north of the border and "barbarous Mexico" to the south, and to increasingly justify imperialistic sentiments about the potential necessity (and superior triviality) of U.S. intervention. "For U.S. audiences of the Revolution," Claire Fox writes, "both those who witnessed it in person and those who witnessed it from afar through visual media, the historical impact of revolutionary activity became neutralized, as the entire event was converted into a spectacle for their benefit"

[12] "As the revolution became increasingly violent and unstable," Alex Bryne writes, "it caused widespread apprehension across the United States, given how invested the nation was in Mexico's stability. Former secretary of War Henry Stimson believed from the onset that 'we were going to have great trouble in some form with Mexico,' and the safety of the so-called American Colony in Mexico City often prompted concern. The revolution additionally threatened to endanger the United States' investments which had been primarily funneled into 'politically unstable' ventures such as mining, railroads, and petroleum. The Monroe Doctrine reared its head when Americans realised that European nations, who had invested an equally significant amount of capital in Mexico, might intervene to restore order" (98).

(83). "Trivializing the Mexican Revolution, in other words," Fox continues, "also involves trivializing U.S. intervention or presence in Mexico" (91).

On top of this, the U.S. government under President Taft had thrown its support behind Carranza's predecessor, Victoriano Huerta, a remnant of the *porfiriato* intent on "restoring order" to Mexico through military dictatorship, but Woodrow Wilson's incoming administration took a more adversarial stance to the overly militaristic Huerta, who had deposed his predecessor, Francisco I. Madero, via a coup in February 1913. The Wilson administration had a direct hand in creating the external pressure that, combined with military defeats by the Constitutionalist coalition and popular disdain for his iron-fisted approach to governance, forced Huerta to leave office.[13] Carranza did not take the lesson of these events lightly. Even after fighting on the side of the Constitutionalists, and even after convening a Constitutional Convention in September 1916, the constitutional changes that were ratified in 1917 were more radical than Carranza was willing to accept, exceeding both the conservative bounds of his governmental philosophy and his comfort zone when it came to testing the patience of the United States.[14] As Jürgen Buchenau describes,

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[13] "At the outset," Alan Knight writes, Huerta's "draconian policies had shoved Carranza and the Sonorans into outright rebellion. Subsequently, these rebellions were consolidated and popular revolts elsewhere began to coalesce. How did Huerta propose to cope with this deteriorating situation? The consistent thread which ran through the Huerta regime, from start to finish, was militarization: the growth of and reliance on the Federal Army, the military take-over of political offices, the preference for military over political solutions, the militarisation of society in general. Even revisionist accounts, charitable towards Huerta, admit as much: the idea of 'pacification dominated Huerta's domestic policy'; Huerta came close to 'convert[ing] Mexico into the most completely militarist state in the world […] I would argue first that the Huerta regime was fundamentally militaristic (that militarism was its defining characteristic); and second (by no means an original argument) that it was fundamentally counter-revolutionary, in that it sought to end the liberal experiment, crush the popular movement, and get back to the good old days of the Porfiriato" (62-63).

[14] This was also the critical factor in Carranza's weighing of the infamous proposal contained in the Zimmerman Telegram, the secret communique issued from the German Foreign Office in

> Carranza's role at the Constitutional Convention of Querétaro in late 1916 and early 1917 demonstrated this reluctance to embrace a more radical economic nationalism. Carranza desired only minor changes in the existing constitution […] Much like Madero, he and his *renovador* faction believed that such narrow political reform would open up opportunities for all Mexicans and thus cure more fundamental maladies.
>
> But at the convention, a "Jacobin" majority around General Obregón scoffed at these gradualist, elite notions [and pushed for] three articles that sought far-reaching social and economic change. Article 3 mandated secularized, compulsory education. Article 27 made the Mexican territory and subsoil the inalienable patrimony of the nation; from now on, foreigners could only farm, dig or drill by applying for a government concession. This article also stipulated a return of misappropriated peasant lands. Article 123, finally, guaranteed basic rights of urban labor, such as unionization and collective bargaining. With these provisions, the new document became Latin America's first constitution incorporating principles of economic nationalism. Freshly elected President Carranza left Querétaro worried that foreign opposition to this new legislation might derail his efforts to obtain de jure U.S. and European recognition (119).

Carranza was stuck trying to manage political pressures and expectations at home that conflicted with his own governmental reformism while, at the same time, navigating tenuous international pressures and expectations that, as he saw it, threatened to further destabilize the country and his hold on power. Thus, while defending the legitimacy of the 1917 Constitution and the economic nationalism it enshrined, at least on paper, Carranza was intent on tempering the expectations of *Mexicanos*—and the fears of foreign investors—about what its implementation would look like. With peasant forces around the country waiting expectantly for land expropriation and

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January 1917. As the U.S. was preparing to enter the war and join the Allies against Germany, the Zimmerman Telegram proposed a military alliance between Mexico, which had chosen to remain neutral, and Germany, offering in return a promise to help Mexico recover its stolen territories in Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. As Cole Blasier writes, "During the balance of the war, Carranza's overriding aim was to stay out of the conflict and avoid further U.S. armed intervention in Mexico […] So as not to jeopardize Mexico's neutral status, Carranza was careful not to be drawn into an alliance with Germany, his refusal of the Zimmerman proposal shortly after the U.S. entry into the war being his most important action in this respect. In fact, Carranza's central concern in relations with Germany was the avoidance of any development which might serve as a pretext for U.S. intervention" (113).

redistribution to follow the historic inclusion of Article 27 in the Constitution, Carranza's administration not only distributed land grants to a paltry percentage of the population, but Carranza himself re-interpreted the Mexican Supreme Court's ruling on Article 27 in favor of foreign oil companies and oilmen with previous contracted claims to active *and* inactive lands in Mexico (Gilly, 385-386; Menchaca, 46-47). To the emergent metropolitan working class hoping for more democratic representation in the workplace with the passing of Article 123, Carranza sided with businesses in refusing to formally recognize unions, continuing to show the same contempt with which he had brutally squashed the 1916 general strike in Mexico City and repressed leaders of the Casa del Obrero Mundial (Córdova, 212-213; Sanderson, 72; Jackson Lear, 341-342).[15] The administrative decision to significantly dilute or outright undercut the principles of the 1917 Constitution, especially as part of an effort to appease foreign—particularly U.S—interests, was by no means limited to Carranza. "After the constitution was adopted," Adolfo Gilly writes, "successive U.S. administrations started a protracted struggle against this document that gave legal sanction to the triumph of the nationalist and agrarian revolution. Directing its fire particularly against articles 3, 27, 123, and 130, the U.S. government used all available means to force a change in the text or to prevent its application to American citizens and property" (Gilly 238). It can be said, at least, that, along with the distractive aid provided by the United States' entry into WWI, Carranza's administration did manage to maneuver its way around provoking further military intervention: "Carranza may not

[15] As Steven E. Sanderson writes, "Toward the working class, Carranza showed little sympathy. In response to a general strike of Federal District workers in July 1916, Carranza noted the small part of society comprised by workers. He cited the rights of other classes to be protected, and the necessity of avoiding 'workers' tyranny,' as well as 'capitalist tyranny.' And, showing his limited revolutionary legalism, he cited the 1862 Ley Juárez to justify the death penalty for 'disruptors of public order'" (73).

have fulfilled the social goals of the revolution," Lester D. Langley notes, "but he kept the gringos out of Mexico City" (108). But he did so at the expense of the revolution itself—and the revolution, in turn, would eat Carranza for it.

The election of Álvaro Obregón, however, presented a momentous occasion for the governmental apparatus of the state to finally be baptized in revolutionary fire, symbolically cleansed of its past sins; it also provided the occasion for the body and blood of the revolution to be transubstantiated through the state. In many ways, Obregón represented the bourgeois managerial synthesis of the dialectical forces represented by, on one side, the rebel peasant forces led by Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa, who had—in a legendarily significant but tragically temporary moment—taken Mexico City in December 1914, and, on the other side, Carranza's conservative Constitutionalist faction, which assumed the seat of state power after Zapata and Villa's departure. As Dan La Botz writes, echoing the sentiments of many historians of the Revolution, including Gilly,

> Villa and Zapata, remaining inveterate provincials, failed to take control of the cities which were the nerve centers of society, and failed to win over the urban working class which went over to Carranza and Obregón. Villa and Zapata never succeeded in creating a unified military command or national army. Zapata and the Morelos peasants fought heroically for communal control of the land. But the peasants had no chance of winning as long as they failed to create a political party, write a program, and take state power. The peasantry proved incapable of reorganizing society (*Democracy in Mexico*, 49).

Embedded in La Botz's assessment is a critical point about the medial infrastructure of state power, about the connective tissue of an organism of terrestrial control that instantiates, justifies, and exercises power through connection itself; in the historical contexts of twentieth-century Mexico, the state, like capital (and with capital), operates as an ur-medium, mediating the mediations of everyday life in a *civitas* that exists insofar as its constitutive elements can be

connected. Inasmuch as the nation is formed in the symbolic generation and incorporation of an "imagined community" that is, the contours of such a community—not to mention the necessarily collective components that populate a shared national imaginary, or the pathways through which an individual's imaginative capacities and sense of self are mediated "externally" through that which not only exceeds any individual self but mediates selfhood through time, space, methods, and contexts that are, in some way, shared, "communal"—are not simply drawn around the outer (non)terrestrial boundaries that determine who's in and who's out; the contours of the imagined national community extend as far as the internal medial forces of national connection will allow. As La Botz points out, even in a largely agrarian country that was still very much in the throes of "modernizing" (and that was *before* the turmoil of the revolution), any restructuring of the political order, any answer to the revolutionary question of establishing a new political hegemony, would ultimately hinge on seizing the "nerve centers" and utilizing and controlling this medial infrastructure of national connectedness that increasingly adjoined cities, towns, and hinterlands, and that connected them, like transistors, to an expanding power grid with the Mexican state at its heart. It is through such a power grid that the energies that constitute society and imagined community in the epoch of the nation state flow—from commerce, travel, and information to communication, knowledge, and mail, from custom, value systems, and disease to law and utilities like water and electricity—but it is also a medial network in and through which state power is made manifest, if not by any physical *presence* (taxes, ordinances, officials, school curricula, public parks and agencies, courts, police, deeds, etc.) then by a constant *potential* for power to be expressed, a potential that lives in the continued (im)material fact—and possibility—of medial connection. This should provide an additional lens through which to view La Botz's assessment of the political shortcomings of *Villismo* and *Zapatismo*.

Contrary to La Botz, Zapata and his followers, like Villa and his followers, *did* have political programs, one more based on rural indigenous communalism and the other more situated along the lines of a federated syndicalism that would still be regulated by a central state.[16] But the implementation and continued survival of each vision for social, political, and economic order hinged on unresolved questions of developing programmatic methods for successfully abolishing, exiting, or reorienting the medial systems in place that connected their "provincial" projects back to the state; leaving the form of this national infrastructure still largely intact meant that the function of its operations would remain largely the same if and when it—"nerve centers" and all—was seized by other parties. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to suggest that either

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[16] Gilly describes the process by which Zapata and the Army of the South, after taking Mexico City, returned to Morelos to continue building a communalist arrangement of collective life. To hear him tell it, "The Morelos Commune" was, in many ways, the temporarily materialized apotheosis of the *campesino* dream of revolutionary change in Mexico, one that uprooted the capitalist political economy that the state, both before and after the revolution, sanctioned and defended: "Unlike so many projects in the Mexican Revolution," he writes, "the law was not merely a theoretical lucubration. It was actually applied to the lands and sugar mills of Morelos, being complemented by other measures that established forms of village self-government and decision making. [*Note here the terms in which Gilly describes the methods for communally applying and collectively managing* law *as a medium that connected elements of the self-governed Morelos Commune and ensured all were responsible for and held accountable to it.*] Its importance lies in the fact that it expressed a revolutionary social reality and the urge to extend that reality to the whole country. [*Note here, however, an "urge to extend" this social-medial arrangement beyond Morelos but an absence of programmatic strategies for doing so and for effectively managing those relations between localities in a nationally connected medial web*]" (253). Gilly continues: "In this period, Zapatism entrenched itself in its peasant state, abandoned by unstable allies and dependent solely upon the armed villages of Morelos. It remained alone: this was at once its weakness and its strength. The Morelos peasants and agricultural workers created a commune of which the precedent was Paris 1871. They established it not on paper but in reality […] In their home territory, the Zapatists created an egalitarian society with communal roots (very different from the individualist utopia of 'rural democracy'), and they maintained it until they finally lost power […] The struggle of the Morelos Commune was the most far-reaching episode of the Mexican Revolution. In order to erase every trace of its existence, the Carranzist army therefore had to exterminate half the Morelos population, with the same wild fury that Thiers's troops displayed against the workers of Paris in 1871" (253-254).

Zapata's or Villa's visions for the ideal arrangement of Mexican society could be characterized by a utopian obliviousness to the nature of these medial systems, let alone a naïve imagining that they could ever permanently exist beyond their reach; again, what they lacked was the programmatic means—and, for that matter, the time—to reorient them. Take, for instance, the famous one-page chapter in John Reed's *Insurgent Mexico* (1914) in which he relates Villa's dream of postrevolutionary society, which is worth quoting in its entirety:

> Chapter VIII
> The Dream of Pancho Villa
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> It might not be uninteresting to know the passionate dream—the vision which animates this ignorant fighter, "not educated enough to be President of Mexico." He told it to me once in these words: "When the new Republic is established there will never be any more army in Mexico. Armies are the greatest support of tyranny. There can be no dictator without an army.
>
> "We will put the army to work. In all parts of the Republic we will establish military colonies composed of the veterans of the Revolution. The State will give them grants of agricultural lands and establish big industrial enterprises to give them work. Three days a week they will work and work hard, because honest work is more important than fighting, and only honest work makes good citizens. And the other three days they will receive military instruction and go out and teach all the people how to fight. Then, when the Patria is invaded, we will just have to telephone from the palace at Mexico City, and in half a day all the Mexican people will rise from their fields and factories, fully armed, equipped and organized to defend their children and their homes.
>
> "My ambition is to live my life in one of those military colonies among my *compañeros* whom I love, who have suffered so long and so deeply with me. I think I would like the government to establish a leather factory there where we could make good saddles and bridles, because I know how to do that; and the rest of the time I would like to work on my little farm, raising cattle and corn. It would be fine, I think, to help make Mexico a happy place" (145-146).

Villa dreams of media. He dreams of a Republic in which people's right to live on (and live off) the land—their right to be and have a place for being—is affirmed and secured by their place within a reoriented network of national connectedness, one in which the state's primary function is to mediate and support the various, syndicated operations of production that sustain its

citizens, materially and spiritually ("The State will give them grants of agricultural lands and establish big industrial enterprises to give them work […] I would like the government to establish a leather factory there […] It would be fine, I think, to help make Mexico a happy place"). He dreams of Mexican people's contemporary medial connections to the national army to be fundamentally dissolved and reoriented ("there will never be any more army in Mexico"), for the army to no longer exist as a body that pulls some citizens in (by conscription or volunteer, by summons or recommendation), that channels them from their homes into the state's medial circuitry (shipping off by road, rail, or waterway; communicating by telegram, telephone, postal networks, or word of mouth), that pulls them into a body within the body of the nation to be trained and deployed by the state—and, more importantly, to loom for all civilians in the permanent *potential* for deployment through the medial infrastructure of national connectedness. Villa dreams, instead, of the existing army to be dispersed back through the national medial network, like blood cells, to return home; to become different people—with different relations to their neighbors and their nation—by way of the human conditioning that takes place when one's life and being is mediated through different relations to work and production ("only honest work makes good citizens"); to not lock their military knowledge and power away in the body within the body of the nation where it is the exclusive monopoly of the sovereign ("There can be no dictator without an army") and, instead, to disseminate it to their fellow citizens and to establish social (medial) relations through which that knowledge and power may pass ("they will receive military instruction and go out and teach all the people how to fight"). Villa dreams of a communication network so robust, and a social network so thoroughly predicated on relations of belonging and duty to one's home, that a phone call from a single point in the medial infrastructure of national connectedness ("when the Patria is invaded, we will just have to

telephone from the palace at Mexico City") will be able to activate an entire people to come to the defense of a community they feel connected to ("in half a day all the Mexican people will rise from their fields and factories, fully armed, equipped and organized to defend their children and their homes").

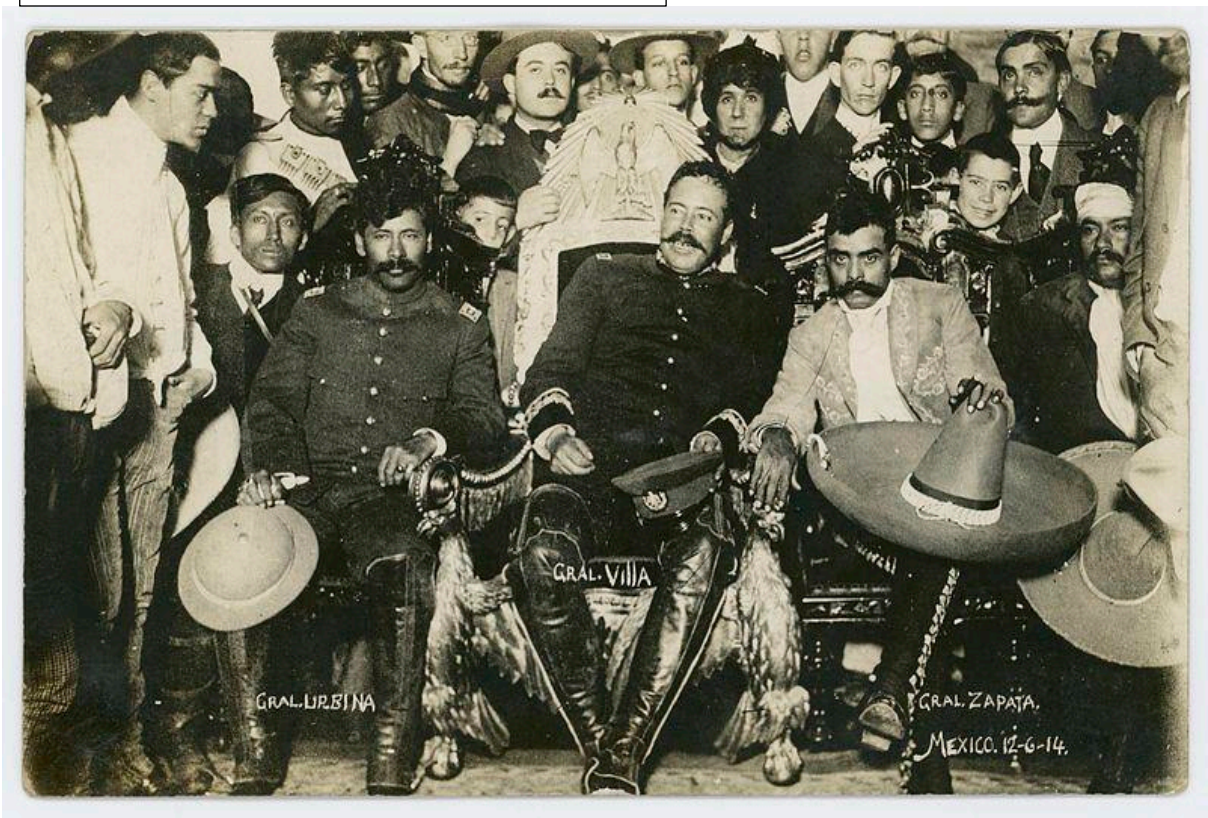
As beautiful as they were, the "provincial" utopias of the Zapatistas in the south and the Villistas in the north could not escape the medial tendrils that connected them to the diffuse infrastructure of state power, even if the seat of state power had been temporarily vacated. It was perhaps for this reason—in anticipation of what would inevitably follow—that Zapata famously suggested that the seat itself be destroyed. When the rebel armies led by Villa and Zapata took Mexico City in December 1914 and occupied the Palacio Nacional, a history-shattering scene unfolded (and was caught on camera): a band of peasants gathered at the helm of state power, a jubilant Villa sat in the Presidential Chair, Zapata to his left, Tomás Urbina to his right (Figure 3.1). As Enrique Krauze describes,

> The huge difference in attitude between the warrior and the guerilla was caught in the famous photo that shows a euphoric Villa sitting in the Presidential Chair next to a surly and suspicious Zapata, always wary of a bullet perhaps springing out of the camera instead of the flash of a bulb. A Zapatista witness to the scene remembers: "Villa sat in the chair as a joke, while Emiliano stood to one side, and he said to Emiliano: 'Now it's your turn.' Emiliano said, 'I didn't fight for that, I fought to get the lands back, I don't care about politics.'" And later he said, "We should burn the Chair to end ambitions" (295)

It is best, perhaps, not to invest too much effort trying to recreate this scene in the hopes of determining just how serious—or how tongue-in-cheek—the tone of Zapata's comment was at the time. Nor could it be seriously assumed, again, that Zapata was so naïve to think that burning the Chair would somehow neutralize the excesses of the whole, interlocking infrastructure of state power at the center of which it sat. What is apparent, however, is Zapata's recognition that

what goes by the name of "politics," in which he expressly has no interest, is something that exists there, in the capital, in the palace, and that the nature of said "politics" is something to be contrasted with getting and having "the lands back." This is not to say that Zapata is expressing an apolitical or antipolitical sentiment here that could be characterized as a desire to leave politics to others and return to some idyllic life "outside" politics back in Morelos (echoing, again, La Botz's charge of "provincialism"); it would be fairer, rather, to suggest that Zapata's expression conveys a disdain for a political arrangement in which life and the terrains of being in Mexico are mediated by a system that always connects back to, and can be controlled from, this gaudy world apart that he, Villa, and their men were standing in. For if, in fact, the true nature of politics and political struggle is located in the changing of those changeable structures, circuits, and relations through which the mediation of life itself happens, then what Zapata desired was for that change—for *politics*—to take

Figure 3.1. ***Villa en la silla presidencial*** **(Mexico City, 6 December 1914).**



place on the terrain of more locally autonomous communal development, not in the bourgeois halls (populated by chronically "ambitious" elites) of Mexico City. As Bruno Bosteels writes, "Autonomy at a distance from the state, in other words, was both the principle strength and the inevitable weakness of the armed peasants. Instead of moving forward, they withdrew. And this withdrawal, in turn, allowed the new bourgeoisie to tighten its grip on the entire state apparatus, now – and for several more decades to come – cynically legitimated in the name of revolution" ("The Mexican Commune," 12).

The vacuum created by Villa and Zapata's departures from Mexico City, as Bosteels notes, not only allowed bourgeois ruling elites like Carranza, Obregón, and many in their cabinets to lay claim to the medial infrastructure of "the entire state apparatus," but it also left said elites to "cynically legitimate" their own rule and the power of the state as the rightful inheritors and guardsmen of the revolution itself. However, as Gareth Williams argues, this cynical process of legitimating the bourgeois state as the institutional body in which the spirit of the revolution lived—and the role that Villa and Zapata played in that process—is more complex. Even to this day, across Mexico, one can find reproductions of the image of *Villa en la silla presidencial*: in murals, on t-shirts, postcards, etc. By design and by proxy, the image itself has been deployed and redeployed for the past 100 years as a symbolic hub and spoke, medially connecting, from different sides, the present to the past, the people to the state, and the state to the revolution. "In their relation to the postrevolutionary state's mobilization of historical national consciousness and 'identity,'" Williams writes, "these iconic images give both bourgeois and subaltern classes exactly what they want. They are an all-inclusive memory and foundational myth of origin for both bourgeois and subaltern views on legitimate authority" (43). The image of *Villa en la silla presidencial*, that is, created a tableau of the Mexican state in

which, henceforth, the subaltern classes of Mexico and the bourgeoisie could see themselves reflected; it generated a perpetual expectation that, after the revolution, the medial state apparatus that shaped so much of their lives would be working for *them*; and it created the symbolic conditions for both to be right.

As mentioned above, given his conservative (and unpopular) methods of translating the ill-defined spirit of the revolution into concrete institutional form and practice, Carranza's ouster provided Obregón and his coalitional supporters a convenient foil against which they could define the state and the new administration as the more faithful embodiments of what so many had fought and died for. As much as it could, Obregón's administration absorbed into itself conflicting interests and social tensions, mediating them through a state apparatus that figured as the postrevolutionary paragon of bourgeois managerial synthesis, which could: repair relations with Washington and foreign businesses; support labor unions, the peasant movement, and greater land distribution; play the mediator (literally) between businesses and officially approved unions in labor disputes, ensuring concessions for the latter and allaying the former's fears of strikes; become the house of a technocratic vanguard, synthesizing different intellectual traditions, whose members—José Vasconcelos (education), Plutarco Elías Calles (interior), Luis Morones (labor), and former PLM member Antonio Villarreal (agriculture), to name a few—would help turn revolutionary nationalism into concrete policy.[17] However, for Obregón,

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[17] "Obregón's popular policies were based on the desire to buffer social antagonisms between the landowners and peasants, as well as between management and labor. The president was convinced that the workers' well-being depended, above all, on the country's economic recovery through an equilibrium between the productive agents—on the one hand, the availability of credit and capital investment, and on the other, the disciplined participation of labor without limitations such as strikes. *To achieve these goals, it would be necessary for the powerful to be*

Carranza, and all future administrations, the great historical foil against which the postrevolutionary Mexican state as such would be defined was, of course, the prerevolutionary Porfirian dictatorship.

In relation to the *porfiriato*, the decade of revolution had been the medium, the converter, the historical wormhole through which Mexico, its people, and its governmental apparatus were devoured, rearticulated, and given new form on the other side. In terms of the shape, scope, and function of its institutions, the personnel occupying them, the interests they served, the philosophies they were informed by, and many other such factors, just how "new" this new state was—and how possible it would be to conduct a sober accounting thereof that could be decoupled from the ideological and moral residue of the revolution—would be a topic of historiographical debate throughout the twentieth century. (This would also, by necessity, require more nuanced analyses of the sociological and—to the extent it could be measured—ideological makeup of the revolution itself, a revolution whose conflicting constituencies, coalitional [re]groupings, demands, degrees of participation, regional dynamics, and so on were anything but clear cut and generalizable.) "[T]here was continuity in Mexico between 1910 and 1920," John Womack Jr. writes. "The crises did not go nearly deep enough," for instance, "to break capitalist domination of production" (81). Understanding how social relations, cultural forms, and the contours of political and economic life had changed in postrevolutionary Mexico is just as important as understanding how they hadn't:

> The 'revolution' had been in governance. There was nothing historically definitive in its principal economic and social results: the same big companies existed as before, plus a few new ones, relying more heavily than ever on American markets

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more revolutionary and for the revolutionaries to be less so" (Spenser, *Impossible Triangle*, 62) (emphases added).

> and banks; a population reduced by war, emigration, and influenza from 15 million to around 14.7 million; a foreign debt of around 1,000 million pesos, plus more than 300 million pesos in overdue interest; a surplus in revenue amounting to 3 million pesos for the year; an army of almost 100,000 men claiming 62 per cent of the budget; national confederations of merchants and manufacturers; a national confederation of labour at odds with the country's railway unions and the new syndicalist movements; and a still largely landless peasantry still demanding its own lands (Womack Jr., 152-153).

Womack Jr.'s description of the political-economic continuity between pre- and postrevolutionary Mexico—domestically and internationally—should be understood both in terms of the actors, relations, and systems of production that remained intact after the revolution as well as the conscious decisions by state agents to prevent changes to them from being implemented. Carranza's reinterpretation of the Mexican Supreme Court's ruling on Article 27 in favor of foreign oil companies is just one example (among many) of the latter—an unfulfilled promise of revolutionary change that, much like the promise of mass land redistribution from the haciendas to the peasants, would take years to come to "fruition" in the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940), which executed the nationalization of the oil industry and agrarian reforms that nearly doubled the amount of land distributed by all of Cárdenas's predecessors combined.[18] As demonstrated by Cárdenas's radical reforms, however, not to mention "Mexico's

[18] As John Dwyer writes, "1936 Cárdenas's government sought to hasten the redistribution of national wealth by passing a new expropriation law that enabled the federal government to seize any type of property through eminent domain. Cárdenas assured Ambassador Daniels that Washington should not worry about the law's application against U.S. economic interests, since it was designed to gain control of industries that had suspended their operations. Despite the president's assurances, the law did facilitate the expropriation of hundreds of American-owned rural estates and the nationalization of nearly a dozen U.S. petroleum companies. The expropriation law required the Mexican government to compensate affected property owners, both domestic and foreign, within ten years. It did not, however, specify either the form or terms of indemnification. Because Washington recognized Mexico's sovereign right to expropriate private property and since, as Lorenzo Meyer points out, U.S. officials capitulated on the issue of prompt payment, the main point of bilateral contention during the agrarian dispute and the

regime of import substitution industrialization (ISI), which lasted roughly from 1940 to 1982" (Lomnitz, *Deep Mexico*, 114), the development of capitalist industry under the aegis of the Mexican state, the state's subsumption and mediation of capitalist relations between itself, labor, and private industry, and the degrees to which the historico-specific iterations of each under successive administrations represented a continuity with (or extension of) the Porfirian political economy—these are not straightforward issues. What is particularly crucial to understand, though, is how all of these things came to exist within the totalizing symbolic purview of revolutionary nationalism as mediated by and through the Mexican state; how each administration's distinct political-economic expression of revolutionary nationalism, that is, could justifiably (and with an internally coherent, somehow-non-contradictory logic) claim itself to be the will of the people as mediated by and through the revolution … as mediated by and through the state.

"The [Mexican] revolution was an explosion of myths," Roger Bartra writes in the passage above that prefaces the current section, "the most important of which was precisely that of the revolution itself" (*La juala*, 227). As opposed to the foundational mythological traditions of other countries, he continues, "our revolutionary myths did not emerge from the biographies of heroes and tyrants, but from the idea of the fusion of the masses with the State, of the *Mexican* people with the *revolutionary* government" (227). It was by no means the only one, but the image of *Villa en la silla presidencial*, and the historical event it captured, was a critical (and instructive) symbolic medium through which the fusion Bartra describes could occur. The event of the peasant armies of the north and south seizing Mexico City and occupying the Palacio

subsequent oil crisis became ''the amount and form of payment'' that Mexico would make to the affected property owners" (194-195).

Nacional in 1914 was a political earthquake that seemingly shattered the historical continuum that articulated state sovereignty in its postcolonial, prerevolutionary mold; a continuum, that is, in which the state's power to govern those it did not fully represent was monopolized by those whom it represented but did not fully govern. Inasmuch as the event itself, with all the blood and bullets that produced it, manifested a concrete repudiation of the racialized bourgeois claim on that power—not just in deposing Victoriano Huerta but in rejecting his rule as an attempted resettlement of the continuum linking it to the days of the *porfiriato*—the peasant occupation of Mexico City also engendered a symbolic upheaval, ripping open the ornate setting that aesthetically mediated the sanctified elitism of state power in the Porfirian code of bourgeois *mestizaje*, placing campesinos and dark-skinned Indians where they "didn't belong" to claim what they "didn't deserve," and thus—for a moment, at least—instituting "a part of those who have no part," as Jacques Rancière writes (11).[19] But the moment, as it were, passed.

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[19] Politics, as Rancière writes, is actually something that occurs much less often—quite rarely, in fact—than most believe. Echoing Zapata's dismissal of "politics" when he was presented with the opportunity to sit in the Presidential Chair, Rancière notes that the administration of society and the divvying up of shared resources through economic systems and institutions of governance—what we might call "high politics"—is not politics as he describes it, even though it lays claim to the name. What politics signifies, rather, is an eruption in the enforced arrangement of that administrative system of "politics" by those whose exclusion, dispossession, and dehumanization it is predicated upon: "The mass of men without qualities identify with the community in the name of the wrong that is constantly being done to them by those whose position or qualities have the natural effect of propelling them into the nonexistence of those who have 'no part in anything.' It is in the name of the wrong done them by the other parties that the people identify with the whole of the community. Whoever has no part—the poor of ancient times, the third estate, the modern proletariat—cannot in fact have any part other than all or nothing" (9). He continues, "There is no politics where there is a part of those who have no part, a part or party of the poor. Politics does not happen just because the poor oppose the rich. It is the other way around: politics (that is, the interruption of the simple effects of domination by the rich) causes the poor to exist as an entity […] Politics exists when the natural order of domination is interrupted by the institution of a part of those who have no part" (11).

As already discussed, when Villa, Zapata, and their armies withdrew from Mexico City, they left much of the medial infrastructure of national connectedness that ran through Mexico City intact to be claimed by Carranza and the conservative Constitutionalist factions of the shaky rebel alliance they had formed to depose Huerta. But Villa, Zapata, and their men had not simply rolled in like a tidal wave, flushed the *Huertistas* out of the halls of state power, and receded back to the countryside—they left something behind. When the armies departed, the image of *Villa en la silla presidencial*, and everything it represented, stayed. Like the murals that would soon cover the walls of government buildings in the wake of the revolution, the peasant and indigenous armies had painted the state with a symbolic legitimacy it never had before; the legitimacy of a government that, henceforth, would be imbued with the collective imaginary currency of being a government of and for "the people," if not *by* them. Empowered by this legitimacy, the governmental constructors of the postrevolutionary political order would work to build in and through the state a bourgeois managerial synthesis that mediated social tensions and inequalities—instead of seeking to eliminate them—and collectivized them into a totalizing nationality that could rightfully claim itself to be the legacy of the revolution.[20] Instead of a

[20] Perhaps the most famous manifestation of this will to define authentic Mexican revolutionary nationalism in the terms of state-mediated bourgeois synthesis was the thesis of *La raza cósmica* (the cosmic race), published in 1925 by Obregón's Education Minister, José Vasconcelos. Vasconcelos (in)famously posited that a "fifth race" would emerge in the Americas, one that represented an amalgamation of all the world's races and would inevitably transcend terrestrial nationalities (Vasconcelos, 63-64). Vasconcelos's universalist thesis spoke to the optimism of domestic intellectual currents in the 1920s wherein Mexico, guided by the renewed vision of the postrevolutionary state, would supposedly draw into itself the diverse racial identities of a population whose collectivization would elevate *mestizaje* as the apotheosis of bourgeois national synthesis. This, again, was a vision that would be symbolically mediated through the images of the 1914 occupation of Mexico City, specifically through the dark-skinned Zapata and the soldiers of the Liberation Army of the South who would nominally represent an indigenous claim on state power and, together with Villa and his men, would project a synthetic ideal of what Joshua Lund calls the "mestizo state." As Lund writes, "it is only with the Revolution that

break with the historical continuum that connected Mexican state sovereignty to the *porfiriato*, then, the occupation of Mexico City provided a patch that allowed that continuum to repair itself into a Möbius strip of bourgeois continuity. "Within this continuum," Gareth Williams writes, "Villa, Zapata, and the faces that surround them become the human essence not so much of the revolution per se but of a post-revolutionary managerial rationality designed to replace the contradictions of insurrection with the bourgeoisie's capacity to orient historical intelligibility toward order, homogenization, and the establishment of a common language that unites the state and the peasantry as the mutual origins of the national postrevolutionary community" (44). Thus, in the same way that the peasant army occupying the Palacio Nacional would become a stand-in for the people's revolutionary claim on the Mexican state, the Mexican state would become a stand-in for the people's postrevolutionary will. These staying images would help form the symbolic core holding together and mediating the ideology of revolutionary nationalism as embodied in the Mexican state, granting the latter the power to define the content of the former (and to qualify whatever form that content took as the de facto "will of the people"). Without understanding these medial dynamics, there is no hope of rationalizing what Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith describe as the dual paradoxes of Mexican modernity: "There is the paradox of revolution: how did millions of Mexicans who made anarchic popular revolution end up as apparently peaceable subjects in the world's most successful authoritarian state? And there is the further paradox of capitalism […] Mexico is extraordinary in that a revolutionary movement, which experimented with collectivist and even socialist modes of production, led to such a deeply inequitable capitalist regime" (2).

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the mestizo state and its cultural elite will begin to internalize a widespread feeling that the fate of the nation is also the fate of the Indian and that the Indian […] is part of the national *us*" (94).

In essence, then, what Roger Bartra described as the revolution's "fusion of the masses with the State, of the *Mexican* people with the *revolutionary* government" created the symbolic conditions of legitimation that would allow the state to not only justify its power to arrange and adjust the medial infrastructure of national connectedness—and, thus, its power to shape the terrains of being of Mexican citizens and the relations through which life itself would be mediated—but to also justify its will to totality; its will to establish itself as "the world's most successful authoritarian state"; its will to fully become the ur-medium to which all social life was, in some way, connected. (In this regard, at least, the revolution advanced the Porfirian project beyond what Díaz himself could ever have imagined.) This, as Williams explains, was the coming to being of a distinctly Mexican modernity:

> in Mexico modernity is not inaugurated via the bourgeois self-limitation of governmental reason carried out in the name of collective well being, prosperity, and happiness. Nineteenth-century Mexican liberalism certainly utilized the discourse of governmental self-limitation to challenge the power of the Catholic Church, and it embraced scientific positivism to forge the conditions of secular rationalism. But […] *Mexican modernity was inaugurated on the whole by the post-colonial quest for a police state capable of creating the good order and sovereign mastery that would allow for the implantation and extension of bourgeois rule. The quest for the unity of economic and political domination is the lasting inheritance of both the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz and the Mexican Revolution of 1910-20* […] In other words, modernity in Mexico has been predicated on the permanent application of state power in the construction of social order, rather than on the self-limitation of state power via a legal system guaranteeing individual rights and limiting public power […] In the official postrevolutionary discourse of Mexican modernity, then, popular will was deposited in the Constitution and from there passed into the state, thereby implying that the will of the state *was* and *is* the de facto will of the people and vice versa […] *Modernity in Mexico was orchestrated by a total state that strived at all times to suppress the duality of state and society* (11-12) (emphases added).

It is here, I believe, that thinking politics through media is particularly useful. For it must be remembered that, before and after the revolution, the Mexican state apparatus was not the

pervasive, all-seeing, endlessly resourced "cold monster" some political dissidents may have made it out to be: state agencies and affiliated organizations struggled from lack of funding, disorganization, opportunism, etc.; mass education and infrastructure projects took years to develop; "The political class remained fragmented […] Mexico's state apparatus remained underfunded, understaffed, and ill-informed" (Gillingham & Smith, 2). The state's will to totality did not simply manifest by way of physically extending itself into the most private or localized spheres of everyday life, by explicitly coopting the outposts of daily commerce and cultural air conditioning, nor by centralizing economic planning or other macro-systems in the vein of the Soviet Union. It did not have the capacity to do these things—and, in fact, it wouldn't need to do these things. Nevertheless, the shaping and enforcing agents the state did have available to it in the medial infrastructure of national connectedness (from the legal system to the currency system to the military and land grants) were very real; and, once again, their capacity for mediating state power through the circuits of everyday life came as much from their *presence* when they exercised that power upon Mexican people as from their *potential* for expressing that power, a potential that was possibilized by that very infrastructure. For the state, though, becoming the ur-medium of national connectedness meant imbricating itself in a vast national web of social relations whose tensions and inherent contradictions were given less and less room to break open into any sort of violent conflict or historical synthesis that would not be somehow mediated, brokered, actualized, or repressed by the state itself; it meant, that is, becoming the mediator of last resort, the Rome to which all roads of unresolvable conflict led; it meant crafting the language, shaping the (cultural, economic, aesthetic, etc.) contours, and demarcating the limits of national togetherness; it meant absorbing and re-presenting the symbology of *Mexicanidad* in ways that made disentangling *Mexicanidad* from the state impossible, if only because the later

imposed itself as the genuine institutional embodiment of the former, because it had imposed itself as the genuine institutional embodiment of the Mexican people; it meant, therefore, becoming the shadow out from which one could not step, because the external terrains of being through which one's very sense of self was mediated—terrains upon which one connected to oneself by connecting to one's land, locality, language, lineage, food, education, profession, even time itself (in relation to national milestones)—were, in one way or another, defined by their connectedness to the state and everything it had made itself represent. This is what we mean when we say that the state, as the ur-medium of national connectedness, mediated the mediations of everyday life in its quest to create (to borrow Williams's terms) "the good order and sovereign mastery that would allow for the implantation and extension of bourgeois rule."

In the end, the medial-political project of the Communists failed to fully account for, let alone contend with, the medial reach and power of the postrevolutionary Mexican state.

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Marxism and socialism did not have a particularly robust presence in Mexico before the revolution. Spanish translations of critical works of European anarchism and utopian socialism circulated in upper-class liberal circles in the 19th century and in groups like the Gran Círculo de Obreros de México, founded in 1872 by followers of the Greek-born Mexican Fourierist Plotino Rhodakanaty, and ideas drawn from thinkers like Proudhon and Louis Blanc were filtered into spheres of political discourse through smaller organs with names like *Falansterio*, *La Internacional*, *El Combate*, *El Socialista*, *El Hijo del Trabajo*, and *La Comuna* (Liss, 205-206;

Illades, 28-29).[21] Mexico itself factored little into Marx's own political philosophy, beyond the obvious. In 1861, for instance, writing for the *New York Daily Tribune*, Marx decried French, English, and Spanish intervention in Mexico as "one of the most monstrous enterprises ever chronicled in the annals of international history" ("The Intervention"), but it was not exactly the plight of the Mexicans that Marx lamented so much as what said intervention demonstrated about the brutish imperialism of European capitalist "order-mongers" imposing their will upon less developed countries like Mexico. Analyses of the political-economic dynamics between imperialist cores and subaltern peripheries would certainly become more sophisticated, but the

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[21] Regarding the intellectual content of early socialist currents in 19th-century Mexico, Carlos Illades writes, "*En México, la primera generación intelectual de la tradición socialista es la romántica; responde a la Reforma, la Intervención Francesa y los inicios de la dictadura porfirista. Fuera del país los acontecimientos determinantes son las revoluciones de 1848 y la Comuna de París. El problema capital que enfrenta es, sin renunciar a la modernización política liberal (i.e., separación de la Iglesia y el Estado, igualdad ante la ley, garantías individuales), cómo hacerse cargo de la 'cuestión social', desatendida por el liberalismo y núcleo del pensamiento socialista. Esto pasa por la extensión de los derechos universales (al trabajo, la educación, por ejemplo), la reorganización de la sociedad (tanto productiva como la socialidad misma), el municipalismo (acepción mexicana del comunalismo), la democracia directa, el federalismo, el reparto agrario y la nivelación de las clases, procurando elevar la condición social de trabajadores, mujeres e indígenas*" (In Mexico, the first intellectual generation of the socialist tradition is romantic; it responds to la Reforma, to the French Intervention, and to the beginnings of the *porfirista* (Of, relating to, or supporting, Porfirio Díaz, former President of Mexico) dictatorship. Outside of the country, the determining events are the revolutions of 1848 and the Paris Commune. The main problem it faces, without giving up liberal political modernization (i.e. separation of Church and State, equality under the law, individual guarantees), is how to take charge of the 'social issue,' unaddressed by liberalism and the nucleus of socialist thought. This is achieved through the granting of universal rights (to work and education, for example), the reorganization of society (not only productive but sociality itself), municipalism (Mexican communalism), direct democracy, federalism, agrarian distribution and the leveling of the classes, ensuring the elevation of the social condition of workers, women, and Indians) (28). Regarding the intellectuals themselves: "*El primer socialismo debate fundamentalmente con liberales y positivistas, quienes dominan la sociedad política, el sector educativo y la academia. Esta última tiene su bastión en la Escuela Nacional Preparatoria, semillero de cuadros gubernamentales*" (The first socialism fundamentally debates with liberals and positivists, who dominate political society, the educational sector, and academia. This last has its bastion in the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria—breeding ground for government posts) (29)

theme of Mexico's role as a "pawn" in the imperialist designs of capitalist powers—especially the United States—would persist in the ideology of the Third International. Granted, the fact that Mikhail Borodin would designate PCM headquarters as the Latin American Bureau of the Third International, and the fact that the Comintern would send three more agents to Mexico in 1921 to help build the Communist movement, meant that it figured more prominently in the Soviet vision of the path to world revolution than most underdeveloped nations. To Lenin, Borodin and others, as Daniela Spenser writes,

> Mexico had experienced a social explosion that had weakened the state and shaken the power of the dominant classes, and it was adjacent to and dependent on the most powerful country in the world. The Bolsheviks believed in the inevitability of socialism in the economically more developed countries, and for theoreticians such as Trotsky, the United States would be "the foundry in which the fate of mankind will be forged"; its technological development and ascending capitalism assured the radicalization of the working class and its attractions to communism. The antagonistic relationship between the developed north and the south in its political and economic orbit made Mexico a fertile terrain to extend communism to the rest of Latin America (*Stumbling Its Way*, 91).

On paper, the Bolsheviks' reasoning was sound. However, as the PCM's struggles throughout the 1920s would bear out, the Bolsheviks had greatly overestimated just how "fertile" the conditions in Mexico were for expanding communism—or how much those fertile conditions would be mediated by complex political, social, and cultural forces in ways that would divert or deflate their revolutionary potential. There were a number of reasons for this, including the fact that, on the one hand, the Bolsheviks often projected onto Mexico expectations that its leftist political milieu resembled that of the United States—and that it could be expected to follow the same course—more than it actually did; and this failure to grasp the nuances of the political landscape in Mexico, on the other hand, was regularly exacerbated by bad, limited, or (to put it mildly) overly optimistic intel from comrades on the ground reporting to the Comintern and its

representatives. As explored in the previous section, however, there were many and much more deeply embedded reasons why the postrevolutionary Mexican state and the bourgeois managerial class both *were* and *weren't* as weak as the Bolsheviks expected them to be—and why communism would have significant trouble taking root as a mass political movement in Mexico.

That's not to say that the Bolshevik revolution did not generate a great deal of excitement in Mexico, both in the positive and negative sense, as it had in the United States. As previously discussed, the specter of proletarian revolution, coupled with encouraging signs around Europe and North America of weaknesses in the global capitalist economy, mass wartime unrest, increasing rank-and-file militancy, and a left political flank ready to advance where the democratic socialism of the Second International had failed—all of this combined to give what the Bolsheviks had accomplished an electrifying glow. On top of this, as demonstrated by the circumstances by which Lenin's "Letter to American Workers" made its way from Moscow to New York, there were significant difficulties in establishing direct communicative connections with Russia within the existing international medial infrastructure; many reports of what was happening in the newly formed Soviet Union that were published in Mexican and U.S. newspapers came secondhand, were republished from European newspapers, and were filtered through thick ideological lenses (including those of Bolshevik propagandists). As a result, readers were largely able to read into the revolution what they wanted to, and to invest hopes in the Bolshevik project that were deeply colored by their own political predilections. In the U.S. context, as Doug Rossinow writes,

> Despite leftist assertions that the Russian and American situations were very different, the Bolshevik insurrection of October-November 1917 did appear to many laborites, both radical and liberal, in a highly general sense like the victory of the cause they themselves had worked for. The method seemed reasonable under the circumstances of war and within a political system that offered little

> chance for real progress through parliamentary means. Moreover, the soviets in Russia seemed from afar to resemble so closely the schemes of industrial democracy that progressives had long traced on paper that once the soviets' rivalry with the reformed Duma emerged clearly, many elsewhere took the side of the workers' councils (90)

It was under a similar pretext that many radical and left-leaning Mexicans saw a lot to like in Bolshevik revolution. In the same way that leftists in the U.S. interpreted it as, to some degree, modeling the kind of industrial democracy they desired, in Mexico the soviet system or workers' councils appeared to embody the kind of direct action and federated, democratic, community- and worker-run enterprise that spoke to many who believed in or engaged with longstanding indigenous communalist, anarcho-communist, or anarcho-syndicalist traditions. Among those who were inspired by the Bolsheviks were the *agrarista* hero Zapata as well as the anarchist leader of the Partido Liberal Mexicano. "*La revolución de Rusia no es una revolución nacional sino que es una revolución mundial*" (The Russian revolution is not a national revolution, but a global revolution), Ricardo Flores Magón wrote on March 16, 1918. "*Los bolcheviques son los verdaderos internacionalistas. Ellos son los únicos que desean ver extenderse por todo el mundo las ideas de la revolución. Incitamos también a la revolución a todos los países, porque por su propia naturaleza la revolución rusa no puede permanecer aislada …*" (The Bolsheviks are the true internationalists. They are the only ones that wish to see the ideas of the revolution spread all over the world. We incite all countries to revolution because by its very nature the Russian revolution cannot remain isolated…) ("La Revolución Rusa").

English Section Page 4. **Regeneración** English Sect Page 4.

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LA REVOLUCION RUSA.

Nikolai Lenine, el leader ruso, es en estos momentos la figura revolucionaria que brilla más en el caos de las condiciones existentes en todo el mundo, porque se halla al frente de un movimiento que tiene que provocar, quiéranlo o no lo quieran los engreídos con el sistema actual de explotación y de crimen, la gran revolución mundial que ya está llamando a las puertas de todos los pueblos; la gran revolución mundial que operará cambios importantísimos en el modo de convivir de los seres humanos.

Las dimensiones de REGENERACION, reducidas a dos pobres páginas, nos forzan a no traducir todas las declaraciones de Lenine, y lo lamentamos, porque estas declaraciones, así como las del otro leader ruso, León Trotsky, arrojan fuerte luz sobre el movimiento revolucionario ruso. Así, pues, allá va algo de lo que dice Lenine:

"La revolución de Rusia no es una revolución nacional, sino que es una revolución mundial.

"Los bolsheviki son los verdaderos internacionalistas. Ellos son los únicos que desean ver extenderse por todo el mundo las ideas de la revolución.

"Los bolshevicki comprendieron desde hace largo tiempo que la revolución, aunque de carácter político al principio, tiene que llegar a ser económica y social, y que este último carácter de ella nada tiene que ver con diferencias de raza ni fronteras nacionales, y por lo tanto, el futuro de nuestra revolución tiene que ser internacional. La revolución tiene que pasar sobre las fronteras y distinciones de raza, para aplastar las ideas opuestas a ella, porque si queda confinada a un pueblo que adopte principios de paz y de igualdad económica y social, será sofocada por los Estados capitalistas y autoritarios."

En seguida explica Lenine, que esto no quiere decir que los revolucionarios rusos van a llevar la guerra a los Estados capitalistas, puesto que tal cosa equivaldría a negar los principios fundamentales de la revolución, que aboga por la fraternización de todos los pueblos de la Tierra, y continúa de esta manera:

"Es un absurdo pensar que la democracia internacionalista rusa pretendía alguna vez hacer la guerra a otros pueblos con el único fin de destruir monarquías extranjeras. Tal guerra estallaría sólo en el caso de que los existentes gobiernos europeos conspiraren, como es posible que lo hagan, para aplastar nuestra revolución con el propósito de impedir que se extienda a sus dominios.

"Nosotros continuaremos propagando nuestros ideales en todos los países, para obtener este resultado: en primer lugar, que la difusión de los ideales antimonárquicos y anticapitalistas, precipite la terminación de la guerra.

"Tal paz, sostenida por los pueblos insurreccionados, es el programa más deseable.

"Incitamos también a la revolución a todos los países, porque por su propia naturaleza la revolución rusa no puede permanecer aislada.

"Las naciones deben ser organizadas ya sobre una base capitalista, o bien, sobre una base proletaria y anticapitalista. Los dos sistemas no pueden co-existir. Es imposible para Rusia existir sin bancos capitalistas e industriales, si ella tiene que tratar con países que todavía los tienen.

"Lejos de aislarse Rusia del resto del mundo, debe entrar en más íntimas relaciones con él, y como estas relaciones íntimas tienen que ser en su mayor parte relaciones fundadas en el intercambio de productos, es necesario que todos los países del mundo tengan un idéntico y homogéneo sistema económico.

"Como la revolución rusa nunca restaurará el sistema capitalista, se hace necesario que nosotros luchemos por la difusión de las ideas anticapitalistas en el extranjero."

* * *

Cuánto alientan las palabras de Lenine. Ya no es la fraternidad universal un deseo sentido apenas por unos cuantos emancipados de prejuicios y errores de toda especie. Este deseo va penetrando a la médula de los pueblos; este deseo se hace carne y sangre.

Los sueños de los utopistas se confirman. Los "sensatos" y "cabezas frías" ya no nos llamarán locos a los anarquistas.

¡Bendita mil veces la carnicería europea que está produciendo tan espléndidos resultados! En tres años y medio de barbarie capitalista, se ha logrado más que lo que se hubiera ganado en cien años con nuestra propaganda de fraternidad y de justicia.

El viejo sistema se derrumba, hermanos de cadenas. ¡Animo!

Que nadie flaquee en este momento en que se necesita que todos los que sufrimos los efectos de un sistema que nos aplasta, tengamos nuestras mentes preparadas para ver con serenidad lo que se acerca: la desaparición de todo lo que nos hace desgraciados: Autoridad, Capital y Clero.

RICARDO FLORES MAGON.

Figure 3.2. Ricardo Flores Magón, "La Revolución Rusa" from *Regeneración*, 16 March 1918.

Ricardo penned this paean to the Bolsheviks in the final issue of *Regeneración*'s *cuarta época*, before he was arrested for the last time—this time under charges of sedition for violating the Espionage Act of 1917 and "obstructing the war effort" with his writings—and sent to the prison where he would die in November 1922 (Figure 3.2). On February 14, 1918, just one month before Ricardo publicly celebrated the Bolshevik revolution in the pages of *Regeneración*, and one year before his own assassination, Emiliano Zapata also extolled the virtue of the Bolshevik revolution and its contribution to the universal human struggle for justice, freedom, and dignity. In a letter to his friend General Genaro Amezcua, Zapata wrote, "We would gain a lot, human justice would gain a lot, if all the peoples of our America and all the nations of old Europe were to

understand that the cause of Revolutionary Mexico and the cause of Russia are and represent the cause of humanity, the supreme interest of all the oppressed peoples" (qtd. in Spenser, *Stumbling Its Way*, 36). Not everyone in Mexico was so enthused by the Bolshevik revolution, however. Like its neighbor to the north, Mexico experienced its own red scare in 1919-1920, resulting in, among other things, the expulsion of radical American draft-dodgers ("slackers") involved with the nascent communist movement as well as an orgy of anti-Bolshevik hysteria in the popular press (La Botz, *Slackers*, 3-4; Spenser, *Impossible Triangle*, 53). This hysteria was very much steeped in—and amplified by—Mexico's complicated and evolving relationship with the U.S. as it emerged from a decade of revolution. A great deal of Mexican anti-Bolshevism, for instance, had its origin in the U.S., with many sensationalist stories (and embellished or fabricated evidence for communist scaremongering) being unscrupulously reprinted from the American press, and with Mexican newspapers and politicians alike jockeying to utilize anti-Bolshevism to advance their political goals, among which was establishing a government that could repair relations with the U.S. and foreign companies. To that end, some papers like *El Universal* exploited fear of the external threat of Bolshevism to defend the Carranza government and shield it from responsibility for social upheaval; others, like the conservative paper *Excélsior*, which longed to reverse the national course set by the 1917 Constitution, weaponized anti-Bolshevism to highlight the government's


EXCELSIOR SEÑALO A TAMPICO COMO UN CENTRO BOLSHEVIKI

Cuando lo Hizo se le Tachó de Timorato, por Algún Periódico, y hoy se Confirma que Estaba en lo Cierto

ASESINARON AL MAYOR CUADRA LOS HUELGUISTAS

El General González Dice que del Obrero Mundial que es "una Agencia Bolsheviki," Recogió el Archivo y unas Banderas

Figure 3.3. "EXCÉLSIOR SEÑALO A TAMPICO COMO UN CENTRO BOLSHEVIKI" from *Excélsior* 17 June 1919

incapacity to fight foreign threats. The latter would go so far as to sensationalize and exaggerate reports of a radical cell ("UN CENTRO BOLSHEVIKI") in the oil fields of Tampico, Tamaulipas in May of 1919, at the same moment when workers in the fields were on strike against the American-owned Waters-Pierce Oil Corporation (Figure 3.3).

A common thread running through both the more enthusiastic and the more alarmist responses to Bolshevism in Mexico was a necessarily credible (or, at least, somewhat credible) belief that what the Bolsheviks stood for in the eyes of many would resonate with workers and *campesinos* in Mexico—that the proletarian rejection of tsarism, capitalist domination, and bourgeois forms of democracy in Russia was infused with the same liberatory spirit with which many Mexicans took up arms in their own revolution. Mexico was not Russia, the Bolshevik revolution was not the Mexican revolution, but the allure of the world it looked like the Bolsheviks were building offered renewed hope for Mexicans fighting to techno-spherologically adjust the media-worlds they inhabited according to more communalist, syndicalist, or anarchist ways of living. Moreover, for radicals like Zapata and Flores Magón, these resonances between the Bolshevik and the Mexican struggles also affirmed that each contained—or, rather, expressed—something that exceeded the bounds of their localized political contexts and concrete historical concerns, something universal, rooted in nothing less than the human spirit and the will to live in a world that didn't hurt. That universalism pointed to a revolution that could never be limited to the borders of any one nation. "*La crítica histórica de la revolución de octubre*" (The historical critique of the October Revolution), José Revueltas wrote later in his life, "*sólo se superaría con el presupuesto básico de sus inicios: la revolución mundial*" (could only be overcome with the basic promise of its beginnings—global revolution) ("Significación actual," 218). Like Lenin and Trotsky, Revueltas understood that, in its early years, before the

abomination of Stalinism, what was most radical and crucial in the Bolshevik revolution could be found precisely in that which necessitated "*la revolución mundial*" to accompany the former if it was going to survive. That the revolution spread worldwide was as much a tactical necessity as it was an ontological one. As previously discussed, the very premise upon which the Bolshevik revolution could justify the viability of its dramatic leapfrog past the teleological stages of historical development prescribed by Marxist orthodoxy was that, once the revolution spread to Europe and beyond, the capitalist imperialist powers that were trying to isolate and smother the Soviet Union in its infancy would be subverted from within their own borders. More than this, though, for Revueltas, the imperative of "*la revolución mundial*" spoke to the universal unlivability of an alienated existence that had reached its apotheosis in capitalist domination—and to the deep, human need to live better.

This, as Revueltas saw it, must be the guiding force for any Communist party worthy of the name, as it should have been for the Partido Comunista Mexicano at its founding: "*La tarea del partido comunista, como representante, todavía por entonces, de la ideología proletaria, para convertirse en la conciencia organizada, en el partido de clase del proletariado mexicano, era la de rescatar e la clase obrera de las formas concretas de enajenación ideológica a que estaba sometida*" (The task of the communist party, as representative, still at the time, of the proletarian ideology, to become the organized consciousness, in the class party of the Mexican proletariat, was that of rescuing the working class from the concrete forms of ideological alienation to which it was subjected) (*Ensay sobre un proletariado*, 224). The duty of the communist party, as the faithful representative of proletarian ideology, is to retrieve and recuperate the working class from the concrete forms of ideological alienation to which it is subjected; in so doing, the communist party—and, to the extent that it was necessary, Revueltas

did believe in a vanguardist party—will become the medium for an organized proletarian consciousness. With both a tenderness and a deep pessimism, Revueltas perceives a holistic kind of synergy in the dialectical movement and mediality of history; the same could be said of his belief in communism's inherent "*racionalidad y* […] *tendencia histórica hacia la* rehumanización del hombre" (rationality and […] historical tendency toward the rehumanization of man) (*Ensayo sobre un proletariado*, 61) (emphases added). Understanding his prescriptions for building a successful communist party—as the medium of organized, de-alienated proletarian consciousness—as well as his bitingly precise critiques of the PCM's ultimate failure to do so requires feeling in yourself, and in the world around you, where that synergy comes from, how it flows. In this regard, the distinctive terms Revueltas employs are instructive: seemingly prefiguring Roger Bartra's exploration of the "exocerebrum," there is a latent, if not implied, continuity between—there are, we could say, medial circuits connecting—consciousness ("inside") and the concrete ("outside");[22] the corruption of one engenders the alienation of the

[22] We could call Bartra's work a media theory of consciousness: "We cannot avoid the problem of the influence of the sociocultural world on brain processes, no matter how much we proclaim that consciousness is an epiphenomenon, that it is actually a nervous process, or that it is the uncomfortable partner of an irreducible duality. Due to an almost mystical obsession with causal closure of the physical world, the cultural and social networks in which we live have remained outside the cloister [of consciousness] […] Something I would like to emphasize is the fact that high-level consciousness (or self-consciousness) seems to contain a paradox: in order for individuals to be aware of their unique individuality, their 'internal' sensations must be exposed to the 'external' world. I am not referring to the obvious fact that the brain nourishes itself with information that comes from the environment. Rather, I mean that the unitary nature of the internal information flow is confirmed to the degree in which it comes into contact with and circulates through the social and cultural space, interacting with other people. An organism's individuality is not solely defined by the epidermis […] But if the interior is also outside, at least partially, then the internal-external dichotomy begins to lose meaning" (*Anthropology of the Brain*, 41, 74). Notably, Bartra's thesis extends what Susan Buck-Morss brilliantly articulates in her deconstruction of "aesthetics" in its classical (and patriarchal) formulation, which presupposes that the human sensorium begins and ends with the body. As Buck-Morss writes, and as I've tried to demonstrate in these chapters, "The nervous system is not contained within the body's limits. The circuit from sense-perception to motor response begins and ends in the

other in a way that distances human beings from the very humanness of their being; ideological alienation, that is, takes "*formas concretas*" in the media-worlds we inhabit, in the material-epochal arrangement of society and social life through which one's being and becoming are mediated (no man is an island, after all); and the nature of the system determining that arrangement, the archē upon which the justification for its shape is founded, imposes itself upon one's ways of living—and making a living—in the world, applying myriad pressures from the "outside" that work us over, pushing as much of the totality of human being into the permitted spheres of existence ("subject positions") prescribed by that very system within which our alienation is designed to inevitably benefit someone else; more than that, these outside pressures bleed into one's very consciousness. In this way, the human itself becomes a biopolitical medium for actualizing the arrangement of the ideological systems that alienate human beings from themselves, from one another, and from the world they inhabit. But, as Revueltas' oeuvre makes clearer than almost any other writer could, what makes us human still cries out; in fact, that which is ineradicably human in us is precisely what remains, what's left over; the human stain of negative dialectics is found in what rebels against being subsumed entirely by these alienating spheres of existence—or, at least, makes the unlivability of this existence known by hurting from it.

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world. *The brain is thus not an isolable anatomical body, but part of a system that passes through the person and her or his (culturally specific, historically transient) environment.* As the source of stimuli and the arena for motor response, the external world must be included to complete the sensory circuit. (Sensory deprivation causes the system's internal components to degenerate.) *The field of the sensory circuit thus corresponds to that of 'experience,' in the classical philosophical sense of a mediation of the subject and object, and yet its very composition makes the so-called split between subject and object (which was the constant plague of classical philosophy) simply irrelevant*," (12-13) (emphases added).

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Especially in his late writings during the '60s and '70s, Revueltas theoretically develops his approach to this human remainder—or, we could say, this essential negative—in ways that bear resemblance to the work of his Frankfurt School contemporary Theodor Adorno. It is worth noting, however, that the novel in which Revueltas conducts his most rigorous interrogation of the human remainder, *Los errores*, was published in 1964, two years before Adorno's *Negative Dialektik* (*Negative Dialectics*) was published in Germany. There are distinct traces in Revueltas' earlier work, however, of a continuing fixation on the essential negative around which his later work would orbit, the kind of negative that Adorno would posit as the dynamic surplus escaping the "idealist" identification between subject and object, between concept and being. In the language we have been using, this dynamic surplus names the pained, yearning humanity that refuses to be subsumed entirely within the spheres of existence that have been prescribed for it by a material-epochal arrangement of social life that alienates human being from itself. This is what Adorno specifies as "nonidentity"; that is, the residue that escapes the idealist Kantian/Hegelian prioritization of the subject and the subject's conceptual identification with object-being. Adorno's focus on the objective is thus a way of conceptualizing that which escapes or slides under conceptualization itself, that lively content no concept can completely cover or capture. For Adorno, like Revueltas, suffering marks the non-identity between being as such and subjectivity; it expresses our rebellious incapacity to be contained within the (material and epistemological) epochal arrangements of social life in which human being and flourishing is subordinated to instrumental reason. Suffering speaks the alienation of human being from itself: "The power of the status quo puts up the facades into which our consciousness crashes. It

must seek to crash through them […] Freedom follows the subject's urge to express itself. The need to lend a voice to suffering is a condition of all truth. For suffering is objectivity that weighs upon the subject" (Adorno, 17-18). Inasmuch as instrumentalist reason (dogma by another name) enforces the consummate identification of being with concept, suffering is embodied counter-reason—the negative made flesh.

Even in his early, starkly surrealist novel *El luto humano* (1943), and his subsequent *Los días terrenales* (1949), Revueltas was heavily criticized by figures on the Marxist left—and eventually expelled from the PCM—for being too "pessimistic," for contrasting too bluntly "the 'earthly' realities of Mexican history and the 'heavenly' political certainties of Stalinized Marxism of the Third International" (Carr, *Marxism & Communism*, 186).[23] "They wanted beautiful and perfect revolutionaries," Revueltas remarked late in his life, "I never knew any, I just spoke about the people who were there" (qtd. in Carr, "Marxism's Contribution," 338). Like Adorno, however, Revueltas's concentration on the negative—that human remainder so eloquently embodied both in the errors of always-imperfect revolutionaries as well as characters whose yearning for liberation and belonging spoke through their suffering from everyday alienation—does not figure as a rejection of the ideals of Marxism, but as the very condition of their truth. Speaking through the writings of the intellectual character Jacobo Ponce in *Los errores*, Revueltas pushes past the question of "mere pessimism" towards the ontological

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[23] As Roberto Simón Crespi writes, "The effect of the publication of *Los días terrenales* was devastating, producing a political furor throughout the Mexican left. For having challenged PCM dogmatism and exposed the ideological contradictions of its Stalinized militants, Revueltas was bitterly attacked by PCM, PP, and independent leftists who all charged that he had openly embraced the decadence of post-war European existentialism […] Essentially, Revueltas' heterodoxy lay not in his anti-Stalinism, for surely there was much support here among his Mexican comrades. The impact of Revueltas' thesis was an attack on what he saw as the myth of the 'absolute' of socialist man in traditional Marxist intellectual theory […] *Los días terrenales* affirmed the dialectics of suffering" (98)

fundament of man's error, his "erroneousness," upon which the communist—or any—hypothesis must stand:

> *"El hombre es un ser erróneo—comenzó a leer con la mirada, en silencio; un ser que nunca terminará por establecerse del todo en ninguna parte: aquí radica precisamente su condición revolucionaria y trágica, inapacible. No aspira a realizarse en otro punto—y es decir, en esto encuentra ya su realización suprema—en otro punto—se repitió—que pueda tener una magnitud mayor al grueso de un cabello, o sea, ese espacio que para la eterna eternidad, y sin que exista poder alguno capaz de remediarlo, dejará siempre sin cubrir la coincidencia máxima del concepto con lo concebido, de la idea con su objeto: reducir el error al grueso de un cabello constituye así, cuando mucho, la más alta victoria que puede obtener; nada ni nadie podrá concederle la exactitud. Sin embargo, el punto que ocupa en el espacio y en el tiempo, en el cosmos, la delgadez de un cabello, es un abismo sin medida, más profundo, más extenso, más tangible, menos reducido, aunque quizá más solitario, que la galaxia a que pertenece el planeta donde habita esta extraña y alucinante conciencia que somos los seres humanos (67)*
>
> Man is an erroneous being—he began to read with his eyes, in silence; a being that never finishes by establishing itself anywhere; therein lies precisely his revolutionary and tragic, unpacifiable condition. He does not aspire to realize himself to another degree—and this is to say, in this he finds his supreme realization—to another degree—he repeated to himself—beyond what can have the thickness of a hair, that is, this space that for eternal eternity, and without there being a power capable of remedying this, will leave uncovered the maximum coincidence of the concept with the conceived, of the idea with its object: to reduce the error to a hair's breadth thus constitutes, at the most, the highest victory that he can obtain; nothing and nobody will be able to grant him exactitude. However, the space occupied in space and in time, in the cosmos, by the thickness of a hair, is an abyss without measure, more profound, more extensive, more tangible, less reduced, though perhaps more solitary, than the galaxy to which belongs the planet where this strange and hallucinating consciousness lives that we human beings are (qtd. in Bosteels, "Marxism and Melodrama," 216)

Within the cosmos of his Marxist humanism, Revueltas embraced both the historical necessity of communism and the irreducible complexity of human life; what he rejected was "the 'absolute' of socialist man in traditional Marxist intellectual theory" (Simón Crespi, 98), the ideal subject

embodying "the maximum coincidence of the concept with the conceived," whose very impossibility (and inhumanity) was forcibly negated, with horrific and catastrophic effect, by the dogmatic grotesquerie of Stalinism. To challenge this as Revueltas did—to assert that our "strange and hallucinating consciousness" can only hope to reduce to the width of a hair the infinite, impassable gap between an ideal worth fighting for and a life worth living—is not simply a question of "pessimism." Confronting dogmatism with its essential negative, its invaluable human remainder, is not the same as rejecting the ideal or deconstructing the concept completely. To declare that the human—like the ideal of unalienated existence to which it strives—"never finishes by establishing itself anywhere," never finds a permanent home in itself, or in this world, that is free from pain and struggle is not to deny the necessity of trying. Quite the opposite: it elevates and honors that necessity to its highest degree, affirming that the (always-incomplete) attempt to realize the fullness of the ideal of communism is only as good as its intertwined attempt to realize the fullness of humanity. "Try again. Fail again. Fail better," as Samuel Beckett said (7).

For Revueltas, in fact, communism *is* man's collective attempt to realize the fullness of his humanity; its guiding principle—and promise—is nothing if not "*la rehumanización del hombre*" (*Ensayo sobre un proletariado*, 61). It is for this reason that Marx's concept of alienation became the central component of Revueltas' own political and existential philosophy, but it was also a concept that he would expand in his own unique way over a lifetime of interrogating the dimensions of man's alienation from himself (from his own *humanidad*), from others, and from the world.[24] Alienation names the painful separation of humans from being

[24] In an interview with Norma Castro Quiteño, Revueltas notes, "*Yo parto de una consideración, que no está muy claramente expresada en mi primera obra, pero que la ha informado siempre: el problema de la enajenación del hombre. Para mí, el ser humano no es un ser enajenado. Esto*

itself—a separation that, for Revueltas, goes all the way back to a sort of originary condition in which the co-developing medial relations connecting humanity and human consciousness to the world they inhabit were broken, reshaped, and instrumentalized. "For Revueltas […] nature exists before man as a movement without history, and man qualitatively transforms nature via consciousness. Alienation is the product of the conflict between the initial revolutionary form in which man appears in the process of the development of nature and the forms introduced by society. In the latter, he is denied full freedom and deprived of the free exercise of his own consciousness" (Simón Crespi, 105). This originary break between humans and being—a state of being in which man knows both "full freedom" and "the free exercise of his own consciousness"—occurs in a way that can only be conceptualized if we take as a given that being as such exists (or takes place, rather) in the medial connection between human and world, between inside and outside; a connection in and through which being is mediated. Revueltas' ontological positing of this originary (and broken) relationship between human and world serves a different function than the romantic "state of nature" hypotheses that Marx himself criticized so vehemently; it is less a prescriptive analytic for determining the contours of man's ideal self in a

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lo comprendí desde el principio en mis conocimientos de marxismo, cuando Marx afirma que vivimos no la historia, sino la prehistoria humana. Este prisma naturalmente tiñe todo mi análisis del individuo. Si aplicamos el principio de que todavía no vivimos una historia humana sino una prehistoria enajenada, el individuo, que es el instrumento de la expresión artística, ya que el artista no trabaja con entidades abstractas sino con individualidades acusadas y personajes, este principio de enajenación del individuo como tal descubre un mundo enormemente expresivo" (I write from one consideration, which is not very clearly expressed in my first work but has informed it ever since—the problem of man's alienation. For me, the human being is not an alienated being. I understood this when I began learning Marxism, when Marx affirms that we are not living through human history, but human prehistory. This prism naturally colors my entire analysis of the individual. If we apply the principle that we are not living through human history but an alienated prehistory, the individual, which is the instrument of artistic expression, inasmuch as the artist does not work with abstract entities but with distinct individualities and characters, then this principle of the individual's alienation as such discovers an immensely expressive world) (38).

bygone world than a diagnostic for understanding the pain man feels in the world today. It is not a state that humanity can ever hope to fully get back to—no more than we can hope to close the divide between "concept" and "the conceived" beyond the width of a hair—but it is a loss we feel, a wound we can never quite heal. The pain from that wound marks our distance from what we and our world should be, and a constant, necessary, but unforgiving reminder that life doesn't have to be *this* way. It is a repressed memory of what never quite was that, in the absence of an organized proletarian consciousness that can politically harness it, can only express itself through myriad forms of pain and violence.

If we could call anything a defining feature of the worlds and people Revueltas depicts in his literary writings, it would be this (and it was this that his critics on the left mistakenly took as the "decadent" source of his heretical "pessimism"). It is easier to show than tell, however, and it is perhaps in *El luto humano* that Revueltas makes the nature of human alienation most brazenly explicit. The novel itself is set in small rural community in the middle of nowhere, a community where the proletarian promise of postrevolutionary prosperity disappeared after a large workers' strike against the exploitative management of a government-sponsored irrigation project resulted in the assassination of a revolutionary leader, the shutting down of the project, and a mass exodus from the town. The characters in the novel are, quite literally, the ten human remainders, none of whom are what one would call "heroic," all of whom smolder with pain and resentment, desperation and exhaustion. As a storm begins to flood the valley—a flood that will inevitably consume every remaining soul—the broken people coalesce, take what they can carry, and begin trudging towards nowhere. In the second chapter, two rival characters, Úrsulo and Adán, arrive at the church to retrieve the priest, who perceives them thusly:

> *Tornó a mirar a los dos hombres, que ya eran dos ángeles indios, torvos ángeles con las camisas raídas y una nostalgia infinita y un pavor. ¡Era tan imposible hacer nada en su contra! Veíanse como en formación continua, aglomerando y dispersando su propia materia, vencidos en absoluto y con cierto rincón, no obstante, tercamente victorioso, hostil, que paralizaba el entusiasmo. Antojábase ver en ellos sólo un ruido con forma humana, lleno de tristeza y de rencor. Eran un ruido, un simple entrechocar de cosas sin luz* (25).
>
> He turned to look at the two men who had now become two Indian angels, fierce angels in threadbare shirts with both infinite nostalgia and deep dread. It would be absolutely impossible to do anything to hurt them! They looked as if they were in continuous formation, amassing and dispersing their own matter, absolutely defeated, but nevertheless a certain corner of their being remained stubbornly triumphant and hostile, paralyzing all enthusiasm. He imagined he saw in them only the human form of a very sad and resentful murmur. They were a muffled thud, a simple collision of objects without light (20).

After nearly everything else has been stripped away, "a certain corner of their being remained." Every character and practically every scene in *El luto humano* is drenched with a sense of resigned loss and directionless resentment. Even Úrsulo and Ádan lack the strength or will to kill each other, which everything we know about their history leads us to expect them to do. It is not hard to see why so many critics read the novel as an exercise in "decadent pessimism." And yet, that trace of being, that "sad and resentful murmur," has nevertheless brought the "two Indian angels" to the priest's door, it drives them and the others to continue walking through the flood, even if they ultimately have nowhere to go. Where they *could* go, how they could get there, what they could do together, and how unalienated their lives could be if they had some organized purpose that called to that unkillable residue of being—that is left to the reader to imagine. But it is clear that the pain of an alienated existence covers each character like a thick crust, smothering all but the "muffled thud" of being one can perceive deep within them. And the atmospheric conditions that mediate this alienation are materialized in the starkest of settings: whatever memory was left of an originary, unalienated symbiosis connecting man to the world he inhabits

has been replaced by dead landscape, a sphere of nonexistence, littered with the mechanical bones of a failed proletarian project to collectively irrigate and renew the land—to revive both it and the people who lived there, together. Once again, the traces of this memory of an originary state of being serve to diagnose what, for Revueltas, is a pain that one could even call primordial (or, in Marx's term, prehistorical):

> *Úrsulo descubrió de pronto que su reino no era de este mundo. Que pertenecía al mundo de lo inanimado, antes, siquiera, de lo vegetal, y que como la piedra maternal primera, ignorándolo también, era tan sólo una extrahumana voluntad hacia el ser, la más vehemente, la más ardiente voluntad de la historia, la voluntad, la vocación de la piedra: sin armas, como ella, sin pensamiento, inmóvil, último, pero esperando durante una centuria, como parte del tiempo ya, convertido ya en tiempo espeso* (69).
>
> Ursulo suddenly discovered that his kingdom was not of this world. That he belonged to the prevegetable world of the inanimate, and that like the first maternal stone he was merely an extrahuman will-toward-being, the most vehement, burning will of history, the will and vocation of stone: weaponless, thoughtless, motionless, and final, like stone, but waiting for a century, like a part of the very thickness of time itself (64).

Like molten, spewing, cooling, settled rock that will become what it will be in the world—mountain, forest bed, sand—there is deep within Úrsulo an "extrahuman will-toward-being" connecting his humanity to the world he, too, is a part of, all the way down to the "prevegetable world of the inanimate." Between such different beings, human and stone, there echoes a call to connectedness.[25] That felt medial connection, however, is often drowned out by the alienated distance that imposes itself when humans strive to "conquer" and instrumentalize the natural world they're a part of, even to the point of conquering, instrumentalizing, and dehumanizing one another:

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[25] "Media help steer nature and humans as logistical techniques linking the anthroposphere and the biosphere, whose fates are now linked" (Durham Peters, 51).

> *Palpándose el pecho, hasta su mano llegaba la sequedad del alma. Alma amurallada con círculos infinitos, del uno al mil, de mil al millón, sin luz dentro, con tinieblas atroces que no dejaban ver, que no dejaban respirar. Era terrible darse cuenta de la derrota y la satánica inteligencia repetía ahí la verdad indudable: corazón amurallado, sin luz, que transcurrió por la vida, inútilmente, estérilmente, como sobre un desierto, no dejando huella, ni rama, ni sombra, ni abrigo. La de vencer había sido su tarea. La de todos esa meta profunda: vencer [...] ¿Alguna vez venció de lo que debe vencerse para ser fecundo y grande? ¿Grande dentro de la pequeñez pura, angélica de la vida?* (77).
>
> As he touched his chest, he felt the dryness of his soul on his hand. A soul walled in by infinite circles, from one to a thousand, from a thousand to a million, with no internal light, with an atrocious darkness that permitted neither seeing nor breathing. It was terrifying to fully comprehend his defeat, and his satanic intelligence was repeating the undeniable truth: his walled, lightless soul had passed through life uselessly, sterilely, as if in a desert, leaving behind neither trace, branch, shadow, nor shelter. His mission had been to conquer. Everyone had this same profound goal: to conquer […] Had he ever conquered what must be conquered in order to be productive and great? In order to be great even within the pure, angelic smallness of life? (72).

There is a strikingly Sloterdijkian tone to the imagery of Úrsulo's suffering—"A soul walled in by infinite circles"—which is reflected inward and outward like an infinity mirror: within himself, a dim continuum of immiscible being, circles within circles, "from a thousand to a million"; that same imagery is projected outward—"his walled, lightless soul had passed through life […] as if in a desert"—with Úrsulo himself appearing as one circle of being within "a thousand to a million" others, surrounded by a wasteland, under the dome of the black sky, as seemingly barren and dry as "the dryness of his soul"; "no internal light," no external light either. Infinite separation; medial arrangements of infinite circles that, by imposing an ordered separateness, alienate more than they connect; an endlessly rippling of existence without a home; being without being. The blistering world cannot be a home to those who have lost the ability to make a home within it, or within themselves; the world to which we are attached, the "outside" mediating our very being, cannot be "conquered" by man without man, in turn, conquering

himself. “Thus an inquiry into our location is more productive than ever, as it examines the place that humans create in order to have somewhere they can appear as those who they are […] The sphere is the interior, disclosed, shared realm inhabited by humans—in so far as they succeed in becoming humans (Slotderdijk, *Bubbles*, 28). What Revueltas’ literary works depict more than anything else are human beings who suffer the throes of living in a world in which they cannot “succeed in becoming humans,” a world in which “the place that humans create” for themselves only allows for a kind of living that alienates them from themselves, from one another, and from the world itself. What Revueltas’ political works depict more than anything is both the practical and existential necessity of communism—and an organized communist party—as a collective proletarian effort to create a world in which humans can “have somewhere they can appear as those who they are”—to bring humanity back to somewhere we belong.

> *Se abandona la vida y un sentimiento indefinible de resignación ansiosa impulsa a mirar todo con ojos detenidos y fervientes, y cobran las cosas su humanidad y un calor de pasos, de huellas habitadas. No está solo el mundo, sino que lo ocupa el hombre. Tiene sentido su extensión y cuanto la cubre, las estrellas, los animales, el árbol […] Se abandona la vida y una esperanza, un júbilo secreto dice palabras, nociones universales: esto de hoy, la muerte, una eternidad… Existo y me lo comunican mi cuerpo y mi espíritu, que van a dejar de existir; he participado del milagro indecible, he pertenecido* (*El luto humano*, 107).
>
> Life finally surrenders and an indefinable feeling of anxious resignation impels one to look at everything with careful, fervent eyes, and things begin to take on their humanity and a warmth of steps, inhabited footprints. The world is not alone; rather, man dwells on it. Its vastness, and all the land it covers, the stars, animals, trees, it all makes sense […] Life finally surrenders and a hope, a secret exultation utters words, universal notions: the situation today, death, an eternity. I exist and this fact is communicated to me by my body and my spirit, both of which are about to cease to exist; I have participated in that unspeakable miracle, I have belonged (*Human Mourning*, 99).

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Again, the medial arrangements of the worlds we're a part of, the spheres we inhabit, adjust us to alienated life—a morbid *habitus* mediating the conditions of our own dehumanization.[26] Moreover, what we could call the "media effects" of such arrangements bleed into one's very consciousness, enticing (if not compelling) one to acclimate to the givenness of the surrounding world, to find ways to live and think within it that hurt less, perhaps, even if mitigating that hurting for oneself means either abiding or increasing the pain of others. It is in such terms that Revueltas discusses the inevitable Marxist conundrum of "false consciousness": ways of thinking and of seeing one's place in the world that, in one way or another, deny, ignore, or accept the world-sized injustice of humanity's alienated existence. The mediating societal forces that make different forms of "false consciousness" appealing, resonant, and even rewarding are multiform and powerful—and their power is more than capable of seamlessly and unobtrusively intertwining with the spheres and consciousnesses of working people.[27] Put

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[26] Fusing the materialism of Louis Althusser and Pierre Bourdieu's analyses of the embodied mediations of social structures, Jon Beasley-Murray argues, "Habit drives and is driven by the unseen and barely audible hum of micropolitics that pervades our daily routines; it is like background noise in that we are almost oblivious to its ongoing importance, the ways in which it structures our all too familiar, endlessly repeated quotidian activities […] The everyday, routine, and almost invisible politics of habit contrasts with the often spectacular display that characterizes politics as it is more usually understood. The politics of habit is not the clash of ideologies within a theater of representation. It is a politics that is immanent and corporeal, that works directly through the body. Yet habit is primary; it is not an effect or a consequence of political processes that take place elsewhere. Rather, other forms of politics depend upon the dispositions and attitudes that habit inculcates" (180-181).

[27] As an aside: such a spherological approach to ideology and consciousness should help guide our analyses of, in all its iterations, the inexhaustible and inevitably recurring question of "false consciousness," the working class, and why people would "vote [or otherwise act] against their 'own interests.'" The analytical premise of such an approach is to *not* begin one's inquiry by questioning why and how working people have been compelled to act in ways that will contribute to bolstering the conditions of their own domination; rather, the question is how, and under what (micro- and macro-) medial conditions, do such actions make sense? How, for instance, could "reactionary" and "revolutionary" segments of a demographically, industrially, and geographically diverse working class simultaneously be "right" in their efforts to advance "their own interests"? How, the question should be posed, do the spherological conditions of

another way: there is never any historical guarantee that those who are most alienated and dehumanized by the medial arrangement of society will be compelled to rise up against it—or to believe that they should.[28] But as Revueltas saw it, the hope for communism and an organized proletarian consciousness existed in the fact that members of the working class knew more intimately—they felt more acutely and more im*media*tely in their daily media-worlds—the essential wrong done to them and their world by the epochal-material arrangement ("the system") that gave them no part. It was the duty of a true communist party, Revueltas argued, to reconcile the proletariat with its historical class consciousness, to harness and organize that collective consciousness as the concrete driver of revolutionary action that would rewire the medial relations of production and the intertwined medial circuits of political economy, reshaping the world in and through which human being was mediated in order to create a place for "humans […] to have somewhere they can appear as those who they are." This, however, was decidedly not what the PCM did:

> *La raíz esencial de la falta de independencia de la clase obrera en México hay que buscarla precisamente en el punto donde radica la enajenación esencial de ésta:* en el papel que ha representado y representa el Partido Comunista Mexicano como *conciencia obrera deformada,* como partido que no ha podido ser el

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one's daily existence organize said interests into different hierarchies of need, perhaps prioritizing one's interests in racial identity, national belonging, family protection, etc. over the collective interest of working-class liberation? As Stuart Hall put so well, "What is required here is to understand how, under *different concrete conditions*, the perceptions and conceptions of the dominated classes can, equally cogently and plausibly, be organized, now into the reformist, now into the revolutionary discourse. Both are ways of organizing, discursively, not false but real, or (for the epistemologically squeamish) real enough, interests and experiences […] The first thing to ask about an 'organic' ideology that, however unexpectedly, succeeds in organizing substantial sections of the masses and mobilizing them for political action, is not what is *false* about it but what about it is *true*" (46)

[28] That is to say, there is never any guarantee, as Bill Schwartz writes, "that the forward march of the people is necessarily democratic" or that there exists "an 'authentic' radical popular culture, resilient or impervious to dominant interventions, such that it can be called upon as unambiguously 'ours'" (87).

auténtico *partido de clase* del proletariado, después de más de cuarenta años de existencia física. Luego entonces en el hecho de que en México no exista el partido de clase del proletariado.

Decíamos que el movimiento obrero de la segunda década del presente siglo (1910-1920) había dejado sentadas la bases para la fusión de la ideología proletaria con la clase obrera bajo la forma de la organización de la conciencia proletaria en México, esto es, de la formación del partido proletario de la clase obrera mexicana, de su vanguardia política, consideradas estas bases como las acciones independientes llevadas a cabo por las masas obreras en el país. Dichas acciones, en su mayor parte, las había encabezado el anarco-sindicalismo.

De tal modo, la tarea histórica fundamental que se plantea para la ideología proletaria, desde el momento mismo de su aparición en México, es, ante todo, la de asumir la conciencia de la independencia de la clase obrera, concebir sus caminos y delimitar con toda precisión cuál debía ser el campo de lucha del proletariado, por medio del desarrollo de su tradición revolucionaria independiente, representada hasta entonces por el magonismo y el anarco-sindicalismo (*Ensayo sobre un proletariado*, 222) (emphases added).

We must search for the essential root of the lack of independence of Mexico's working class precisely at the point where its essential alienation resides: *in the role that the Mexican Communist Party has represented and still represents—that of deformed working-class consciousness, of a party that has failed to become the authentic class party of the proletariat after more than forty years of physical existence. Then in the fact that in Mexico there is no class party of the proletariat*.

We used to say that the workers movement of the second decade of the current century (1910-1920) had left in place the bases for the fusion of the proletarian ideology with the working class under the form of the organization of Mexico's proletarian consciousness, of its political vanguard, with these bases as the independent actions taken by the country's working masses. Said actions had been, for the most part, led by anarcho-syndicalism.

Such that the fundamental historical task of proletarian ideology, from the very moment of its appearance in Mexico, is, above all, that of assuming the consciousness of working class independence, to come up with its paths and mark out with great precision what should be the proletariat's battle field, through the development of its independent revolutionary tradition, represented until now by anarcho-syndicalism and Magonism (*Essay on a Headless Proletariat*, 222) (emphasis added).

Published in 1962, over 40 years after the PCM's official founding in November 1919, Revueltas' *Ensayo sobre un proletariado sin cabeza* (*Essay on a Headless Proletariat*) was an excoriating indictment of the PCM's decades-long failure to establish a genuine, independent working-class party that represented and mediated an organized proletarian consciousness.

Instead, after the revolution, the "headless proletariat" in Mexico had only been represented by entities that denied its capacity to act independently for itself and that offered only a "deformed" working-class consciousness, the motivation of which was inevitably to temper and placate the proletariat's interests in being able to live dignified, unalienated lives — and to make that goal seem attainable only insofar as said interests could be placated within the managed bourgeois synthesis of revolutionary nationalism. Such entities included both the "organized labor"—the Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (CROM), the state-affiliated umbrella federation of labor unions—and the "organized (i.e., official) politics" wings of the bourgeois synthesis embodied in the Mexican state apparatus, which, as previously discussed, would lay perpetual claim to the right—forged in revolutionary fire—to represent and embody the will of "the people." However, as Revueltas' critique contends, these institutional technologies served to capture working-class consciousness and mediate a "deformed" version of it that would ensure the proletarian and proto-proletarian sectors of society, instead of mobilizing politically and acting independently to reshape the medial arrangements of the world they lived in, would have their political, social, and economic interests represented in the halls of power to the extent that those interests could be subsumed within the ordering project of postrevolutionary society embodied in the Mexican state, which sought to manage and mediate social tensions as opposed to eliminating the. However, the Partido Comunista Mexicano itself was another source of deformed working-class consciousness "*que no ha podido ser el auténtico* partido de clase *del proletariado*" (that has failed to become the authentic class party of the proletariat).

The tragedy, for Revueltas, was that the conditions had been in place for the fusion of the nascent working class, the peasantry, and an organized proletarian consciousness during the decade of the Mexican revolution. The potential for a historical rupture in the continuum of

bourgeois rule that had been opened up by such sustained and violent social upheaval was simultaneously an opening for the Mexican proletariat to emerge as a class of and for itself, acting independently to assert its own needs in the reshaping of the medial infrastructure of national connectedness and the architecture of enforced relations of economic production. Instead, Revueltas argues, in a scenario that would replay itself over and over again, the proletariat lost its head. That is to say, the proletarian and proto-proletarian populations allowed themselves to be splintered and disorganized—or, worse, to be organized in political collectivities whose causes and leaders ("heads") mediated a "deformed" or compromised working-class consciousness. One of the prime examples Revueltas gives in this regard is the swell of revolutionaries who initially threw their support behind the bourgeois liberal reformism embodied in Porfirio Díaz's successor (and wealthy landowner), Francisco I. Madero. Notably, as a counter to the mobilization of the *antirreeleccionistas* who channeled their revolutionary fervor into supporting Madero, Revueltas points to Flores Magón and the Partido Liberal Mexicano as a driving force for an independent, organized proletarian consciousness—recalling, no doubt, the fissure in the *magonismo* movement, discussed in the previous chapter, that occurred when Ricardo declared in the 3 April 1911 issue of *Regeneración* the PLM's anti-*maderista* stance and openly embraced anarchism:

> The people of Mexico find themselves in these moments in open rebellion against their oppressors, and, taking part in the general insurrection are those who sustain modern ideas: those convinced of the fallacy of political remedies as a means of redeeming the proletariat from economic slavery; those who do not believe in the goodness of paternalistic governments nor in the impartiality of the laws worked out by the bourgeoisie; those who know that the emancipation of the workers must be accomplished by the workers themselves; those convinced of the need for direct action; those who do not recognize the "sacred right of private property"; those who have not taken up arms to elevate any boss, but rather to destroy wage slavery. These revolutionaries are represented by the Organizing Junta of the Partido Liberal Mexicano […]

> The Partido Liberal Mexicano does not fight to overthrow the dictator Porfirio Díaz in order to put a new tyrant in his place […] Now then, another party also finds itself with arms in hand: the Anti-Reelection Party, whose leader, Francisco I. Madero, is a millionaire who has seen his vast fortune grow through the sweat and tears of the peons on his haciendas. This party fights to make "effective" the right to vote, and to found, in sum, a bourgeois republic such as that in the United States. This party, overall political, is, naturally, the enemy of the Partido Liberal Mexicano, because it sees in the activities of the [PLM] a danger to the survival of the bourgeois republic which guarantees to the politicians, to the job seekers, to the rich, to all of the ambitious, to those who want to live at the cost of the suffering and the slavery of the proletariat—it sees a danger to the continuation of social inequality, to the sustenance of the capitalists, to the division of the human family into two classes: exploiters and exploited ("Manifesto to the Workers of the World," *Dreams of Freedom*, 134-135)

It is in these sentiments expressed by Flores Magón that one can see concretized the kind of organized proletarian consciousness Revueltas argued for, one whose independence—"those who know that the emancipation of the workers must be accomplished by the workers themselves"—would enable the working class's pursuit of its ineradicable need to be human, and the need to live in a world in which the very humanness of their being could appear as that which it is, to be asserted without curtailing itself to fit within the limits of bourgeois democracy—"those who do not believe in the goodness of paternalistic governments nor in the impartiality of the laws worked out by the bourgeoisie." In Revueltas, Flores Magón finds vindication for taking this stance in the early days of the revolution, which drew heavy criticism and resulted in many, including his brother Jesús, defecting from the PLM to support Madero. The direction for the creation of a proletarian party that acted consciously and independently for itself, Revueltas writes, already existed in the form of *magonismo*; the force that could impel such action, he continued, was already deeply imbedded in the medial life-worlds of many Mexicans who believed or participated in more anarcho-syndicalist ways of living, even if they didn't call them by that name.

This brings us back to the Bolshevik revolution. Recall that it was not only radical figures like Flores Magón who were enthused by the great historical event—or what they perceived that event to be—that was unfolding in Russia before their eyes. The same was true of Zapata and many in the nascent Mexican labor movement who worked within more mutualist and libertarian political frameworks, the roots of which extended deep into regional and communal traditions, and who would thus resist being enticed into capitulating to the reformist détente of bourgeois synthesis embodied in the postrevolutionary Mexican state. Among regional sectors of the Mexican lower classes, as Revueltas notes, these embedded cultural traditions and cooperative organizational structures would make the anarcho-communism of *magonismo* and the anarcho-syndicalism of the labor movement's leftwing more resonant, familiar, and attractive than Marxism.[29] It was also, notably, this affinity for more anarchistic and syndicalist intellectual and political traditions that colored the positive perceptions many Mexican leftists had of the

[29] As John Hart describes in *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class, 1860-1931*, "During the forty-five years that preceded the Mexican Revolution the anarchists, who were the first urban *agraristas*, helped to contribute a body of doctrine to the previously poorly understood Mexican agrarian movement. In this way they hoped to change the nature of Mexican agrarianism from profound but relatively inarticulate uprisings into a movement reinforced by a coherent peasant view of the world to come. Resistance provoked by oppression and the lack of basic necessities articulated a program designed to preserve traditional patterns of peasant life. The anarchist *agraristas* specifically demanded local autonomy from centralized government; seizure and redistribution of agricultural properties by the *municipios libres*, or free village governments; and an end to the political corruption of national and local government officials. Their success in becoming a part of the Mexican agrarian movement stemmed from the compatibility of their program with the values, traditions, and aspirations of the sedentary-indigenous people […] At the same time that the agrarian movement acquired ideological dimensions, the Mexican urban labor movement evolved during the late 1860's through the revolutionary period of 1910-1917 from mutualism to cooperativism to revolutionary anarchosyndicalism. Mexican working-class organizations, influenced by forceful and militant anarchist organizers, stressed deplorable working conditions in the factories, decried miserable living conditions in the cities, and aspired to a better life. Thus, the anarchists facilitated labor's view of what the ideal society should be and in what manner the working class should organize in order to achieve it" (15-16).

Bolshevik revolution and of the erection of what appeared to be a society governed primarily through the cooperative federation of worker-run soviets. As Barry Carr writes,

> The revolutionary events were […] given an interpretation that accorded with anarchist and syndicalist beliefs. The Mexican radical press placed particular emphasis on the soviet, or workers' council, as the most characteristic and significant institution created by the revolutionary upsurge. For Mexican anarchists, the Russian Revolution was a magnificent example of direct action (*acción directa*) carried out by an active minority with the familiar anarchist and libertarian slogans of antimilitarism, individual freedom, and the smashing of the state. The world was witnessing a spontaneous uprising by the masses made desperate by the miseries of war. To a certain extent the distortions of the bourgeois press actually encouraged these attempts to see the Bolshevik revolution as the incarnation of the anarchist goal of Social Revolution. The Mexican radicals' response to revolutionary developments in Russia almost exactly mirrored the response of many syndicalists and anarchists in Spain and throughout Europe during the immediate postwar years (*Marxism & Communism*, 18).

Thinkers like Revueltas would lament the historical "missed connection" between Mexican anarchists, syndicalists, and communists during and immediately after the revolution, often alluding to a lost moment when that pervasive sentiment described by Carr gave many radicals hope that they could create the kind of world they wanted in Mexico—and that they could achieve it by working together. The embeddedness of anarchist and syndicalist traditions in the labor movement and various leftist factions provided a brief fertile period of potentiality in which the newly formed PCM could bank on widespread political enthusiasm inspired, in large part, by the Bolshevik revolution and its coverage in the national and radical presses. That potentiality was also spurred by a critical division within the Mexican labor movement itself. Once in power, Carranza and the Constitutionalists had moved to not only crush Zapata's and Villa's armies but to also stall official recognition of unions while sending a message to organized labor by obliterating the Casa del Obrero Mundial workers' center in Mexico City

(founded by former PLM members), its leadership, and the general strike it organized in 1916. The next three years would prompt many workers to lick their wounds and rethink their organizing strategies; they would also make increasingly apparent the great divide that existed between, on one hand, the reformist trade unionism that would be embodied in the affiliated members of the Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (CROM), founded in March 1918, and, on the other hand, the temporary fusion of PCM members with the anarcho-syndicalist currents of the labor movement that had united first in the Gran Cuerpo Central de Trabajadores (GCCT) in 1918 and subsequently in the Confederación General de Trabajadores (CGT) in February 1921 (Carr, *El movimiento obrero*, 95).[30] And it was in this leftwing of the labor movement that Revueltas saw one of the only—if not *the* only—potential sources for significantly growing an independently organized working-class consciousness after the PLM had been repressed into oblivion: "*Dentro de las circunstancias de una mediatización absoluta del movimiento obrero por la ideología democrático-burguesa, que logra conservar las luchas*

[30] Heavily oriented toward Mexico City workers, the Gran Cuerpo embraced the most staunchly independent and militant workers of the capital city and its southern suburbs, many of whom would, in February 1921, find their way to the General Confederation of Workers (Confederación General de Trabajadores, CGT). The Gran Cuerpo drew support from bakers, tramway workers and telephone company employees (both unions were very active in late 1914 and 1915), chauffeurs, and certain sections of the textile workers' movements of the Federal District" (Carr, *Marxism & Communism*, 17).

proletarias dentro de sus puros y estrictos marcos tradeunionistas, el anarco-sindicalismo es el

Figure 3.4. *El anzuelo del capitalismo* woodcut print by Xavier Guerrero from *El machete* 21 August 1924. The symbolism in Guerrero's print is quite blunt, depicting a visually deformed officer of "Los Comités de Huelga" (Strike Committees) receiving money from a distinctly Morones-like figure on the right (an association signified by the rings on his fingers) and a prostitute on the left, whose presence leaves no doubt about the implied condemnation of union officials who, instead of serving the interests of the rank and file, corruptly sell their positions of influence to the highest bidder.

único movimiento obrero que en México imprime a las huelgas el carácter de verdaderas batallas de clase, es decir, que las politiza y les da una naturaleza proletaria independiente, sin que, por otra parte, adopte ante la revolución democrático-burguesa una actitud negativa o de considerar que sea una revolución que 'se halla en pugna con los intereses del proletariado'" (Within the circumstances of an absolute mediatization of the workers movement by democratic-bourgeois ideology, which manages to keep proletarian struggles within its pure and strict trade unionist frameworks, anarcho-syndicalism is the only workers movement that in

Mexico imprints the strikes with the true character of class struggle; that is, it politicizes and gives them an independent proletarian nature, without, on the other hand, adopting before the democratic-bourgeois revolution a negative attitude or of considering it a revolution that 'finds itself in conflict with the interests of the proletariat') (*Ensayo sobre un proletariado*, 214). Revueltas' dogged focus on the question of an independently organized proletariat (that acted *independently* in its own self-determined interest) is a theoretical and praxical necessity in the strictest Marxist-Leninist sense: "*la lucha de clases deberá*

Figure 3.5. *Judas Morones* woodcut print by José Clemente Orozco from *El machete* 25 September 1924. Orozco's arresting image depicts a Mexican worker (whose traditional overalls visually link him to the urban proletariat) with his arms defiantly folded as a visually grotesque, almost reptilian Morones leans in close while wrapping his ring-clad, sharp-tipped claws around him in a treacherous imitation of intimacy, concern, and solidarity. "Judas Morones" is emblazoned on the toad-like figure's bulging stomach as he does the bidding of the villainous, sneering, top-hat-wearing, knife-clutching capitalists in the background. Such overt biblical references are commonplace in the writing and artwork featured in *El machete*, providing an immediately recognizable interpretive key for readers that was both morally clarifying and deeply resonant with Christian traditions in Mexico

expresarse, en todo caso, como una lucha de la clase obrera por ser independiente*, por conquistar su independencia, conservarla y no dejarse arrastrar y dirigir por la burguesía*" (to be independent, to conquer its independence, conserve it and not let itself be dragged and directed by the bourgeoise, class struggle will have to be expressed, in any case, as a struggle of the working-class) (*Ensayo sobre un proletariado*, 216). The social contradictions created by capitalism, resulting in the mass exploitation, disenfranchisement, and dehumanization of the working class, can only be eradicated when the dehumanized class organizes to express, by and for itself, its collective, non-negotiable need to be human; a need that is, by necessity, all-or-nothing, that cannot be permanently satiated with compromises and half-measures promising the return of *some* humanity—a need that can only be met by destroying the hegemonic medial arrangement of the political-economic system that depends on mass dehumanization to function. But the question of proletarian independence was also, for Revueltas, an analytical necessity when it came to parsing the key differentiating factors between the organizations that would take it upon themselves to represent and attempt to mediate working-class consciousness.

On one side, as mentioned above, there was the CROM (established in 1918), its leader, Luís Napoleon Morones, and the Partido Laborista Mexicano (PL), which functioned as CROM's political arm and, during the Obregón administration, would serve as a direct medial bridge between the CROM and the Mexican state, particularly between Morones and then-Interior Minister Plutarco Elías Calles. Morones—whose devotion to political collaboration with the bourgeois state, coupled with his (in)famously ostentatious style of dressing and covering his fingers with expensive rings, made him an easily caricature-able target for his opponents, including the communists—is a morbidly fascinating figure in his own right (Figure 3.4/Figure 3.5). It certainly can be said that his democratic socialist brand of reformist trade unionism that

operated within the boundaries of revolutionary nationalism (i.e., within the boundaries of bourgeois managerial synthesis mediated by the postrevolutionary Mexican state) was rooted in a genuine concern for improving the lot of working people. But it must also necessarily be said that Morones and the CROM itself were capable of executing that mission only insofar as their efforts could be made consistent with a "deformed" working-class consciousness retrofitted to the artificially—and often corrupt(ing)ly—managed synthesis between workers, capital, and the state. As Arnaldo Córdova describes it,

> *Pero, en realidad, todo ello cuadraba perfectamente bien con el papel que Morones y los suyos habían acordado asignar a los trabajadores organizados bajo su mando, ya en la CROM o ya en el [PL]. Por una parte, se afirmaba que México era un país de proletarios y que el movimiento revolucionario implicaba aquí la elevación de la clase de los proletarios, mientras que, por otra parte, se estimaba que antes que el triunfo de los trabajadores mexicanos estaba el supremo interés de la reorganización económica del país. Los laboristas mexicanos, se pensaba, diferían de los bolcheviques en que éstos buscaban la transformación del sistema imperante, recurriendo a la violencia, mientras que los laboristas mexicanos pretendían socializar la riqueza mediante una evolución lenta.* Los resultados de esta política no podían ser otros que la total sujeción de los trabajadores a la línea adoptada por el gobierno de Calles para las relaciones entre el capital y el trabajo, y la corrupción de los dirigentes obreros a un nivel insospechado (324-326) (emphases added).
>
> But, in reality, it all lined up perfectly with the role that Morones and his people had agreed to assign to the organized workers under their command, either in the CROM or in the [PL]. On the one hand, they affirmed that Mexico was a country of proletariats and that the revolutionary movement here meant the elevation of the proletarian class; while on the other they considered that above the victory of Mexican workers was the supreme interest of the economic reorganization of the country. Mexican laborers, it was thought, were different from the Bolsheviks, in that the latter sought the transformation of the prevailing system through violence, while Mexican laborers intended the socialization of wealth through a slow evolution. *The results of this policy could be no other than the total subjection of the workers to the line adopted by the Calles government regarding the relationship between capital and labor, and the corruption of labor leaders to an unprecedented degree* (324-326) (emphasis added).

Much like the 1914 occupation of Mexico City and the accompanying image of *Villa en la silla presidencial* had provided the medial-symbolic contexts for bourgeois state rule to justify itself as the undeniable will of the people by laundering itself through the blood and righteousness of revolution, the pact between Morones, the CROM, and the postrevolutionary state served to further bolster the latter's claim that it represented the interests of Mexican workers and that, by definition, it would be good, just, and necessary to impose itself as the ultimate mediator of labor relations in Mexico writ large. (The result, as Revueltas writes, was a most-peculiar postrevolutionary hybrid state that could accurately be called "the workers' government of the bourgeoisie": "*A tal extremo llega, en un momento dado, la identidad entre la CROM y la burguesía gobernante, bajo el gobierno de Calles, que éste no ve como cosa descabellada la posibilidad de ceder a Luis N. Morones, líder de la CROM y del Partido Laborista, la presidencia de la República, en el siguiente periodo presidencial, con lo que hubiera aparecido en México un curioso "gobierno obrero" de la burguesía*" [At a certain moment under the Calles government, the identity between the CROM and the governing bourgeoisie went to such an extreme that he did not see as absurd the possibility of ceding the presidency of the Republic to Luis N. Morones, leader of the CROM and the Labor Party, in the next presidential period, which would have meant the appearance in Mexico of a curious "workers government" of the bourgeoisie] [*Ensayo sobre un proletariado*, 209]). But for workers to buy into the project of revolutionary nationalism, in which the state (the *media*tor of final resort) manages the interests


PAGINA TRES.

Judas Gompers, Enemigo de México

Un Error Trascendental de Calles

Figure 3.6. "Judas Gompers, Enemigo de México" from *El machete* 21 August 1924. Once again, the biblical figure of Judas is re-deployed by the editors of *El machete* to cast Samuel Gompers (and the doctrine of "*gomperismo*") in the starkest terms of villainy and betrayal of the righteous working class.

of the working class while simultaneously serving those of the bourgeoisie, is precisely the kind of contradiction Revueltas articulates in the notion of a "deformed" consciousness that results when the working class is not organized and acting independently.[31] Concerning the question of

[31] In describing the reformism of Morones and the CROM, Revueltas actually describes the former as a "creole Millerand," in reference to Alexandre Millerand, whose presidency in France coincided with Obregón's in Mexico. Millerand's ascent through the French government became a heated topic of debate for socialists in the early decades of the twentieth century, as the fact that he served in Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau's cabinet alongside Gaston Alexandre Auguste (the Marquis de Galliffet), who led the brutal repression of the Paris Commune, led many to question the tradeoffs that came from socialist parliamentary collaboration: "*El reformismo, representado primero por los líderes de derecha de la Casa del Obrero Mundial y, a la desaparición de ésta, por la Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (CROM) dirigida por Morones, era un reformismo democrático-burgués que encabezaba luchas obrero-patronales (aparte, también, de traicionar huelgas) dentro del concepto "obrerista" de la revolución mexicana, y entregaba con ello a la clase obrera en manos de la burguesía. Ver entonces en Morones, ministro de Industria y Fomento de Calles, la réplica de un Millerand criollo, era equivocar esencialmente los términos, porque se trataba de algo más que un Millerand, ya que figuraba dentro de un gobierno "revolucionario" donde era muy difícil que las masas proletarias de la CROM pudieran advertir a un gobierno de la burguesía*" (Reformism, represented first by the leaders of the right of the Casa del Obrero Mundial and, after its disappearance, by the Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (CROM) led by Morones, was a democratic-bourgeoisie reformism that led worker-employer struggles (apart from also breaking up strikes) within the "obrerista" or workers concept of the Mexican revolution, and with it gave up the working class to bourgeoisie hands. To then see in Morones, minister of Industry and Highway Development, a replica of a Millerand criollo, inasmuch as he was part of a "revolutionary" government where it was very

independence—which is another way of saying the question of *im/mediacy* (i.e., the question of how, and to what extent, the interests and consciousness of the proletariat are mediated by external organizing entities)—there was also, of course, an international dimension. As mentioned above, the Constitutionalist destruction of the Casa del Obrero Mundial and the crushing of the 1916 Mexico City general strike were critical events that catalyzed the increasingly stark divergence between the more radical wing of the labor movement (primarily led by the anarcho-syndicalists who would come to dominate the CGT, but also including socialists, communists, and some trade unionists) and the *cromista* wing organized around Morones-style reformism. Another similarly critical event was the convening of the Pan-American Federation of Labor (PAFL) in January 1921, which took place in Mexico City. A consequential act of labor diplomacy, the PAFL placed the AFL and its president, Samuel Gompers, in the position of mediator between the U.S. and Mexican governments at a time when diplomatic relations between the two countries had been rocked by a decade of revolution, intervention, and disruption (culminating, it seemed, in the assassination of Carranza). In the lead-up to the PAFL, already facing accusations that its leadership was corrupt, opportunistic, and utterly beholden to the Mexican state, the CROM leadership faced internal and (especially) external pressure to dispel rumors that it was simply an unofficial arm of the AFL (Figure 3.6). These rumors certainly bolstered communists' confidence in their somewhat unnuanced—or, at least, lopsided—view that the PAFL was little more than a bald attempt to expand the United States' imperialist reach into Latin America in order to further impose its economic and political will. Speaking generally, the communists weren't wrong, and PCM members were dismayed to

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hard for the CROM's proletarian masses to be able to warn a government of the bourgeoisie) (*Ensayo sobre un proletariado*, 223).

see the PAFL achieve greater success in creating the kind of Pan-American labor alliance they hoped to achieve by extending medial connections through the Pan-American Bureau of the Red International of Labor Unions (Profintern) (Spenser, *Stumbling Its Way*, 98). However, the PAFL also served as an effective tool for warding off what Gompers saw as the very real and dangerous threat of the international spread of communism. In 1921, writing in the *American Federationist*, Gompers didn't mince words:

> The greatest danger to Mexican trade unionism is the doctrine of bolshevism. It is immaterial whether Lenine [sic] is actually paying propagandists in Mexico. There are those who are doing the work as well as paid agents do it […] Bolshevist propagandists pay more attention to Mexico than to other Latin-American countries for two reasons: First, Mexico has 300,000 organized workers, a fairly large army to win over; and second, Mexico lies next door to the United States whose government is most hated by all Bolsheviks because of its democracy and its consequent stability. It is proper that American labor should give to the workers of the Latin-American countries, and perhaps to Mexico particularly for the reasons just shown, all possible counsel and assistance and that the most cordial reciprocal relations be established (qtd. in Poy, 171)

Gompers would maintain that it was the bosses who were ultimately responsible for not giving disaffected workers (at home and abroad) what they needed, thus making them more susceptible to being enticed by communism, but he reserved ample amounts of vitriol for the communists as well, who, as he saw it, were working to sow discord and undermine the labor movement (G. Andrews, 105). In sum, the PAFL represented a convergent, medial knot of power and influence that threatened to draw more and more workers across the Americas into itself, enmeshing them in a medial web that bound them and their struggle for a fuller humanity to external organs mediating "deformed" working-class consciousnesses. These consciousnesses were adjusted to the political needs and ideological machinations of, on one side, an anti-communist AFL that had spent the wartime period collaborating—and, thus, further binding itself—with the imperialist

power center that was the U.S. government and, on the other side, the reformist CROM, which struggled to convince a significant contingent of Mexican workers that the union benefits it afforded would be worth the double-sided political subordination of their interests to the Mexican state and American economic imperialism. For many Mexican workers and radicals alike, the PAFL congress in January 1921 put the worrisome scope and power of this intertwined medial knot on full display, thus providing a final catalyst for the foundation of the CGT one month after the PAFL convened.

The CROM was a powerful common enemy for the anarcho-syndicalists, anarchists, trade unionists, socialists, and communists who formed their uneasy alliance under the banner of the CGT in 1921.[32] "It was that aspiration to free themselves from the restrictions that the

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[32] "*En efecto*," Juan Felipe Leal writes, "*la CGT se forma con agrupaciones sindicales disidentes de la CROM; las sucursales sobrevivientes de la Casa del Obrero Mundial; la sección juvenil del Partido Comunista Mexicano, y algunos grupos culturales con inquietudes sociales. El punto común que unifica a fuerzas sociales tan distintas, consiste en el repudio a la alianza entre el Partido Laborista Mexicano—brazo político de la CROM—y el gobierno presidido por Álvaro Obregón; en el rechazo a la política sindical internacional de la CROM, particularmente a sus vínculos con el sindicalismo panamericano, encabezado por la American Federation of Labor (AFL) de Estados Unidos, y en la impugnación del chambismo burocrático de los altos jerarcas cromistas, todos ellos pertenecientes al Grupo Acción. Las organizaciones que integran a la CGT en su origen, se autodefinen en un 50 por ciento como sindicalistas revolucionarias—esto es, anarcosindicalistas—; en un 23 por ciento como comunistas; en un 15 por ciento como anarquistas puras, y en un 12 por ciento como simplemente sindicalistas*" (In effect, the CGT was formed by dissident union groups that defected from the CROM; the surviving branches of the Casa del Obrero Mundial; the youth section of the Mexican Communist Party, and some cultural groups with social concerns. The common point that unifies such different social forces consists of the repudiation of the alliance between the Mexican Labor Party—the CROM's political arm—and the government presided over by Álvaro Obregón; in the rejection of the CROM's international unionist policy, particularly in their ties to Pan-American syndicalism, led by the American Federation of Labor (AFL) of the United States, and their challenge of the CROM leadership's bureaucratic sloppiness, all of them belonging to Grupo Acción. The organizations that make up the CGT, in their origins, 50% define themselves as revolutionary syndicalists (that is, anarcho-syndicalist); 23% as communists; 15% as pure anarchists, and 12% as simply syndicalists) (97).

CROM imposed on the unions to harmonize its activities with the government's objectives that motivated the anti-CROM congress in which the General Confederation of Labor was established," Daniela Spenser writes (*Stumbling Its Way*, 95).[33] But it was not only anti-CROM sentiments that spurred among members of this alliance that "aspiration to free themselves"; there was, as Revueltas previously noted, a staunchly principled desire among many organizers and members to retain a less hierarchical and more democratically organized infrastructure of labor and intra-union relations that would allow affiliates of the CGT to achieve what they knew the structured medial arrangement of the CROM disallowed.[34] According to José Valadés—who

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[33] Regarding the composition of the CGT's founding congress, Spenser continues: "Most of the delegates, between sixty and seventy from various parts of the country, were adherents of anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism, while a minority subscribed to the imprecise notion of what the communism of the Bolshevik Revolution was. Also present were the representatives of the most important currents and trade unions opposing the CROM, workers and peasants, and the tenants' movement of Veracruz. Most were men but there was a handful of women. The founding congress of the CGT brought together the accumulated experiences of the delegates who had participated in the pre-revolutionary social movements, those who came of age during the revolution, and those who emerged from the relative opening of the governments legitimized by the 1917 Constitution. Among the most combative and supportive anti-CROM organizations was the Great Mexican Regional Workers Confederation, created in 1919, which supported the labor movements of the time, especially in the Federal District, and that subsequently dissolved into the CGT" (*Stumbling Its Way*, 95).

[34] "*La CGT se mantiene alejada de los aparatos de dominación del Estado y de la burocracia sindical representada por la CROM*," Guillermina Baena Paz writes; "*ello la lleva a ser codiciada como un frente contra los cromistas y atacada por éstos de manera permanente por su posición opositora*" (The CGT has kept its distance from the State's apparatuses of domination and from union bureaucracy represented by the CROM, which leads to it being coveted as a front against those from the CROM and permanently attacked by them for their opposing position) (8). The Provisional Executive Committee's opening statement at the Primer Congreso Obrero Nacional de la Confederación General de Trabajadores, convened on 4 September 1921, seven months after the CGT's founding, is instructive: "*Creemos firmemente que ya es llegado el momento de establecer sobre sólidas y firmes bases y con la seriedad que reclamen nuestras tendencias de liberación integral, la personalidad del proletariado de la República representada en una organización que signifique de verdad una potencialidad nueva y respetable que responda a las justas exigencias de la clase laborante, que hasta hoy, no ha sido objeto, sino de engañifas vulgares, así de políticos de oficio, como de los que ocupan las derechas en la controversia obrera del país, conocidos por 'amarillos', a quienes no se les ha ocurrido el establecimiento de métodos prácticos para el funcionamiento interior de los sindicatos, a efecto*

was head of the Communist Youth from 1920-1922 and would become a delegate of the CGT after being expelled from the PCM—when it was suggested at its founding that the CGT should aim to replicate the CROM's medial structure and increase its capacity to lobby for its members by way of closer collaboration with the Mexican state, "*La protesta fue unánime. No: queríamos contaminarnos de oficialismo. Deseábamos fundar un movimiento obrero independiente, pretendíamos la revolución proletaria, no el motín burocrático*" (The protest was unanimous. No, we did not want to contaminate ourselves with officialism. We wished to found an independent workers movement, we wanted the proletarian revolution, not the bureaucratic revolt) (97). The CROM's growing reputation for having corrupt leadership—enabled by a hierarchically organized bureaucratic medial structure with few mechanisms or pathways for holding leaders accountable to the rank and file—who would opportunistically compromise the needs of its members to satisfy the needs of the Mexican state already provided a sufficiently persuasive cautionary tale for CGT members and sympathizers who hoped to avoid the same fate. Beyond this, though, as Valadés' quote makes clear, workers in Mexico were well practiced

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de garantizar así la estabilidad de éstos, etc., etc., sino que toda iniciativa, justificación, de sus actos o promesas para emancipar a trabajador de las garras de la burguesía capitalista, ha consistido en avivar encontrados pareceres, debilitando y aun dividiendo sus propios organismos, rindiendo pleito homenaje a la política de partido en el corazón de los gremios de trabajadores" (We firmly believe that the moment has come to establish, over solid and firm bases and with the seriousness that our tendencies of integral liberation require, the personality of the Republic's proletariat represented in an organization that would truly signify a new and respectable potentiality that responds to the just demands of the working class, which until today has only been the object of vulgar swindling, not only of career politicians, but even of those who occupy the right in the country's labor controversy, known as 'amarillos,' who have not bothered to establish practical methods for the interior functioning of the unions, thus guaranteeing their stability, etc., etc., so that every initiative and justification of their acts or promises to emancipate the worker from the claws of the capitalist bourgeoisie has consisted in heightening opposing opinions, weakening and even dividing their very organisms, paying tribute, in the form of false controversy, to the party policies at the heart of the workers unions) (Baena Paz, 53).

(and, frankly, justified) in distrusting the state to serve their needs in good faith, as exemplified in the Constitutionalist crackdown on organized labor and the enforced regime of labor relations under the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz before that. Dictatorship, as Barry Carr writes,

> did not extinguish all traces of popular political and syndical activity, as the black legend used to hold, but it certainly did not permit the small Mexican working class to develop the rich associational and political life which the franchise and other political conquests (and ruling class concessions) provided workers in some European countries. Workers had gained little from politics, and the memory of state repression was still fresh, so it is not necessary to look to the influence of anarchist and libertarian thought to explain the widespread suspicion of the state and hopes for likely benefits to be gained from the conventional exercise of political power which characterized the radical wing of the Mexican working class for so long (*Marxism & Communism*, 14).

Hidden behind Carr's assertion that workers "had gained little from politics" in the decades before the revolution is, in fact, another testament to the medial-historical continuum connecting, from the *porfiriato* to the postrevolutionary period, the inauguration of Mexican modernity via (in Gareth Williams' terms) "a total state that strived at all times to suppress the duality of state and society" (12). Workers, especially in the nascent urban working class, hadn't gained *nothing* during the period of Porfirian rule; however, much like the *cromistas* in the 1920s, their real gains—especially regarding payment in tender over scrip, slight wage increases, more fixed work hours, and better safety regulations—came at the cost of shoe-horning their organizational capacities (and, even, their existential imagination) into a matrix of limited political possibilities, the boundaries of which were set by—and adjusted to complement the prerogatives of—the expanding ur-medium of the bourgeois state apparatus. What they gained under the totalizing shadow of bourgeois rule, that is, they lost in their capacity to build, let alone imagine, medial arrangements that exceeded the *logos* of bourgeois rule. As David Walker writes,

> The Díaz government developed a flexible and sophisticated array of labor policy instruments that was based upon cooperation with and subsidies to pro-government labor organizations as well as political rewards and the other fruits of cooptation for labor leaders loyal to the regime. With its labor allies, the Diaz government promoted modes of organization which retarded labor militancy, sponsored informal as well as official mediation between workers and employers during strikes and other conflicts, and disseminated propaganda and instituted educational programs, including pro-government labor newspapers and schools for the working class, designed to promote labor's identification of its own well-being with the interests of the state (258)

We should note Walker's description of the materialized expansion of Porfirian ideology via human-conditioning medial networks, institutions, and propaganda efforts—from "labor newspapers and schools" to "labor policy" and government "subsidies"—designed to draw more workers into the "total state" as it strove to mediate the mediations of everyday life, enticing—if not coercing—subjects to adjust their lives, labor, and imaginations to the media-worlds it helped create (and, in turn, enticing—if not coercing—those same subjects to accept whatever pain and alienation that came from living that way as "natural," immutable, and necessary). This further helps to explain why, as discussed in the previous chapter, the PLM's media politics extended—through and beyond the production and dissemination of *Regeneración*—to the creation of a pervasive resistance culture that required the attempted erection of a medial infrastructure for alternative human conditioning processes that could rival those of the still-growing Mexican state under Díaz's rule. Moreover, it adds another dimension to the calculus of the communists in the immediate postrevolutionary period, who saw it as a vital necessity to join forces with the anarcho-syndicalists, anarchists, and trade unionists under the banner of the CGT in order to increase the PCM's capacities to build a working-class base and to develop a media politics that could contend with the hegemonic forces of the Mexican state, the CROM, and American imperialism.

While retaining strongholds in the state of Mexico, Puebla, and especially in Mexico City, the CGT would never approach the size and influence of the CROM, nor would its reach extend significantly (with some isolated regional exceptions) into strategically critical national and infrastructural sectors like electricity, oil, railroads, and mining (Gómez-Galvarriato, 161; John Lear, 72). Nevertheless, the 43 groups that joined the CGT in 1921 represented an impressive number of workers and a diverse array of professions, including streetcar workers and porters, cigar and tobacco company workers, and bakers, with the strongest presence existing in textiles, especially among the over 9,000 members of the spinners and weavers union in Mexico City.[35] With the attendant members providing an ample working-class base of support, and given both the initial enthusiasm for the Bolshevik revolution that many of the anarcho-syndicalists expressed and the desire to maintain a principled organizational independence from the CROM and the state that brought them together in the first place, the CGT provided the most immediately tangible vehicle for expanding the PCM's medial-political project. Doing so was

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[35] As Felipe Leal describes, "*de las 43 agrupaciones que constituyen la CGT en 1921, 30 tienen un carácter sindical, y 13 son círculos organizativos; no habiendo mutualidad o cooperativa alguna en su fundación. De las 30 agrupaciones sindicales aludidas, que en conjunto hacen un contingente de cerca de 15,000 trabajadores, 8 pertenecen a la rama agrícola; 3, a la industria cigarrera y tabaquera; 3, a los servicios portuarios; 3, a la industria textil; 2, a la industria del transporte, y 1, a la industria minera, telefónica, de las artes gráficas, al comercio, a la industria alimenticia, a la industria jabonera, a la industria de la construcción, a la industria del vestido, a los servicios municipales, respectivamente. Con todo, la columna vertebral de la CGT, desde su nacimiento, es la Federación de Sindicatos de Trabajadores de Hilados y Tejidos del Distrito Federal, Estado de México y Anexos, fuerte en 9,000 miembros*" (As Felipe Leal describes, "of the 43 groups that make up the CGT in 1921, 30 have a syndicalist character, and 13 are organizational circles—without any mutuality or cooperation in their foundation. Of those 30 syndicalist groups, which total a contingent of nearly 15,000 workers, 8 belong to the agricultural branch; 3 to the cigar and tobacco industry; 3 to port services; 3 to the textile industry; 2 to the transportation industry, and 1 to municipal services and to the mining, telephone, graphic arts, commerce, food, soap, construction, and garment industries respectively. All in all, the backbone of the CGT, from its birth, is the Federación de Sindicatos de Trabajadores de Hilados y Tejidos del Distrito Federal, Estado de México y Anexos [Federation of the Fabric and Textile Workers Unions], which is 9,000 members strong) (97).

also in keeping with the Comintern's early policy of increasing communist party membership and influence by building cells and working within existing national labor unions, which, along with its policy on national parties participating in elections, would shift multiple times, causing frequent organizational headaches along with occasional critical losses in membership, momentum, and capacity. This would certainly be the case when the PCM inevitably abandoned its efforts to work within the CGT and, to a lesser extent, the CROM itself:

> Formed in 1919, the PCM briefly collaborated with the anarchist CGT and coexisted with the CROM before breaking with both, leading to a deep crisis in membership. Following Communist International policy from 1921 to 1928, the PCM rejected the formation of its own labor federation, instead trying to organize party membership in industries without unions or in cells within existing unions. After 1925, they made a deliberate outreach to campesino leagues. Their influence in the early 1920s was limited mostly to urban rent strikes, campesino leagues in Veracruz, what would become an important group of railroad office workers affiliated with the Alliance of Mexican Railroad Workers, and a few small groups of miners and oil workers (John Lear, 76-77).

There is an important historiographical point to make here, lest the information above be misinterpreted. As with communist parties in other countries, the PCM's struggle to build a robust media politics in the years after the revolution were undeniably hampered by the organizational, interpersonal, and even ideological havoc created when top-down directives issued by the Comintern prompted abrupt changes in existing PCM policy or required the implementation of policies and organizing strategies that could not be effectively deployed within the particular medial realities of Mexico in the postrevolutionary period. In general terms, the Comintern figured as a "sociologically unique phenomenon," a powerful transnational medial apparatus whose networked connectedness to communist parties around the world—coupled with mechanisms of surveillance and information sharing, funding, and accreditation—mediated "an absolute loyalty, a disciplined fidelity, amongst its constituent national sections" (P.

Anderson, "Communist Party History," 150). It was, after all, "a condition of membership of the International that the policies determined by it were followed" (150).[36] Nevertheless, especially in its early phase in the 1920s, the Comintern's operations were slow and often contradictory, and its medial infrastructure and reach were a mere shadow of the (in)famously disciplined and centralized apparatus it would become later in the twentieth century. "Communications and other problems played havoc with the Comintern's understanding and handling of European situations, so it is even more difficult to accept the seriousness of those accounts which argue in a rigid teleological fashion that there was a one-to-one correspondence from the very beginning between the actions of the Mexican Communist party and the Executive Committee of the Comintern" (Carr, *Marxism & Communism*, 7). There is an ever-present danger of taking the official, self-affirming narratives of the Third International at face value, which, if coupled with a taken-for-granted assumption that the medial sophistication of the Comintern under Stalin extended backwards into the early years after the Bolshevik revolution, can give the misleading and reductive impression of

[36] In *Latin America and the Comintern, 1919-1943*, Manuel Caballero notes that the medial arrangement of the Comintern, and the position of national parties within it, poses yet another problem for historians of communism in the twentieth century; namely, as was the case in Mexico, that officially affiliating with the Comintern and following official International protocols, while giving the impression of a well-oiled, expansive, and indigenously organized arm of a global movement, often obscured the disorganization and miniscule political impact of national parties on a day-to-day level. As Caballero writes, "Perhaps nowhere better than in Latin America did the Comintern show all the contradictions and finally, the lack of viability and efficiency of a world organization with a structure too rigid, too centralized and too vertical. At every step in the history of the world organization or of its national sections, it appears that as the Comintern was a single world party, then the source of the legitimacy of the national sections was less in their real strength and the degree to which they were imbedded in their own society, and in the working classes they were supposed to represent, than in the acknowledgement by Moscow that they were true 'bolshevised' Communist Parties […] The Communist Parties of Costa Rica, Ecuador, and even the Communist Party of El Salvador were always more important as parties than that of Mexico; and the Brazilian and Chilean, more important than the Communist Party of Argentina, but not as sections of the Comintern" (43-44)

> the PCM's history as a series of incidents in which it passively responds to Comintern agents and "Moscow Gold." We need to acknowledge that Comintern policies and directives were frequently welcomed and accepted with enthusiasm by the national leaderships of Communist parties, and the circumstances which explain this parallelism of interests need to be explored in each national context. In other cases Comintern policies were anticipated or foreshadowed by Mexican developments that operated quite independently of the international framework. A last warning concerns the danger of taking at face value the international homogeneity of the Communist movement. All parties, no matter how Stalinized and servile they were, invariably assimilated many of the peculiar characteristics of their country's national culture and radical traditions (Carr, *Marxism & Communism*, 8).

In terms of both conceptualizing on-the-ground medial-political realities and exercising nuanced historiographical judgment, there is an especially useful disciplinary parallel between, on one hand, the question of navigating the top-down and bottom-up medial relationships between the Comintern and local communist parties (not to mention the masses they tried to reach) and, on the other hand, the question of navigating the top-down and bottom-up relations between producers and consumers of mass media. Developments in cultural and media studies in the 1960s and '70s—especially by way of thinkers in the Birmingham School, like (but by no means limited to) Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall—challenged critical conceptualizations of the human-conditioning power of mass media and the top-down force by which the "culture industry" and its inbuilt ideological messaging shaped consumers' ways of living and thinking.[37] In *The Historiography of Communism*, Michael E. Brown describes these disciplinary

[37] See: Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944); Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (1974); Stuart Hall, "Encoding / Decoding" (1980); Huimin Jin, "British Cultural Studies, Active Audiences and the Status of Cultural Theory: An Interview with David Morley" (2011); Philip Bounds and David Berry (eds.), *British Marxism and Cultural Studies: Essays on a Living Tradition* (2016).

interventions in terms that, I would argue, could also be applied to the medial infrastructure of relations to and within the Third International:

> While each of these might remain subject to manipulation from above, it was thought that this was not presently the most important factor in determining the responses of audiences to the media. Instead, television and radio messages, for example, were said to be "received" in the contexts of lives riven with unsettling contradictions and subject to social forces that could not be reduced to hierarchical control. It followed that audiences are not created as objects by the media but "found" as subjects. Audience members are not merely passive recipients but morally involved in activities that profoundly influence the effects of the media on the groups, organizations, and communities in which messages are interpreted and entered into social praxis (162).

Granted, the scope of conditions and relations within which communist party leaders and members exercised agency in "encoding" and "decoding" directives from the Comintern (in ways that were inevitably inflected by their own local, national, and existential contexts) was narrowed by the fact that they were already living within a resistance culture mediated by—and reinforcing commitment to—the party itself. Nevertheless, the key historiographical point is that any history of communist party politics must, at one and the same time, accept the Comintern's top-down power to shape the organizational functioning of local communist parties (and the lives of those operating within their spheres) and the particular national, cultural, interpersonal, etc. dynamics that shaped the reception and implementation of Comintern policy on the ground.

To bring us back to 1921, this is all to say that the PCM's efforts to build a robust working-class base by way of collaborating with the CGT and other unions were hampered by directives from the Comintern to its Mexican emissaries. This was especially the case when it came to the crafting of propaganda efforts directed at Mexican workers and union members. The early PCM leadership—most of whom (like Manabendra Nath Roy, a wealthy Indian national and anti-colonialist, the Japanese communist Sen Katayama, and Americans Charles Francis

Phillips and Louis Fraina) were not actually Mexican—devoted a great deal of time and energy to such propaganda efforts. These early efforts often bore little fruit, however, as they relied heavily on translated material imported from Russia and Western Europe and, more significantly, their messaging in broadsides and pamphlets about the villainy of the CROM and about the Mexican revolution being a bourgeois sham failed to ideologically or culturally resonate with a lot of workers who had seen and experienced marginal improvements in their lives on account of both.[38] But the directives the PCM received from the Comintern, and the difficulty of implementing them effectively, were by no means the only factor that contributed to its stumbles. It must be noted, though, that the very specter of the Comintern was something that made the anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists in the CGT increasingly wary of their shaky alliance with the communists as—like the CROM, the AFL, and the Mexican State—it represented an external mediating force that both threatened the independence of the federation and embodied a fundamental impasse in the ideologically charged media-political strategies of the communists and the other *cegetistas*. "When mention was made of the affiliation of the CGT to the Communist International, the 'world communist party' that 'fought for communism using the

[38] This was certainly the case for Katayama, who, at one point, was manning these propaganda efforts nearly all by himself after Obregón's 1921 crackdown on foreign radicals, which resulted in the expulsion of other party members (La Botz, "Slackers," 259-260). Keeping as low of a profile as possible, Katayama continued to use print media to ventriloquize as a concerned Mexican worker heralding the evils of the CROM and the institutionalized revolution that was the Mexican state: "Although Katayama's perceptions regarding the CROM and its leaders were correct, the Comintern representative did not understand the importance of the relationship between the government and the labor movement, whose goal was to strengthen the two sides. In 1921, numerous strikes erupted that, due to the government's pressure on employers, were resolved in favor of workers' interests. Furthermore, the CROM was able to boycott the strikes that the CGT organized as well as the circulation of its newspapers and propaganda materials. All of the CROM's actions and activities that affected the workers' movement had an impact on the success of the Profintern Bureau not only when they affected the CGT but also because the labor confederation in alliance with the government of the revolution was able to present itself as the best defender of the workers' interests" (Spenser, *Stumbling Its Way*, 105).

transitory dictatorship of the proletariat as its means,' the delegates justified the position on the condition that the dictatorship not be 'exercised by a party that abrogates for itself the representation of the organized working class, but rather by the proletariat organized in Workers, Peasants, and Soldiers councils.' The CGT would not have any link with political parties that did not accept the need for the destruction of capitalism by means of direct revolutionary action" (Spenser, *Stumbling Its Way*, 96). As with their initial enthusiasm for the Bolshevik revolution and the apparently syndicalist medial structure of the soviet system, the anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists who made up the bulk of the CGT were initially swayed to affiliate with the International on the condition of a shared agreement that the "dictatorship of the proletariat" be achieved through direct (i.e., im*media*te) action in the medial form of democratically organized workers' councils. In many ways, the temporary alliance between the communists and the rest of the CGT was premised on the very notion that Soviet communism was the living embodiment and expression of proletarian autonomy via workers' councils that had, like the Mexican state claimed it had, had been born from (and legitimized by) revolution. The credibility of this notion became harder and harder to maintain as the imposing role of the Comintern became more apparent and, most significantly, as news in the mainstream and radical press brought to light the Bolshevik government's persecution of anarchists in Russia. For the anarchists and anarcho-syndicalist *cegetistas*, the latter was a window into what their communist peers apparently meant by the "dictatorship of the proletariat." The situation had become untenable. Thus, in September 1921, nine months after the founding of the CGT, their alliance with the PCM would crumble.

From its founding in 1919, the PCM would struggle mightily to build a major presence in the labor movement, let alone in the realm of official politics. Their membership numbers were

never particularly big—and the official records thereof have never been completely reliable.[39]

However, there was undoubtedly one realm in which the PCM punched well above its weight,

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[39] The heyday of the PCM would come under the Cárdenas administration: "The golden age of the PCM as far as membership was concerned is undoubtedly the second half of the 1930s, when membership increased by leaps and bounds in tune with the radical thrust of *cardenista* economic and political strategy, the birth of the large national industrial unions (of rail, petroleum, and mining workers), and the consolidation of a powerful teachers' union" (Carr, *Marxism & Communism*, 11). Along with those explored in the current chapter, there were numerous other internal and external factors contributing to the PCM's struggles to become a formidable political force in the 1920s. As Carr explains, "The party was miniscule throughout the 1920s, the product of severe organizational weaknesses, abrupt changes in leadership, and continuing resistance by rank and file members to the united front policy of work within the "reformist" Regional Confederation of Mexican Workers (CROM) and independent trade unions. The intra-caudillo violence of the 1920s also took its toll; the de la Huerta rebellion of 1923-1924, for example, destroyed links between the central body of the party and its local branches, and a majority of the branches (in Veracruz, Yucatán, Michoacán) were destroyed or weakened by the rebels. By the end of 1928 party organization had recovered to the extent that over thirty branches were functioning throughout the country with a total membership of fifteen hundred. The recuperation was quickly terminated, though, by the repression launched by governments during the period 1929-1934 and by the sectarianism displayed by the PCM during its leftist period so that by the beginning of the Cárdenas presidency membership was no higher than it had been ten years earlier" (*Marxism & Communism*, 10-11). What Carr describes constitutes yet another example of the PCM's organizational struggles being, in large part, tied to its—admittedly uneven and locally variable—efforts to absorb Comintern policy and translate it into political reality on the ground. Along with external political factors like the de la Huerta rebellion, which disrupted the medial infrastructure of its slow-growing political project (particularly the established communication channels between the central party office in Mexico City and local branches), the PCM's progress would also be significantly disrupted as—following International directives emerging from the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in September 1928 (and spurred on by the widespread sense among communists that, after 1929, the unfolding worldwide economic crisis meant the end of capitalism was coming to fruition)—it abandoned its policy of working within existing labor unions and political groups and entered into a hard-left phase that promoted class war over a united front policy. What resulted were not only devastating losses in membership and severed ties with strategically pivotal groups, which had been painstakingly built up over the preceding years, but the hard-left policy also seemed to provide fodder for the government's repression of the PCM and its members, its forced shuttering of the *El machete* offices in June 1929, and its breaking of diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union in 1930. "The lurch to the left," Carr continues, "brought about a break between the PCM and those cadres and members who had doubts about the new line—in particular the creation of the [Confederación Sindical Unitaria de México] and the Worker-Peasant bloc. The most disastrous loss was the resignations and expulsions of virtually all the leading figures in the National Peasant League, the single most important site of Communist influence. Among those who left the PCM were Manuel Almanza and Ursulo Galván […] Furthermore, the Communist

party also denounced most of its revolutionary democratic allies, such as the former governor of Veracruz Aldaberto Tejeda (the most influential of the independent socialists) and Ramón P. Denegri. In one fell swoop the party's main channels of communication with the left-wing current of the Mexican Revolution were broken" (*Marxism & Communism*, 44-45). This hard-left shift in communist policy, accompanied by the government's crackdown on the PCM, would effectively end the "first period" of the communist party in Mexico

There is an interesting story in its own right behind the international medial-political strategy of the Mexican state in navigating its relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, as Daniela Spenser details in her first book, *The Impossible Triangle: Mexico, Soviet Russia, and the United States in the 1920s*. Mexico had established official diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in 1924 (as a result of unofficial negotiations initiated by Álvaro Óbregon during his presidential term), which was a decidedly provocative move aimed, in part, to demonstrate Mexico's political independence from the designs of the United States. However, as Spenser argues, eruptions of political violence and electoral turmoil in the latter half of the 1920s would provide both a justification for anti-communist government crackdowns as well as an opportunity for the U.S. to apply indirect pressure on Mexican state officials via disinformation campaigns: "The United States did have an unquestionable impact on the course and pace of the Mexican Revolution during the 1920s and did indirectly contribute to the break in relations between Mexico and the USSR. Already in 1918 and during most of the 1920s, the line that the Mexican reforms did not differ from Soviet confiscation policies was taken up by the press and politicians within Mexico, both of whom were equally opposed to the constitutional reforms. No less influential on the evolution of relations between Mexico and the USSR were the attempts of different individuals to provide disinformation to the U.S. State Department concerning Mexican radicalism: to the country that viewed itself as the only home of democracy and liberty in the region, Mexico began to appear as the breeding ground for hemispheric subversion. Although it is not possible to determine the exact impact of such disinformation on U.S. foreign policy, circumstantial evidence leads to the conclusion that the portrait of Mexico as a country in the grip of Bolshevism created a climate of uncertainty in the political elite and motivated more than one businessman to seek countries less inclined to radical changes for investment purposes. In addition to the disinformation about Mexico being played up by the press and by U.S. espionage agencies, alleged Soviet-inspired plots to destabilize the Mexican government were invented […] Generally, the Mexican government accepted the veracity of the fabricated documents without question and acted in accordance with the threat supposedly posed to the country's stability. It was particularly after the division of the governmental elite following Obregón's [assassination] in 1928 that the government became more sensitive to tales of subversive plans designed by the USSR and less capable of discerning the truth behind the fabricated accounts. U.S. interest groups, which for so long had tried to pressure Mexican authorities to abandon the reform program, could now exploit their vulnerability. However, the plots that illustrated in vivid detail the Communist plans to subvert Mexico would not have had the desired effect on the Mexican government had they not proven to be true. After the change in 1928 in Soviet foreign policy, which went from seeking coexistence with the capitalist world to overt hostility toward the capitalist system, the USSR did not hide its attitude toward governments that, as in the case of Mexico, were considered puppets of the imperialist powers" (4-5).

especially in the 1920s: the realm of cultural influence. What the party lacked in a robust working-class membership, it made up for in attracting, for a time, major artistic and intellectual figures like Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and José Clemente Orozco. As John Lear writes,

> The PCM's greatest influence in the early 1920s would be among intellectuals and artists. By late 1923, the artists Rivera, Siqueiros, and Guerrero filled three of four positions on the party's executive committee. According to the fourth committee member, Bertram Wolfe, "from a party of revolutionary politicians, it changed to a party of revolutionary painters." This dual militancy further exposed the artists to the radical ideologies circulating within the early PCM—particularly the centrality of the proletariat to revolutionary transformation. It also disposed them to share the party's bitter rivalry with the CROM (76-77).

Even if they didn't want to be, these radical artists would become the face of the PCM by the mid-20s. Each would follow their own particular path to becoming more involved with leftist politics, but together they were drawn into overlapping medial spheres of artistic and political activity in the forms of the government-sponsored Open Air Schools, the Estridentista movement, and the culturally emergent air-conditioning force that would become the muralist movement—a movement that, in the early postrevolutionary period, at the behest of Education Minister José Vasconcelos, would leave its enduring imprint on government buildings like the National Preparatory School.[40] In fact, the medial organization that would draw the artists even

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[40] Regarding the connective tissue between *El machete* and the Estridentista movement, Alicia Azuela writes, "Founded by the poet Manuel Maples Arce, El Estridentismo brought together some of the most prominent writers and artists during the first period of postrevolutionary Mexican art, many of whom had connections with the international avant-garde. Members included artists as diverse as José Juan Tablada, Diego Rivera, Siqueiros, Mario de Zayas, José D. Frias, Fermín Revueltas, and Silvestre Revueltas and, above all, writers who were interested in the rich artistic and expressive possibilities of the European movements of Futurism, Constructivism, and Dada. Political dissenters, these artists called themselves 'bolsheviks,' and much of their literary and graphic work had political themes […] From the ranks of El Estridentismo came important contributors to *El machete* and *Frente a frente*, such as Leopoldo

closer together politically, and that would inevitably merge their activities with the PCM and *El machete*—namely, the Sindicato de Obreros Tecnicos, Pintores y Escultores (SOTPE) (The Syndicate of Technical Workers, Painters, and Sculptors), formed in December 1922—was formed partially as a response to uncertainties about assignments, payment, and creative control over murals commissioned by the artists' number one client: Vasconcelos, or, rather, the state. The fact that, at the time, the state more or less had a monopoly on mural commissions and fresh walls to paint on meant that the Syndicate's efforts to collectively bargain with Vasconcelos failed rather miserably; these failures, coupled with Vasconcelos' waning influence in the Obregón administration (which meant, by extension, fewer mural commissions) and the political disruption created by the de la Huerta rebellion, would hasten the Syndicate's dissolution. Nevertheless, working with SOTPE would prove to be a formative political experience for the artists—before it fell apart in 1924, Rivera, Siqueiros, Xavier Guerrero, and Fernando Leal

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Méndez, Rivera, Charlot, Ramón Alva de la Canal, and Revueltas. While at first these artists contributed to Estridentista publications as well as to *El machete*, their Estridentista years marked a transition in their aesthetic position and style. During the time in which they were affiliated with El Estridentismo, they supported the formal experiments of the avant-garde while, at the same time, they were personally committed to social ideals and political militance" (250)

Figure 3.7. (Left) Diego Rivera in his studio wearing overalls, an outfit traditionally associated with the urban working class (1936); (Right) portion of *North Wall* fresco of the *Detroit Industry* murals (1932-33, Rivera Court, Detroit Institute of Arts), featuring a multiracial mix of auto factory workers on the shop floor, all seemingly united in their common labor and the overalls they wear on the job.

served as the principal officers—and their experiences with the Syndicate would bring them more closely within the medial orbit of the struggling PCM.

Moreover, as demonstrated by the name itself, the Syndicate represented the coming to being and expression of converging artistic and political transformations that brought many of these artists to self-identify as workers themselves—often donning overalls to prove it (Figure 3.7)—and that would also shape their embrace of murals and printing, over bourgeois mediums like easel painting, as more authentically proletarian art forms.[41] As the American communist

[41] Siqueiros's unedited musings provide a window into the rationale behind what the muralists saw as a natural extension of their media politics from murals to the printmaking practices they explored in the making of *El machete*: "*Cuando las posibilidades de pintar muros terminaron*

para nosotros, fue necesario que buscáramos un nuevo campo de acción, un nuevo campo de acción que nos permitiera continuar en nuestra obra y ese intento nos llevó, indudablemente, a la comprensión de que en la época actual, época de ilegalidad, de suma ilegalidad para la clase trabajadora y para los revolucionarios que defienden los intereses de la clase trabajadora, la expresión plástica más útil es la plástica multiejemplar que quiere decir aquella plástica que se produce en multitud de ejemplares, de copias y no en una sola copia o ejemplar; quiere decir que el bloque de pintores dijo: "de la misma manera que Dugo [sic], plástico revolucionario, un socialista de los claustros universitarios […] a la calle […] de los grandes […] una producción plástica transportable de manos del parásito burgués que lo hace para su propio bienestar y muchas veces no lo hace para nada y llevarla a los hechos, a la contemplación, a la utilidad de las masas trabajadoras de la mayoría de los hombres y ¿cuál es ese procedimiento; qué técnica necesita para poder realizar esa finalidad?" (When the possibilities of painting walls ended for us, it was necessary to look for a new field of action, a new field of action that would allow us to continue our work; and that effort led us, undoubtably, to the understanding that in the current era, era of illegality, of supreme illegality for the working class and for the revolutionaries that defend the interests of the working class, the most useful visual expression was one which could produce multiple pieces, that could be produced in copies and not in one copy or original; meaning that the group of painters said: 'just as Dugo [sic], revolutionary visual artist, a socialist from the halls of academia […] to the streets […] one of the greats […] a visual production that can be transported from the hands of the bourgeoisie parasite, that makes it for his own wellbeing and many times does it for no reason at all, and bring it to the reality, for the contemplation, the utility of the working masses of the majority of men; and what is the procedure, what is the technique needed to realize this end?") (qtd. in Jaimes). In his autobiography, *Me llamaban el Coronelazo*, Siqueiros describes the pressing political need he and his comrades felt to put these materials and techniques to work in the creation of a publication that would not amount to an artistic artifact to be appreciated but would become an effective political and propagandistic organ that could be functionally elevated by their artistic prowess: "*Naturalmente*, El Machete *es una experiencia muy embrionaria de gráfica multiejemplar revolucionaria, de publicidad tipográfica revolucionaria. Sus autores nos circunscribimos al cliché fotográfico en muy pocos casos y casi siempre al grabado tradicional de madera. Sus recursos de impresión fueron pobres y reducidos. De naturaleza gráfica muy poco vivaz, sin que esto signifique un demérito de su importancia para su época. Sus autores, en ese primer esfuerzo no llegamos a plantearnos todavía el problema de su fabricación ad hoc. . . Y es así como se vio frecuentemente reducido a la impotencia por razones de la persecución policial. Tampoco percibimos entonces la necesidad de transformarlo en un paródico documental, que es forma de tipografía indispensable a todo periódico revolucionario moderno. En esas condiciones puede afirmarse que nuestro* Machete *no dejó nunca de ser un periódico artístico. La experiencia de la gráfica tipográfica revolucionaria, de verdadero valor para la educación y agitación de las masas, estaba, pues, por ser realizada*" (Naturally, *El Machete* is a very embryonic experience of multi-issue revolutionary graphic art, of revolutionary typographic publicity. We, its authors, circumscribed to the photographic cliché in very few cases and almost always to the traditional wood engraving. Its printing resources were poor and reduced. Of a very unlively graphic nature, without this being a detriment to its importance to the period. In that first effort, we did not ask ourselves about the problem of its ad hoc fabrication… And that is how it came to be frequently reduced to impotency for reasons of police persecution. We also did not

Bertram Wolfe, who was also a PCM member and biographer of Diego Rivera, wrote, "One of the great services of the Mexican Revolution to the painters was to break through the vicious circle of private patronage. "I was sick of painting for the bourgeois," Diego told me in 1923. "The middle class has no taste, least of all the Mexican middle class. All any of them wanted was his portrait, or that of his wife or his mistress. Rare indeed was the sitter who would consent to my painting him as I saw him. If I painted him as he wanted, I produced shoddy counterfeits. If I painted him as I wanted, he refused to pay. From the standpoint of art, it was necessary to find some other patron" (143-144). In the early 1920s, that patron was the Mexican state. The postrevolutionary state and its revolutionary nationalist project, which strove to define—and symbolically present itself as the culmination of—the authentic nature of *Mexicanidad,* provided opportunities for artists like Rivera to explore the medium of murals at a time when there was growing interests (not just among left-leaning artists and critics) to find expression of the revolution's ostensibly egalitarian principles in artistic and cultural forms that spoke of and to "the people":

> Though it had fallen on evil days, though its technical secrets had largely perished and its forms degenerated, fresco was still a living tradition in Mexico. The Indian had painted frescoes on the walls of his pyramids over a thousand years ago, before the Spaniard came. Catholicism had continued the tradition. To the idol of the Aztec was joined the idol of the Spaniard; the frescoes of Teotihuacán, Mitla, Monte, Albán and Chizen Itzá were succeeded by those on thick-walled Romanesque churches of little window and great expanse of wall. It was Diego's hope that an illiterate people who had been told the stories of the saints through the painted image would respond to this new secular myth of the Revolution and its promises for man's life on earth (Wolfe, 144)

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see at the time the need to a documentary parody, which is an indispensable form of typography for every modern revolutionary periodical. Under these conditions we can affirm that our Machete never stopped being an artistic periodical. The experience of the revolutionary typographic graphic art, of real value for the education and agitation of the masses was, then, still to be realized) (219).

Murals provide a compelling example of the medial dynamics of spherological air (and human) conditioning: the muralists certainly intended to propagandize revolutionary principles to viewers of their art, aiming to achieve through aesthetic style and culturally resonant symbolism "media effects" that would condition people—including the illiterate lower classes—to more seamlessly absorb those principles and feel compelled to realize them in their actions, relations, and in constructing the media-worlds they were a part of; more than this, though, the artists hoped to harness the spatiotemporal contexts of public spaces adorned with painted murals to mediate for those who occupied these spaces—those who could feel themselves interpellated by the historical, cultural, racial, humanistic, etc. features depicted—both a conscious and sub-conscious sense of ownership over, familiarity with, and belonging in said spaces, as well as an active sense of participation in and identification with the traditions to which these murals medially connected them.[42] However, in the vein of the CROM's collaboration with the state and

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[42] The distinction here echoes that made by Walter Benjamin regarding the human-conditioning power of media, which comes as much from what can be actively ("optically") perceived as from the sub-perceptible ways media passively ("tactilely") shape our sensorial habits. Crucially, in a manner that would seem to support the much-expanded conceptualization of "media" that I argue for, Benjamin elects to make this distinction—in an essay that largely focuses on visual media, traditionally defined—by highlighting the medial qualities of buildings: "Buildings are received in a twofold manner: by use and by perception. Or, better: tactilely and optically. Such reception cannot be understood in terms of the concentrated attention of a traveler before a famous building. [*Compare the "traveler" described here, optically observing a famous building as if it were an easel painting in a gallery, to the day-to-day contexts of Mexican workers and government employees passing through state-owned buildings in Mexico City, the walls of which featured frescoes painted by communist muralists like Rivera and Siqueiros.*] On the tactile side, there is no counterpart to what contemplation is on the optical side. Tactile reception comes about not so much by way of attention as by way of habit. The latter largely determines even the optical reception of architecture, which spontaneously takes the form of casual noticing, rather than attentive observation. Under certain circumstances, this form of reception shaped by architecture acquires canonical value. [*Along with communicating overt and symbolically embedded revolutionary principles to optically attentive observers, it was this kind of sensorial "canonization" that the muralists hoped to achieve with their public art, repetitively air-*

the 1914 peasant occupation of Mexico City before that, the muralists who were commissioned by the state to paint the walls of public buildings—even if they used such opportunities to embed ideological messages that mediated revolutionary sentiments far more radical than those contained within the Mexican state's medial-political project of revolutionary nationalism—would not end up subverting the state's project so much as expanding its medial universe, allowing the state to physically and symbolically extend its medial connection to (and co-optation of) the revolutionary sentiments articulated in the murals that adorned government-owned buildings. "The young revolutionary state had need of a sort of legitimization or cultural consecration," Octavio Paz notes, "and what better consecration than mural painting? That was the way in which a mistake began which ended with the perversion of Mexican mural painting: on the one hand, it was a revolutionary art, or one that called itself revolutionary; on the other hand, it was an official art" (Octavio Paz qtd. in Coffey, 1). This process of officialization and institutionalization would become clearer over the course of the twentieth century, as the buildings that housed these revolutionary murals became art objects in and of themselves, separated from the im*media*te contexts of daily public life, which the muralists had hoped their art would shape. Along with the erection of national museums like the Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City, in which many of these murals would be curated in architectural settings that mediated the constant presence (and ownership) of the state itself, buildings like the National Preparatory School and the Ministry of Education, the walls of which were adorned with these radical murals, would become, in turn, museal exhibitions of sorts that put the state's

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conditioning and gradually shaping the contexts *of perception to the point that the perceptual habits of passersby and "casual noticers" would adjust accordingly and stick.*] *For the tasks which face the human apparatus of perception at historical turning points cannot be performed by optical means—that is, by way of contemplation. They are mastered gradually—taking their cue from tactile reception—through habit*" (268).

revolutionary bona fides on display. “In postrevolutionary Mexico, through the institutional apparatus of the museum, mural art became a technique of didactic museology and, as such, a technique of exercising power” (Coffey, 20). It was in this way that, as Mary Coffey expertly details, “a revolutionary art became official culture.”

In many ways, the SOTPE muralists would create *El machete* as an act of rebellion against the Mexican state itself, but fear of official cooptation of their art and its revolutionary content was not the primary driver of that rebellion. Initially, before it would become the official organ of the PCM in 1925, *El machete* was founded in March the previous year as a medium through which the muralists could channel their revolutionary ideas about proletarian art at a time when, apart from Rivera, the status of their continued mural commissions from Vasconcelos was very much unclear (and, led by Siqueiros, the remaining muralists harbored increasing resentments towards Vasconcelos for dismissing the Syndicate’s attempt to collectively bargain out of hand).[43] But as political changes within and beyond government offices further threatened relations between the muralists and the state, the mission of *El machete* would evolve. For it’s important to note that, while Vasconcelos’s commissioning of murals in the early 1920s

[43] Regarding the PCM’s adoption of *El machete* as its official organ, Stephanie J. Smith writes, “Reflecting the Party’s faith in the paper to reach a growing number of potential readers, the outgoing National Committee of the PCM’s 1925 Third Congress decided to take a more formal stance toward *El Machete*. Although the paper operated as the PCM’s unofficial publication for about a year, the PCM now declared that *El Machete* lacked any issues that could impede its adoption by the PCM, and committee members recommended that the Party recognize it as the PCM’s *official* newspaper. Although Party officials expressed reservations regarding Siqueiros’s, Guerrero’s, and most especially Rivera’s contributions to the PCM, the committee still applauded the artists’ work in establishing *El Machete*. PCM members also noted that *El Machete* represented a ‘heroic’ effort on the part of its collaborators, but most especially Siqueiros, Guerrero, and Graciela Amador. In fact, the PCM’s report of the Third Congress noted with pride that *El Machete* boasted the largest circulation among Mexico’s peasants and workers in comparison to other ‘proletarian’ newspapers, and that it played an enormously important role in explaining the PCM’s views and tactics to the workers and peasants” (37).

represented a tacit state endorsement of the muralists' revolutionary politics, not everyone was happy with the murals, let alone the politics and cultural influence of the muralists. As Philip Stein notes in his biography of Siqueiros,

> The critical and openly hostile Mexico City newspapers fomented resentment and opposition toward the organized artists, who were clearly a force to be reckoned with […] But a major blow came from Vasconcelos's successor, the new Minister of Education, José Manuel Puig Casauranc. He presented the members of El Sindicato with an ultimatum: "If you continue publishing your newspaper, *El Machete*, with its political line of systematic attack on the government, which is the government of the Revolution, your contracts for mural painting will have to be suspended." The government had now laid down the law. It would either be the murals, or *El Machete*. (P. Stein, 49-50)

Casauranc's ultimatum came on the heels of a heated clash between Siqueiros, the muralists, and conservative students at the Preparatoria who had become incensed by the "blasphemous" murals and the communist invectives they had read in *El machete*, even threatening to destroy the murals and assault the artists. In response, Siqueiros famously relayed to his comrades, "If they deny us the fixed walls of public buildings, we will continue our great mural movement by making portable murals of the pages of *El Machete*" (qtd. in P. Stein, 50). It was certainly true that Siqueiros and the other muralists had options available to them for publishing their own articles or even providing woodblock prints in other radical publications.[44] Nevertheless, much

[44] "Their decision to produce a newspaper," Lear notes, "is not surprising: through much of the Porfiriato and during the Revolution, short-lived newspapers had proliferated to express the views of political, social, and cultural groups. In the cultural effervescence of the early 1920s, political and cultural journals that incorporated the writings and drawings of artists proliferated as independent or government projects. Siqueiros published a single issue of *Vida Americana* as a manifesto to artists in 1921, and in the same year Manuel Maples Arce initiated Estridentismo with *Actual*, using a manifesto-poster format. In 1923, the Grupo Solidario published two issues of Vida Mexicana, and the Estridentista movement published three issues of a new journal, *Irradiador*. All were ready examples of periodicals produced entirely by writers and artists, and *Irradiador* in particular offered a model of a vivid graphic style, including images by Syndicate artists Charlot, Revueltas, and Rivera. For the artists of the Syndicate, the creation of *El Machete*

like the art and politics of murals themselves, the muralists had invested a great deal of thought, energy, and hope in the revolutionary possibilities that they could cultivate by developing a concerted media politics that fused their artistic practice—and all of the aesthetic and propagandistic dimensions it expressed—with the medium of the newspaper. With the Mexican state's growing efforts to actualize the promise of universal education enshrined in the 1917 constitution, coupled with the dazzling realities and possibilities of medial connection that were beginning to unfold at the dawn of the age of mass media, the prospect of a self-produced newspaper that could conceivably grow to reach tens if not hundreds of thousands of workers and peasants (thus, seemingly approaching a form of connection with readers that was even more *immediate* than with murals, which were still geographically immovable and attached to state buildings) must have felt like a natural extension of the muralists' revolutionary commitment to proletarian art, education, and mobilization. Indeed, as Siqueiros writes in his autobiography,

> *Pero de todas maneras* El Machete *respondía a una necesidad social y su carácter multiejemplar cumplía con una necesidad política revolucionaria. Si su forma subjetiva seguía siendo inadecuada, su forma material, el periódico, significa un enorme progreso en nuestra tarea. Las masas lo acogieron con extraordinario entusiasmo y pronto recorrió el país de un extremo al otro.*
>
> El Machete *nos ponía delante de un nuevo espectador (quiero insistir en la importancia enorme del espectador en las artes plásticas, particularmente en las de propósito político). Ese nuevo espectador eran las grandes masas obreras, campesinas e indias (me refiero a las tribus indias y no a la circunstancia etnológica, pues la mayor parte de los obreros mexicanos y casi todos los campesinos son indios), en vez de los catedráticos y estudiantes universitarios que formaban el único espectador diario de nuestras obras murales. En el caso de nuestros frescos, debo insistir, el espectador no eran las masas populares sino una burocracia de remanentes ideológicos porfirianos y un estudiantado pequeño burgués en su mayor parte, sorprendido por el ácido gusto estético de nuestros primeros ensayos. Un espectador que no nos pedía sino que dejáramos de seguir*

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must have seemed natural and urgent. Finally, the absence of an official newspaper for the Communist Party of Mexico at its moment of greatest weakness since its founding in 1919 provided a further incentive and a way for Syndicate artists Siqueiros, Guerrero, and Rivera to tighten their ties with the struggling party" (87-88).

> *produciendo aquellos «monstruos», aquellos «monotes». Nuestro nuevo espectador, subrayo, era el pueblo y de este pueblo, su parte más consciente, es decir el pueblo obrero y campesino organizado en los sindicatos industriales y en las comunidades agrarias.*
>
> El Machete *fue, pues, nuestra tarjeta de presentación ante esas masas organizadas del país. Él nos dio el acceso a los sindicatos obreros y a las comunidades agrarias, que antes conocíamos sólo por referencia* (217).

> But, regardless, *El Machete* responded to a social necessity, and its multi-issue character met a revolutionary political necessity. If its subjective form was still inadequate, its material form—the paper itself—represented an immense progress in our task. The masses embraced it with extraordinary enthusiasm and soon it swept the entire country.
>
> *El Machete* put us in front of a new spectator (I want to insist on the immense importance of the spectator for the visual arts, particularly for those with a political purpose). Those new spectators were the working, peasant, and Indian masses (I refer here to the Indian tribes and not to the ethnological category, for most of the Mexican workers and nearly all the peasants are Indian), instead of the academics and students that made up the only daily spectator of our mural works. In the case of our frescos, I must insist, the spectators were not the popular masses, but a bureaucracy of ideological remnants of the porfiriato and a small number of bourgeoisie students, surprised, for the most part, by the acid aesthetic taste of our first efforts. A spectator that only asked us to stop producing those "monsters," those "vulgarities." Our new spectators, I stress, were the people of this country, its most conscious part, that is, the working and peasant people organized in the industrial unions and agrarian communities.
>
> *El Machete* was, therefore, our calling card to the county's organized masses. It gave us access to the workers unions and the agrarian communities that until then we knew only by reference (217).

Siqueiros articulates a powerful desire to utilize *El machete* to reach a new kind of audience (*un nuevo espectador*): a mass audience. While his autobiography presents what are, by definition, after-the-fact reflections on a period in his youth that he may have come to interpret differently later in life, the traces of this expressed desire to create in *El machete* a medial organ that would help reach and take root in the lives of a newly massified audience are clear in the issues of *El machete* itself (Figure 3.8-3.13):

> The design of the paper as a foldout poster gave prominence to graphic images, creating affordable art for the masses. Readers were urged to embellish the walls

> of their homes with the newspaper, and many of its images were reproduced and offered for sale or as raffle prizes ("Comrade Worker: If you want to have the original print in your own house, union or cooperative …"). *Machete* images sought to address a primary problem of the initial cycle of murals painted on the walls of the National Preparatory as well as many Estridentista paintings. Their obtuse symbols and fragmented, almost abstract visual language were deemed inaccessible to a broad public and inadequate to the more direct political messages they sought in the context of the events of 1924. Moreover, if some of the articles assumed a fairly sophisticated readership, or at least a reader looking to be enlightened, prints condensed the messages into their graphic essence. The intent, Siqueiros remembered, was that "the articles would illustrate the drawings."
>
> The artists of the Syndicate researched the development of Mexico's visual history, searching for artisanal and popular traditions that could provide a model for capturing a narrative of the armed revolution and their aspirations for worker and campesino militancy. They found a vivid and immediate model in the *corridos* and rustic plays of broadsheets and the prints of Posada (John Lear, 92)

In many ways, especially at first glance, the early issues of *El machete* and the medial strategies they employ bear a distinct resemblance to *Regeneración*, especially during its third and fourth *épocas*. The most immediate difference, of course, is the stunning and prominent use of visual artwork, from the large title plate, featuring a hand gripping a blade with EL MACHETE emblazoned on it (and the original prints used both red and black ink, producing an even more striking visual effect), to the highly stylized woodblock prints by Siqueiros, Guerrero, and Orozco. (Rivera, being the most high-profile and in-demand artist among the group, mainly contributed to *El machete*'s production by way of financial contributions and editing or writing the occasional article.) The woodblock prints very much express an aesthetic continuity between the famous murals and *El machete*, and they undeniably elevate the didactic power of the paper in a way that is distinctly missing from *Regeneración*; nevertheless, in design and typography, *El machete* figured as both a distinct callback to (or remediation of) *Regeneración* and a noticeable departure from the more experimental Estridentista journals that proliferated in the early 1920s:

> The journal's typography reflected the unadorned, bold linear style of the woodcut technique. Instead of the avant-garde typographic combinations that appeared in Estridentista publications, *El machete* artists chose simple typefaces of varying sizes for the didactic messages printed in gray tones that captioned their illustrations and accompanied *corridos*. *El machete* illustrations also made use of distinctive iconographic elements. Socialist symbols appeared, sometimes adapted to Mexican reality: ears of corn with hammers and sickles, stars from the new socialist era, and factory chimneys. Masonic symbols such as the triangle, circle, and square also appeared, reflecting the fact that artists, intellectuals, and politicians were quite commonly associated with Freemasonry as well as the esoterica and theosophy […] Typical subjects were popular heroes and revolutionaries such as Zapata and Lenin as well as agrarian reform, the abuse of peasants by landowners, and the exaltation of workers' rights. These subjects were innovatively represented in a figurative style inspired by the fantasy of children's illustrations and the didacticism of political caricature […] the images of *El machete* not only sought to encourage noble behavior but also to present a social message to awaken class consciousness (Azuela, 255-257)

Apart from the artwork, one can find in *El machete* numerous traces of the medial tactics that Flores Magón and the PLM employed (or attempted to employ) in the production of *Regeneración*: the pages themselves are impressively large, intended to be held out and read among groups of workers (recalling Tina Modotti's 1924 photograph "Men Reading *El Machete*"); *corridos* are featured on the front pages of numerous issues alongside other textual and mnemonic devices designed to enjoin readers and illiterate comrades to participate in collective practices of receiving, absorbing, and engaging with the information contained therein; the editors frequently included calls for reader engagement, including instructions to hang issues of *El machete* up in their homes and notes encouraging readers to send in articles to be published. And yet, few ever did. "*El Machete* repeatedly invited readers to send articles, but with the exception of an occasional letter, most content came from members of the Syndicate or the Communist Party" (John Lear, 90). In fact, these and other editorial strategies developed to imbue the paper with a more revolutionary quality actually reveal quite a bit about the limits of

the media politics of *El machete*. In design and content, as Alicia Azuela notes, "*El machete* addressed the masses," but that didn't necessarily mean that it found them:

> Texts dealing with national and international workers' issues and Marxist theory were written by both Mexicans and foreigners; among the latter were the German Adolf Goldschmidt and the American Bertram D. Wolfe […] Although it had no art section, the artists Guerrero, Rivera, and Siqueiros wrote regularly for the magazine. El machete *seldom credited its contributors, symbolically stressing its rejection of bourgeois individualism and identifying with anonymous collective labor.* The few articles to credit their authors did so with initials and abbreviations that varied from issue to issue. *Siqueiros humorously commented that this was a way of giving 'the impression that the journal had many more collaborators and making it seem more important'* (253) (emphases added).

The practice of largely excluding bylines to give the impression of a far-reaching and inclusive process of "anonymous collective labor" including many contributors was one that the editors of *Regeneración* also employed—and they, too, surely felt there was some political benefit to giving off such an impression and to obscuring the fact that Ricardo and his close contingent of comrades did a great deal of the article writing themselves. Moreover, like their PLM predecessors, Siqueiros, Guerrero, Graciela Amador (who, regardless of performing copious amounts of editing labor, never received official recognition for it), and others involved in the small, core *grupo editorial* would recall—quite fondly, even—the intense labor and clandestine operations that went into producing and disseminating *El machete.*[45] As Xavier Guerrero noted,

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[45] "Orozco notes in his *Autobiography*, 'it [*El Machete*] would never have succeeded without the indispensable collaboration of Graciela Amador,' who 'edited most of the articles and composed the magnificent ballads that came to be the essential stuff of the publication.' In spite of the magnitude of Amador's contribution, neither she nor any other women held an editorial title or official position in the organization" (Rashkin, 68). There is a whole chapter to be written about Graciela Amador, the gender politics of *El machete,* and the political and social-reproductive labor performed by women in the broader medial-political project of the PCM (on the latter, see: Jean Franco: *Plotting Women* [1989]; Jocelyn Olcott, *Revolutionary Women in Postrevolutionary Mexico* [2005]; John Lear, *Picturing the Proletariat* [2017]). Married to Siqueiros at the time, Amador produced many of the creative textual entries printed in *El machete*; namely, poems and

> We wrote the articles, drew the illustrations, carved the blocks; we printed and folded the paper, delivered it, and paid all costs. The government was against us and we worked in secret. At four in the morning, street lamps were extinguished, and there remained a short time before the first stirrings of day. Then Siqueiros and I would sally forth, loaded with papers, brushes, and a pail of glue. In the dark we hurriedly pasted the *Machete* on strategic walls, and retreated before dawn (qtd. in Charlot, 250-251).

From the concentrated labor they devoted to designing and producing *El machete* to the covert operations they conducted to disseminate it throughout Mexico City during its first year, the communist artists were energized by their vanguardist effort to create a revolutionary medium that they hoped would grow to reach a mass audience through the increasingly expansive and interconnected medial networks of a modernizing world. And the paper did achieve moderate success in expanding its readership: by the end of 1924, its circulation reached six thousand copies; in the coming years, after it became the official organ of the PCM, and after the muralists relinquished editorial control, *El machete*'s success would fluctuate, but it still managed to increase circulation to 11,500 in 1928, marking a high point for the paper right before the tumultuous period in which the PCM would enter its hard-left phase, the Mexican state would crack down on the communists, and *El machete* would be driven underground (Carr, *Marxism & Communism*, 36-38). That *El machete*'s growth in readership in its first year came at a time when the PCM's medial connection to the labor and peasant movements were seriously weakened belies a medial-political strategy by which the muralists hoped to harness the infrastructure of an expanding mass-media culture to reach the "*nuevo espectador*" that culture had ostensibly called into being, to use national and common-alizing networks of medial connectedness to intervene in

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short plays. It was also Amador who gave the paper its name (Carr, *Communism & Marxism*, 36).

and spherologically shape the localized media-worlds of *"las grandes masas obreras, campesinas e indias"* (the great working, peasant, and Indian masses). However, without attaching itself to a broader and lively resistance culture that was mediated by dispersed and interconnected political operations of human conditioning, like those embodied in the media politics of *magonismo*, such a strategy had serious limitations.

For as much as Siqueiros and the other communist artists hoped to find in *El machete* a medium that would allow them to connect with a mass audience beyond the students, intellectuals, and elites who appreciated their murals, they would, like the PCM itself, struggle to achieve what they wanted. Siqueiros, Guerrero, and Rivera edited and wrote for the paper, which featured short essays on current political events and a hefty dose of articles and manifestos on art and communism—articles that were often much denser and less approachable than the artwork. The cost of the paper itself, moreover, was prohibitive: it cost ten centavos at a time when "many a rural peon did not earn more than thirty centavos a day by labor from sunup to sundown" (John Lear, 153). (Finances were always a problem, but the particular issues the originators of *El machete* faced would be mitigated when, after becoming the official organ of the PCM, it would get some steady funds from the Comintern—and its art, while still biting and unique, was produced by artists not named Siqueiros, Guerrero, or Clemente Orozco.) Echoing Siqueiros's frustrations regarding the audiences he and the other muralists hoped to reach with their frescoes but felt they weren't able to, the cost and textual density of *El machete*, among other reasons, would ensure that a significant portion of its readership would consist not of proletarians and *campesinos* but of fellow artists, intellectuals, and educated middle- and upper-class sympathizers. More than this though, especially if we compare its media politics to those of the *magonistas*, *El machete* embodied the disconnect between the elite vanguardist "head" of the

communist party and the proletariat whose consciousness it hoped to organize. This was not because the medium itself and the art it contained didn't have revolutionary potential, but because, in focusing on reaching a mass audience through the growing medial infrastructure of national connectedness, and in believing the paper's artistic and political appeal alone could help them achieve this, the originators of *El machete* neglected to attach—or fully appreciate the necessity of attaching—their media politics to the creation of a broader, organic, bottom-up resistance culture containing interconnected institutions, practices, relations, and spheres of human conditioning that could actualize and materialize what they believed their art could inspire. What the communist muralists managed to achieve in *El machete* in the 1920s was impressive, and a great deal of political ambition and tireless effort went into producing it, but without an infrastructure for developing an air- and human-conditioning resistance culture comparable to what the PLM had—not just with *Regeneración* but with its Liberal Club network, its presence in worker camps, and its medial feedback circuits connecting the Junta to readers and distributors—their media politics could not contend with the imposing hegemonic medial reach of the "total state" and the capitalistic regime of relations contained within it. Without a concerted strategy and robust network for conditioning workers, peasants, and others to become the kind of readers *El machete* called forth—and to become the kind of people who would actualize in their lives and in their local and national spheres the medial arrangement *El machete* called for—their organ was largely left to compete for attention from a (real or imagined) mass audience that was already imbricated in and conditioned by the overdetermined medial webs of national connectedness described in this chapter. Without a more expansive media politics attached to their politicized medium, these webs would prove to be too pervasive, too interconnected, and too thick for *El machete* to cut through.

"*La tarea del partido comunista*," Revueltas writes, "*como representante, todavía por entonces, de la ideología proletaria, para convertirse en la conciencia organizada, en el partido de clase del proletariado mexicano, era la de rescatar e la clase obrera de las formas concretas de enajenación ideológica a que estaba sometida*" (The task of the communist party, as representative, still at the time, of the proletarian ideology, in order to become the organized consciousness, to become the class party of the Mexican proletariat, was that of rescuing the working class from the concrete forms of ideological alienation to which it was subjected) (*Ensayo sobre un proletariado*, 224). To rescue the Mexican working class from its lived reality of concrete, systematic alienation, to destroy and remake the hegemonic medial arrangement of the world that alienates the proletariat from the humanness of its being, the communist party must dutifully organize, represent, embody, and mediate the proletarian consciousness of the working class itself. Doing so requires a concerted media politics that can connect the vanguard of the party (the "head") to the proletariat and vice versa, that can connect the dispersed and alienated elements within the proletariat itself, and that can intervene in and reshape the (im)material arrangements that mediate the conditions of collective and individual alienation. However, if the Mexican working class was, in Revueltas' terms, a proletariat without a head, then the PCM in the 1920s was, by and large, a head without a body. What the PCM lacked in an organic working-class base on par with that of the CGT or the CROM it made up for with support from the Third International, a fiercely committed (but very small) vanguard, and outsized cultural influence. But as the case of *El machete* demonstrates, this was not enough to materialize an organic (i.e., not "deformed"), robust, and organized proletarian consciousness, nor was it enough to contend with the alienating forces of a hegemonic medial arrangement dominated by the ur-medium of the Mexican state.

A Conclusion of Sorts

I could very well double the length of the current chapter by devoting the same amount of theoretical and historical analysis to the PCM and *El machete* specifically as I have given to the medial and political contexts in which they circulated. Indeed, the former would be much more congruent with my original plans for this chapter—and a significant amount of the archival research I conducted for it. I did not intend for this chapter—or this dissertation, for that matter—to take the shape it ultimately did. In the end, though, it feels somewhat fitting.

This is a necessarily incomplete project, one that attempts to take a tentative step in the direction of: first, historicizing the *question*, the *asking of the question*, and the *expression* of being within the complex social, cultural, economic, and epistemological arrangements of a given epoch, defined by its principial anchoring to a specific *archē* that gives said arrangements their historical shape and that gives said shape its ontological justification; second, asserting that the shape and hegemonic force of such epochal arrangements are made manifest in the (im)material circuitry through which life and being itself are mediated (that is to say, that the historicity of epochal hegemony—the very notion that such hegemonies don't simply spring forth from outside of time but, rather, emerge, gradually permeate the spheres of human life, and eventually give way to others—would mean nothing, would have nowhere to go, would have no way to *be*, if it were not for [a] the in-between spaces through which all entities—*archai*, selves, societies—live, move, and *become* in conversation with one another and the world they're a part of, and [b] the *media* that connect that which is separated by such spaces, that convey any entity—across those same spaces—from one state of being to another, and that make us

vulnerable to all that traverses the porous boundaries behind our [epochally conditioned] illusions of self-contained-ness); third, conceiving of all politics, thus, as media politics, as the struggle to shape and reshape the medial arrangements through which being may (or may not) appear and express itself; fourth, examining *leftist* media politics as that which inevitably approaches the horizon of an an-archic medial arrangement in which the humanness of being can appear as that which it is, unalienated from itself, at last. To give historical flesh to such a project, my intention was to set up something of a side-by-side comparison between the media politics of the PLM and the PCM, examining their primary organs, *Regeneración* and *El machete*, in terms of their capacities and strategies for intervening in hegemonic medial arrangements both as newspapers (i.e., as media, traditionally defined) and as lively nodes embedded in much broader networks of concerted media politics that aimed, overall, to condition people to become the kind of subjects they needed to be in order to create the kind of world in which they could become the human beings they deserved to be. I followed this guiding rubric in crafting the previous chapter on the PLM, *Regeneración*, and the medial networks they worked within and attempted to create as the realization of the media politics of *magonismo*. My attempt to do the same for the current chapter sort of failed. In this chapter, I planned to demonstrate how the PCM's media politics lacked much of what made the media politics of the PLM more—but obviously not entirely—successful, even revolutionary. (Especially regarding the project embodied in *El machete*, PCM members were significantly less capable of connecting their organ to larger networks of medial-political action—like the PLM's collective practices of producing and disseminating *Regeneración*, which involved harnessing robust Liberal Club networks, crafting propagandistic techniques that resonated with existing mutualistic and cooperativistic political and intellectual traditions that were more amenable to anarchism, and

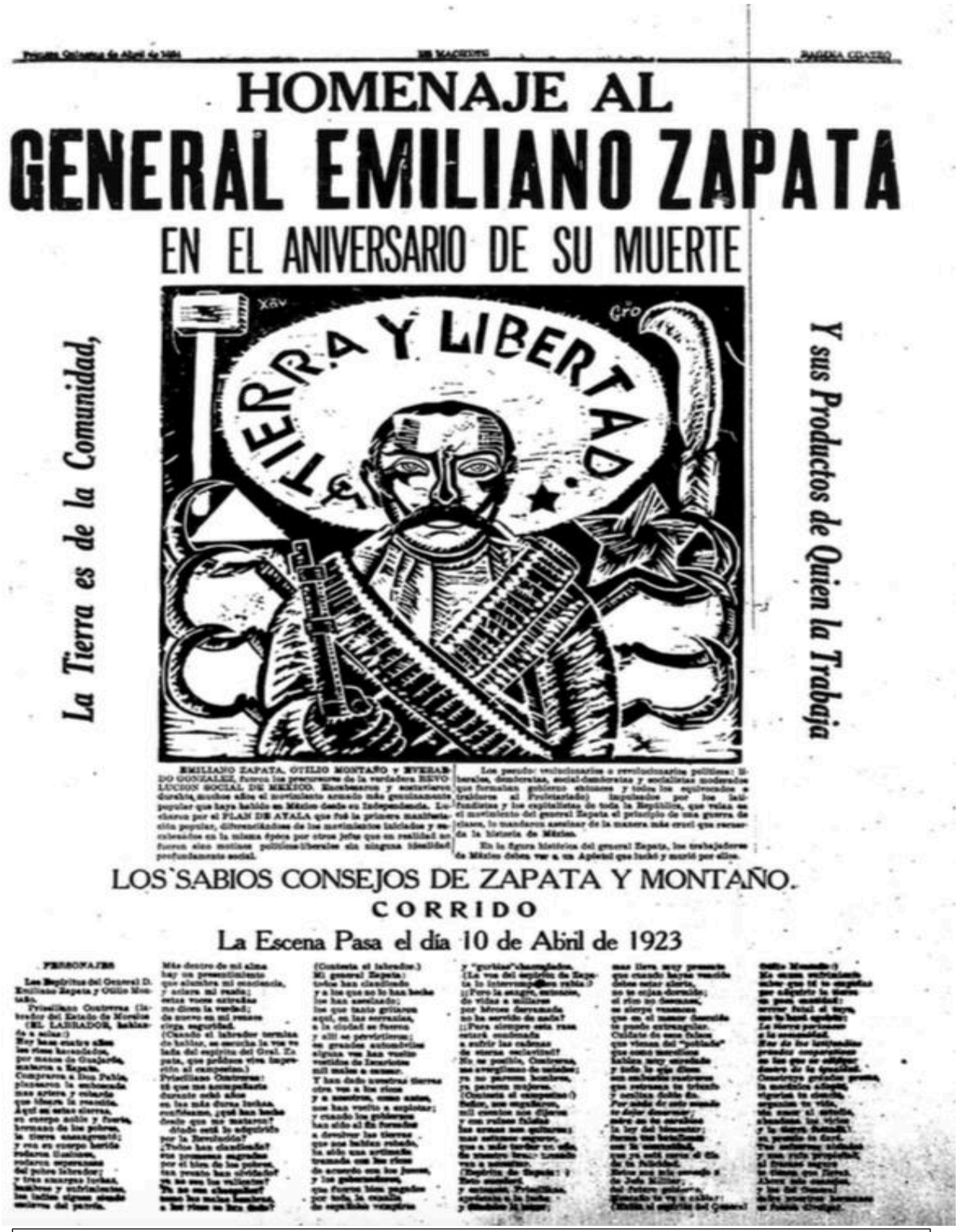
productively fusing these political efforts with broader and more localized medial contexts of human-conditioning processes that made *magonistas* more successful in their efforts to build a strong resistance culture and to draw others into the cause, and that made the latter more receptive to the media-political project of *magonismo*. Where they *were* most successful was in using their artistic techniques to intervene in the medial ecosystem of national symbology, but doing so ultimately came at the cost of (nearly) their whole medial-political project, allowing the symbolic efficiency of the latter to be swallowed and subsumed by [and, thus, allowing that symbolic efficiency to bolster] the totalizing project of revolutionary nationalism embodied in the ur-medium of the postrevolutionary Mexican state.) However, I inevitably found myself needing to contextualize that lack, and to keep contextualizing, so we could comprehend and appreciate the medial conditions that the PCM was up against and that ultimately made its media politics more ineffective. In the end, that "contextualizing" made up the bulk of the chapter.

Again, upon realizing this, my initial impulse was to keep writing until I felt the PCM and *El machete* got as much focused attention as the PLM and *Regeneración* did in the previous chapter (this also made me worry about not having the time to return to the previous chapter and "fill it out" with more contextual analyses like those in the current chapter). Ultimately, however, I came to appreciate the way each chapter complements the other, as opposed to mirroring it. Each chapter, that is, examines the subject of leftist media politics in early twentieth-century Mexico: one, the strategies and justifications for the concerted medial-political project of *magonismo*, whose participants hoped to change the world; the other, the medial contexts of a world that would resist being changed in the way the communists wanted it to. If it feels like the current chapter on the PCM and *El machete* is not, in fact, *about* them at all, it is precisely because, in comparing the medial-political projects embodied in *Regeneración* and *El machete*,

having used the former to begin thinking through the dynamic contexts in which such a project could intervene in—and attempt to reshape—the hegemonic medial arrangement, this prompted me, in turn, to begin thinking through the dynamic contexts of hegemonic medial arrangements themselves; that is, of the tangled and entangling thicket of media through which *El machete* ultimately could not cut. Nevertheless, even if we accept each chapter for what it is, the fact remains that neither chapter gives anything close to a "full" accounting of the complex and dynamic medial contexts of the respective historical moments and political projects they are supposed to capture. Nor could they, for that matter. "Hence it may be said," Antonio Gramsci wrote about political parties, "that to write the history of a party means nothing less than to write the general history of a country" (151). The same is true of the PLM and the PCM. In the Gramscian sense, analyzing the political projects of each party—let alone evaluating the effectiveness of their political tactics within their given historical contexts—is like trying to analyze the complex internal biology of an organism using only the fossilized bones you've been able to pull from the ground; but it is also, even more dauntingly, like retroactively reconstructing the geographically, temporally, and atmospherically specific ecology in which said organism lived, in which it and its being shaped, and were shaped by, the world it was a part of.

In a more expansive sense, however, beyond Gramsci, my inability to fully contextualize the media politics I have attempted to analyze is, at the very least, proof of concept regarding this approach to media, history, and politics. Because to analyze the media politics of any given political party means nothing less than to analyze the medial arrangement of the world itself. Because "Media are not only about the world," John Durham Peters writes, "they *are* the world" (21). Media, as I have tried to argue, "are world-enabling infrastructures" (25), and it follows

that “At its most ambitious, media studies sees itself as a successor discipline to metaphysics, as the study of all that is” (27). Thus, what I hope to have given anyone reading this dissertation is an imperfect but, I think, necessary jumping-off point for a whole host of opportunities to think differently about media, history, people, and politics—and the lively, dynamic processes by which all are engaged in the making, unmaking, and remaking of one another. If nothing else, I hope to at least have sparked a sense of excitement about the possibilities for thinking about and doing history in a way that tries, as much as possible, to eschew the “substance fetishism” that takes the self-contained completeness of historical beings as a given and, instead, examines the medial conditions through which they come to be what they are.



HOMENAJE AL

GENERAL EMILIANO ZAPATA

EN EL ANIVERSARIO DE SU MUERTE

La Tierra es de la Comunidad,

Y sus Productos de Quien la Trabaja

TIERRA Y LIBERTAD

EMILIANO ZAPATA, OTILIO MONTAÑO Y EVERARDO GONZALEZ, fueron los precursores de la verdadera REVOLUCION SOCIAL DE MEXICO. Encabezaron y sostuvieron durante muchos años el movimiento armado más genuinamente popular que haya habido en México desde su Independencia. Lucharon por el PLAN DE AYALA que fué la primera manifestación popular, diferentándose de los movimientos iniciados y secundados en la misma época por otros jefes que en realidad no fueron sino meros políticos-liberales sin ninguna idealidad profundamente social.

Los pseudo revolucionarios o revolucionarios políticos: liberales, demócratas, social-demócratas y socialistas moderados que formaban gobiernos efímeros y todos los equivocados o traidores al Proletariado) impulsados por los latifundistas y los capitalistas de toda la República, que veían en el movimiento del general Zapata el principio de una guerra de clases, lo mandaron asesinar de la manera más cruel que recuerda la historia de México.

En la figura histórica del general Zapata, los trabajadores de México deben ver a un Apóstol que luchó y murió por ellos.

LOS SABIOS CONSEJOS DE ZAPATA Y MONTAÑO.

CORRIDO

La Escena Pasa el día 10 de Abril de 1923

Figure 3.8. ***Homenaje al General Emiliano Zapata en el aniversario de su muerte*** **woodblock print by Xavier Guerrero depicting Emiliano Zapata surrounded by communist symbols, accompanied by the text of the corrido "Los sabios consejos de Zapata y Montaño,"** ***El machete*** **primera quincena de Abril, 1924**

PAGINA CINCO — EL MACHETE — Primera Quincena de Abril de 1924

A LOS SOLDADOS, A LOS OBREROS Y A LOS CAMPESINOS

FARSA EN VARIOS ACTOS, TITULADA:

"LA CAIDA DE LOS RICOS Y LA CONSTRUCCION DEL NUEVO ORDEN SOCIAL"

Por D. y G. Alfaro Siqueiros

Los Tres Somos Víctimas

Los Tres Somos Hermanos

Continuación del Prólogo: "LA TRINIDAD DE LOS SINVERGUENZAS".

Parte del primer acto titulado: "EL EJERCITO DE LOS SOLDADOS, OBREROS Y CAMPESINOS."

PERSONAJES:

Un obrero anciano (Símbolo de "LA EXPERIENCIA".
Un soldado joven (Símbolo de "LA ENERGIA".)
Un campesino "Símbolo de "LA FE.")
Un soldado joven y enclenque (Símbolo de "LA INGENUIDAD".)
Un fifi disfrazado de obrero (Símbolo de "LA FALSEDAD".)
Un obrero moribundo y pobre (Símbolo de "LA DEBILIDAD".)
Un campesino de la multitud.
Un soldado traidor.

La escena representa un paisaje; al levantarse el telón, se escucha a lo lejos el canto de varios cientos de hombres (cuando esto se representare en EL ESTADIO podrán ser miles que entonan "LA INTERNACIONAL" (himno de los trabajadores de todo el Mundo, cuya letra y melodia trasformen el gusto de cantar a nuestros hermanos el próximo día Primero de Mayo). El canto se escucha cada vez más cerca hasta el momento en que grupos compactos de obreros, soldados y campesinos, vestidos cada cual con su traje de costumbre, armados y en formación correcta, penetran a la escena en donde terminan de cantar; entonces, a la voz de mando, rompen filas lanzando gritos entusiastas de triunfo que cesan cuando el obrero anciano, símbolo de "LA EXPERIENCIA", empieza a hablar:

"Por fin hemos alcanzado
a la Vil Burguesía,
con su pecunia sangre
de miles de soldados,
después de tantas luchas
y tantas subversiones,
de tantas dinamitazos
y tantas fábricas;
al nuestro triunfo ha sido
palpable realidad
tan solo se ha debido
al poder de la unión;
a que a la disciplina
son hombres sujetados,
formando un brazo rígido
con el Proletariado,
y a que hemos aplastado
con mano noble y fuerte,
con inteligencia
y con fé inquebrantable
a los tibios sistemas
de debilidad traumada,
que nos traían amarrados
de cruel dictadura.
(Cuando termina de hablar, entran en la escena, "el soldado joven", "el falso obrero" y "el campesino", el obrero hambriento, dirigiéndose al Comité Ejecutivo les dice:)
Los ruines hacendados,
los curas explotadores,
los malos generales,
los clérigos apóstatas,
los jueces perversidos,
los funcionarios públicos
que robaron al Pueblo,
los diputados "Honrados",
los ganaderos de leyes,
los líderes que engañaron,
los tontos "empleados",
los soldados vendidos,
los falsos campesinos
mayordomos de ricos,
pidos, con amargura
y con tristes lamentos
me quitaron la vida:
joven por sus familias
y por todos los grados,
llevados de rodillas,
nunca más conquistar;
y el mejo bondadoso
se ofrecía, resuelto,
al gran sacrificio
para redimirlos;
alegre que su ciencia
y toda su cultura,
entre sus ignorancias,
sus pueblos cumplir;
y yo ciego, cansado,
que en sangre se sumerge
sus promesas son ciertas
y no hay que dudarlo.

(Entonces el "falso obrero", interrumpiéndolo hipócrita y ceremoniosamente, dice:)

En justo, camaradas,
lo que acabáis de oir:
son ellos servidores
que pueden resurgir;
¿Qué sentimientos de ayer?
¡Que de la venganza!
¡Cuando que no saberse
el bien, la ortografía,
y no el primer cuartel
a que ya a nosotros.

(Cuando termina, llegan hasta la escena varios campesinos)

Perdón, cuanto le quitado.....
(Primero, voz.)
Perdón, cuanto engaño.....!!
(Segunda voz.)
Perdón, cuanto le robado
(Tercera voz.)

Perdón, cuanto mentir.....!!
(Entonces, un pocherco en la mano, habla "el obrero falso" que está muy emocionado:)
Los pobres, este todo,
como tanto han sufrido,
de los malos ajenos
se deben apiadar;
los que ellos se inventan
son hombres como todos,
que sufren, moralmente
y hacia arriba llorar.
(Con indignación y rudeza le interrumpe el obrero símbolo de "LA Experiencia":)
Yo pongo la EXPERIENCIA
con cosas conquistada,
a fuerza de fracasos
y mil desilusiones,
y te aconsejo a todos
que no se lanza de clase
cobrde con maraña.
¡JAMAS CON TRANSACCIONES!
(Aquí, el obrero símbolo de "La Energía", exclama:)
Y para no faltar
a esta regla fecunda,
en fuerza que al instante
se empiece a demostr.
(Y dirigiéndose al "falso obrero" y a sus compañeros:)
Y a vosotros, el cambio,
a esta hueste ingrata,
a este fardo tonto,
debemos abandonar
con LA MALA CHARA,
con LA INUTIL MATERIA,
con LA GRAVE MISERIA
QUE IMPONE ESPECIAL.
Hay que ser inclemente,
hay que ser radicales,
y a todo lo que estorbe
debemos derrumbar.
(Al terminar el obrero símbolo de "LA EXPERIENCIA", todos los campesinos gritan:)
Proclamando que en el pelo
se cambia un Gral. Jurado
que debe ser tontemas,
a los vivos juegos.
(La multitud hasta rodearse en...
...ejecutores de aprobación, terminan por decir a gritos los soldados:)
Quien que el Jurado

debe de constituirse
por tres hombres mayores
de los mismos años;
por tres que tengan
algo más de cuarenta,
y tres que hayan llegado
a su "mayor edad".
Y los tres nombrados
que tengan cuando,
organizarse al acto
con su ciencia y saber.
(Nuevas exclamaciones de aprobación de la multitud, de la que entran los hombres de las edades ya indicadas y de pie, formando una barrera, se colocan en medio de la escena: el Comité en el centro. Habla del nuevo "LA EXPERIENCIA:")
Acto seguido Jurado
serán designados,
el soldado primero
y los tres después.
(Los obreros armados salen de la escena y vuelven trayendo a un soldado preso a quien interroga "LA EXPERIENCIA":)
Hablanos de tu vida
con fiel sinceridad,
dinos qué fuentes extrafa
la fiel disciplina,
(Mientras el preso:)
Durante cambio de años
he sido el sufrimiento,
he sido el mismo juego
de ellos, burgués.
Bien sabe he comprendido
que a todos hermanos
que a todos semejantes
somos "hombres"
con esta esencial,
con estos mismos sufrimientos
con estos mismos pensares,
decenas nos pervierten
Ya cuando vestido
cuando ya no sabía
que aquella palanca
a quien debía hacia
los más monstruosos crímenes
me hicieron vestir.....
(Le interrumpe la "Experiencia":)
Tu humanidad no pesa,
y no fue a ver

que te hayas convertido
en el verdugo cruel
de tus propios hermanos
y de tu misma raza
que junto a ti sacharon,
y el mismo fiel hoy viste.
(Le contestan a todos)
que hace ya cientos de años
dos pobres en destierro
existieron entre ellos,
por defender tan sólo
los pobres de los ricos
sin alcanzar, al cabo,
ningún bien para el,
pidiendo la libertad
después la de Reforma,
y todas las contiendas
que ha habido en el País
fueron únicamente
lucha cruel y fuerte,
de dos explotadores
para la esclavitud
Hoy sido tres las fuerzas
unidas por las cosas
para que tú veamos
sobre sus intereses:
Primero la miseria
hacinadora cruel
con fuerza y justicia
te hizo a convivir;
después vino la ley
con la que te arrancaron
del lado de tus hijos
y de tu amado hogar,
y ahora, finalmente
con las mismas cadenas
y las mismas patrullas
te vuelven a engañar.
Está bien que no olvides
que tú eres de los pobres
y por ningún motivo
les vuelvas a matar.

Nota: La entusiasmada de este acto se repetirá en el próximo número, siguiendo la [illegible]

Figure 3.9. ***Los tres somos víctimas, los tres somos hermanos*** **woodblock print by David Alfaro Siqueiros, featuring a holy trinity of campesino-soldier-worker,** ***El machete*** **primera quincena de Abril, 1924**

P E R I O D I C O Q U I N C E N A

Número 5 | Responsable: XAVIER GUERRERO | México, D. F., Primera Quincena de Mayo, 1924 | Redacción: Uruguay APARTADO 2083

El Machete sirve para cortar la caña,
para abrir las veredas en los bosques umbríos,
decapitar culebras, tronchar toda cizaña
y humillar la soberbia de los ricos impíos.

1.--La Internacional: música y letra 2.--Editorial "La Huelga de Tampico. 3.--"Compere y el Primero de Mayo", por Bertram D. Wolfe. 4.--Lenin ha muerto, por G. Demidyuk Traducción del Esperanto por T. Saucy. 5.--Corrido del Primero de Mayo por D. y G. A. S. "Retrato de Vladimir Ilich Lenin", grabado en madera por Xavier Guerrero. 6.--La Bandera Nacional y la C. R. O. M., por Domingo A. Sierra. 7.--Grabado de la Continuación de la farsa "La caída de...", etc., por D. y G. A. S. 8.--Carlos Marx, por el Prof. A. Goldschmidt. 9.--Por el Agrarismo Comunista, por Antonio Hidalgo B. 10.--Conferencia del Partido Comunista.--A los encargados de construir edificios con el dinero del pueblo, por D. Alfaro Siqueiros. 11.--El Fascismo, el Proletariado y la Democracia Burguesa, por Spineli Aldo. 12. -- Salvagio Electico de Obreros y Campesinos, por Rafael Mallén, Jr.

LA INTERNACIONAL

"HIMNO DE LOS TRABAJADORES DE TODO EL MUNDO"

1o. de Mayo de 1886 "POR EL FRENTE UNICO" 1924

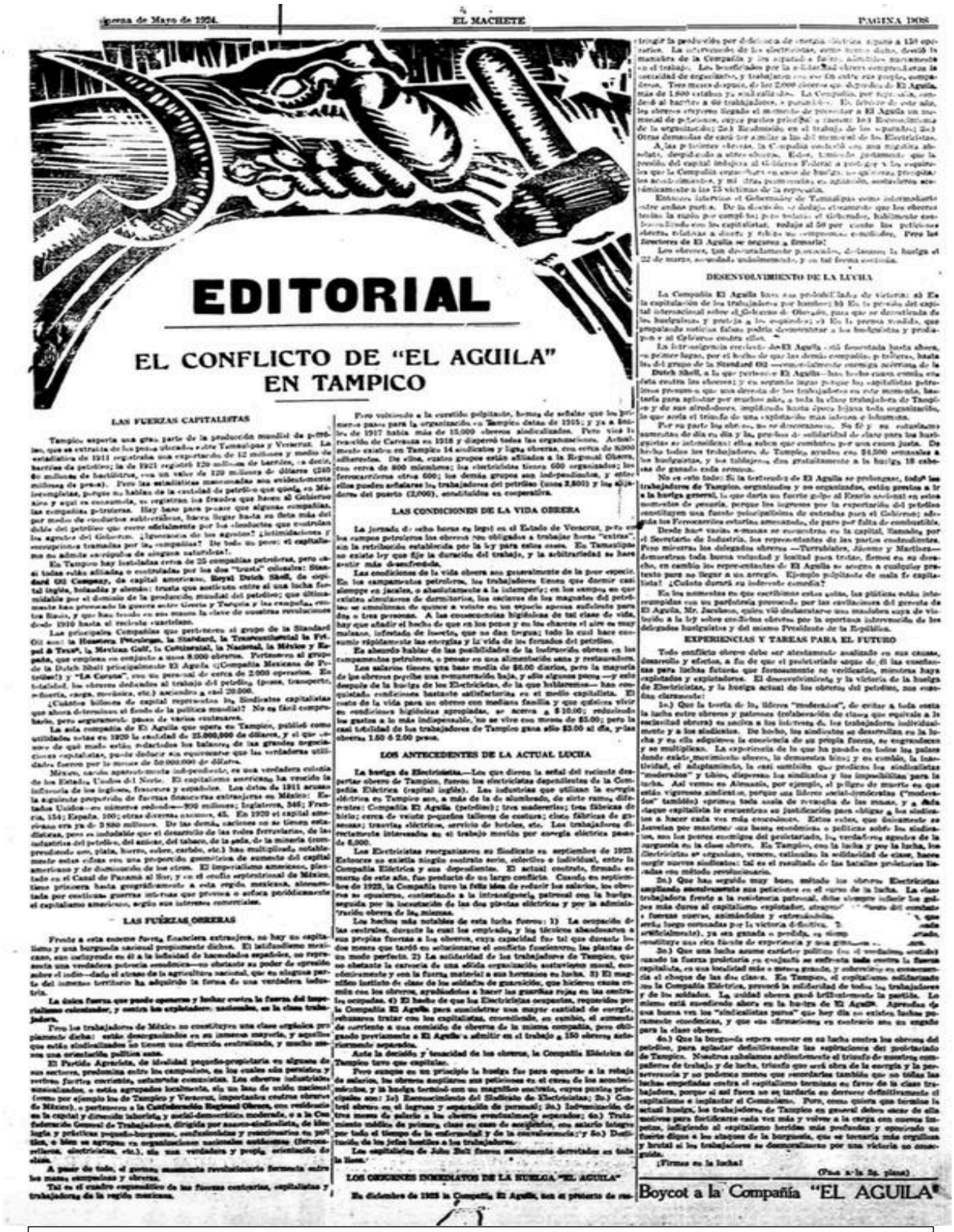
TIEMPO DE MARCHA

A RRI—BA VICTIMAS HAMBRIENTAS ARRI—BA PARIAS DEL DO-
LOR Y CANTE-MOS TO—DOS U—NI—DOS UN NUE-VO
MUN—DO NACIÓ NO SE A-MOS MAS ES—CLA—VOS DES TRU
YA-MOS LA OPRESIÓN LA TIE-RRA SERÁ DE NOSO—TROS SI QUE
—REMOS DESDE HOY ¡A LA LU-CHA, PROLETARIOS NUESTRO FIN EL I-DEAL POR EL
FU-TU-RO MUNDO POR LA INTERNACIONAL! ¡A LA LUCHA PROLETARIOS NUESTRO
FIN EL I-DEAL POR EL FU-TU-RO MU—NDO POR LA INTERNACIO-NAL!

La manifestación de hoy debe reunir en un solo bloque todos los trabajadores sin distinción.

Arriba, víctimas hambrientas,
arriba, parias del dolor,
y cantemos todos unidos:
un nuevo mundo nació!
No seamos más esclavos,
destruyamos la opresión!
La tierra será de nosotros,
si queremos, desde hoy!
¡A la lucha, proletarios,
nuestro fin el ideal,
por el futuro mundo,
por la Internacional!
Avante, avante! La victoria
es nuestra, nuestro el porvenir,
que recta y justa es la historia,
nueva era brilla al fin!
¡Cerramos a la batalla
y luchemos por triunfar;
seamos dignos, no cobarde,
luchemos por la libertad.
¡A la lucha, etc.

Figure 3.10. Cover of *El machete* primera quincena de Mayo, 1924, featuring the music sheet and lyrics to the "Internationale," "Himno de los trabajadores de todo el mundo."



EDITORIAL

EL CONFLICTO DE "EL AGUILA" EN TAMPICO

LAS FUERZAS CAPITALISTAS

LAS FUERZAS OBRERAS

LAS CONDICIONES DE LA VIDA OBRERA

LOS ANTECEDENTES DE LA ACTUAL LUCHA

DESENVOLVIMIENTO DE LA LUCHA

EXPERIENCIAS Y TAREAS PARA EL FUTURO

Boycot a la Compañía "EL AGUILA"

Figure 3.11. Full-page editorial, "El conflicto de 'El Aguila' en Tampico," broken up into sections, accompanied by a call to boycott the British-owned El Aguila oil company operating in Tampico, *El machete* primera quincena de Mayo, 1924

PAGINA SEIS EL MACHETE Primera Quincena de Mayo de 1924.

Sigue el Desarme de Campesinos

LLEGAN HASTA NOSOTROS CONTINUOS RUMORES (EN MUCHOS CASOS DESGRACIADAMENTE, NOTICIAS COMPROBADAS Y CIERTAS) ACERCA DEL DESARME DE LOS CAMPESINOS QUE EN LA ULTIMA REVUELTA OFRECIERON SU SANGRE CONTRA LA REACCION Y EN PRO DEL GOBIERNO. ULTIMAMENTE HA PASADO EN ZACATECAS ALGO INAUDITO A ESTE RESPECTO.

¿QUE SE PRETENDE CON ESTA CULPABLE ACTITUD?

¿ES QUE HAY ALGUN INTERES *REVOLUCIONARIO* QUE REQUIERA PARA SU GARANTIA EL DESARME DE LOS CAMPESINOS, CUYAS CARABINAS TODAVIA HUELEN A LA POLVORA QUEMADA CONTRA LA REACCION?

EN ESTOS MOMENTOS EN QUE SE PREPARA Y MADURA EL NUEVO GOLPE CONTRA LA REVOLUCION DEL PUEBLO, ES UN CRIMEN IMPERDONABLE DEJAR A LOS TRABAJADORES INERMES A MERCED DEL ENEMIGO, Y EL GOBIERNO DE OBREGON NO HA PODIDO HALLAR PEOR NI MAS PELIGROSO MODO DE PAGAR LA AYUDA RECIBIDA DE LOS CAMPESINOS AGRARISTAS.

¡HASTA DONDE SE VA A LLEGAR POR ESTE CAMINO?

En el Orden Burgués Reinante hay que Buscar la Causa de la Decadencia Arquitectónica Contemporánea

Por D. ALFARO SIQUEIROS.

A LOS ENCARGADOS DE CONSTRUIR EDIFICIOS PUBLICOS CON EL DINERO DEL PUEBLO; ALTOS FUNCIONARIOS, ARQUITECTOS, MAESTROS DE OBRAS.

[illegible]

Figure 3.12. ***Sigue el desarme de campesinos*** **woodblock print by David Alfaro Siqueiros accompanied by an editorial, "En el orden burgués reinante hay que buscar la causa de la decadencia arquitectónica contemporánea," penned by Siqueiros (an example of the disconnect between the aesthetic clarity of *El machete*'s artwork and the frequently dense textual material), *El machete* primera quincena de Mayo, 1924**

CARLOS MARX

Por el Prof. ALFONSO GOLDSCHMIDT

Todas las teorías y tentativas de fundar una nueva ciencia social como una verdadera ciencia social económica, se resuma y se aclaran y limpiaron en la obra grande de Carlos Marx, y Ricardo significó un paso hacia la exactitud del método de la investigación económica o para decir así hacia una ciencia económica relativamente exacta. No es una casualidad que Carlos Marx se refiera más a Ricardo que por ejemplo a los fisiócratas o a Adam Smith. Ricardo corresponde ya al camino nuevo de la investigación, es decir al camino abstracto que no deja los hechos, pero que en más lógico en su deducción que el camino de los escritores anteriores que eran más o menos convencionales o descubridores, pero no tan analizadores exactos como Ricardo y sobre todo Carlos Marx.

Karl Heinrich Carlos Enrique Marx el 5 de mayo del año 1818 en Treveris en Alemania, es decir la juventud de Carlos Marx era la época de la lucha por la democracia liberal en Alemania. Era al mismo tiempo la época de una agitación enorme en los círculos literarios y filosóficos de Europa. Marx debía estudiar jurisprudencia según el plan de sus padres, pero él no se ocupó mucho del estudio regular, más de estas fermentaciones literarias y filosóficas.

Como alumno del filósofo alemán Hegel, entendió Marx las necesidades históricas, es decir la lógica del proceso económico. Comprendió al mismo tiempo la explicación de la historia por un método dialéctico. Aquí tenemos la base del así llamado materialismo histórico y de la aclaración de los fenómenos sociales como la emanación del desarrollo histórico.

Con estas armas no quedó Carlos Marx alumno de Hegel en el sentido de la defensa del estado existente, y tampoco quedó luchando en el campo literario, ético religioso o filosófico. Pronto vió Marx los problemas sociales actuales y se dirigió a estudiar estos problemas con el método y concepto fundamental de Hegel, pero con una tendencia completamente distinta.

Desde este tiempo encontramos en Carlos Marx un luchador e investigador vehemente por la verdad económica social con un concepto siempre más claro de las causas del desarrollo de la sociedad humana, luchando primeramente en Alemania como periodista y publicista, después en el exilio especialmente por la revolución. Vivía lejos de su país en Londres hasta su muerte el 14 de marzo del año 1883. Una vida muy agitada, muy pobre, atacado Marx por toda la burguesía europea, desconocida su obra o mal comprendida por los economistas científicos contemporáneos. Muchas veces sin el dinero para salvar la vida de la próxima semana, sufriendo de enfermedades, pero gozando de un cariño más y más grande del proletariado internacional y de los mejores intelectuales de esta época. Una vida científica y política, una vida del trabajo permanente y de una responsabilidad enorme frente de los principios del movimiento proletario, pero una vida no obstante todos los sufrimientos y penas, adornada por la estimación de los más cultos y de los más sinceros y especialmente ayudada por la amistad de Federico Engels. Todo este trabajo, las luchas, los sufritos y los caídos continúe el discurso fúnebre de Federico Engels el día 17 de marzo de 1883; en este discurso dijo Engels: "No se puede juzgar lo que el proletario luchador de Europa y de América, lo que la ciencia histórica perdió con este hombre. Muy pronto aparecerá la falta de este gigante.

Como Darwin descubrió la ley del desarrollo de la naturaleza orgánica, descubrió Marx la ley del desarrollo de la historia humana. El hecho simple hasta ahora tapado por ideologías falsas, que los hombres sobre todo deben comer, beber, habitar y vestirse antes de hacer política, ciencia, arte, religión etc., se decir, el hecho que la producción de los materiales primitivos para vivir y por esto el grado económico de un pueblo o de una época, en la base en la cual deben explicarse las instituciones del estado, las opiniones jurídicas, el arte y las inspiraciones religiosas, este simple hecho lo descubrió Carlos Marx. Pero además él descubrió la ley especial mecánica del hombre actual capitalista a producir y de la sociedad burguesa causada por este método. Vino la luz sobre este problema con el descubrimiento de la plusvalía mientras todas las investigadores anteriores de los economistas burgueses como de los críticos socialistas erraban en las sombras.

Dos de estos descubrimientos bastan para una vida. Feliz el que puede hacer uno de ellos. Pero en todos los campos que Marx investigó, hasta en la matemática hizo él descubrimientos propios.

Tal era el hombre de la ciencia; pero como hombre de ciencia no aprovechó Carlos Marx la mitad de su fuerza. La ciencia era para Marx una fuerza motriz histórica, una fuerza revolucionaria. Tan pura como era su satisfacción después de un descubrimiento nuevo en cualquier ciencia teórica, él sentía más satisfacción si se trataba de un descubrimiento que movía inmediata y revolucionariamente la industria del desarrollo histórico en general. De este punto de vista consideró Carlos Marx por ejemplo el desarrollo de los descubrimientos en el campo eléctrico.

Carlos Marx era sobre todo revolucionario. Colaborar en esta o esta manera en la caída de la sociedad capitalista y del estado creado por esta sociedad, colaborar en la libertad del proletariado moderno al cual él como primero dió la razón de su propia situación y de sus necesidades, la razón de las condiciones de su emancipación, este era su verdadero oficio. La lucha era su elemento y él luchó con una pasión, con una tenacidad y con una exactitud como pocos, hasta la creación de la gran asociación internacional obrera como la coronación de toda su obra.

Por esto era Marx el hombre más odiado y más calumniado de su época. Gobiernos absolutos como republicanos le expulsaban. Burgueses, conservadores y demorráticos extremos, montaban con difamaciones contra él; pero él murió estimado, querido, deplorado por millones de colaboradores revolucionarios que vivían de las minas siberianas por toda la Europa y América hasta California, y se puede decir: "Quizá quedaban muchos adversarios, pero no un émulo conmigo personal. Su nombre vivirá a través de los siglos y con su nombre también su obra".

Mejor yo no puedo explicar el valor de esta vida grande científica y luchadora de Carlos Marx. Solamente se necesita modificar las últimas palabras de Federico Engels refiriéndose a la desaparición de los enemigos de Marx. En nuestros días se levanta nuevamente un ejército de enemigos, no solamente de Carlos Marx, también del así llamado marxismo. Para hablar francamente: no encontré dentro de esta multitud de nuevos enemigos al uno que combata con conceptos científicos objetivos, la teoría de Carlos Marx. Combaten a la raza del judío Marx o a conclusiones políticas vulgares que no tienen sus fundamentos en el verdadero marxismo. Ellos no conocen la obra de Marx, ni su método, ni el objeto de esta obra, ni entienden tampoco el sentido económico científico del proletariado. Es para mí una sorpresa porque Carlos Marx como todos los grandes investigadores del desarrollo y sentido humano, son al mismo tiempo grandes simplificadores. Es verdad: difícil es entender el fundamento de la teoría de Carlos Marx, pero una vez entendidos los conceptos fundamentales, entonces se simplifica toda el desarrollo económico social de una manera admirable.

Es la importancia grande de los faros de la ciencia económica que ellos aclaren de una manera directa y lógica la constitución total de la sociedad. Esta es la importancia tanto como de los grandes eclesiásticos o del fisiócrata grande Quesnay, también del socialista clásico Marx. Se reunen en su obra todos los conceptos científicos económicos anteriores, pero con una simplificación enorme y con un método nuevo más exacto, más matemático y también más en la base de los hechos que por ejemplo las investigaciones de Ricardo y no carece el análisis del capitalismo de un concepto moral. Al contrario con estas aclaraciones crece una nueva moral, es la moral de la productividad efectiva o del proletariado como el fundamento de una cultura nueva.

Carlos Marx comenzó su trabajo científico como filósofo y su obra demuestra en todas sus partes, una profundización filosófica, no solamente por causa del método lógico, también por sus motivos nobles fuera del materialismo que él analizó, pero que él al mismo tiempo quería destruir.

Algunas palabras sobre el estilo de la obra de Carlos Marx. El método dialéctico [illegible] pide un estilo especial o también dialéctico. El estilo de Carlos Marx parece a muchos como un estilo pretencioso, bizantino y falsamente brillante. Pero este estilo es muy natural como consecuencia del método, él es una parte del método mismo. Marx deja el estilo seco, árido de la ciencia económica, y escribe de una manera muy luminosa, característica, muchas veces clásica, pero siempre con una emoción alta, ética y directa. Efectivamente es este estilo muy sincero y facilita mucho por medio de imágenes y ejemplos para entender los pensamientos profundos del autor. La cosa es que en los círculos científicos económicos no saben escribir con claridad y brillantemente, porque ellos no defienden un ideal. Son en general analistas y no constructores. Pero la obra de Carlos Marx, significa con el análisis, la construcción científica de una nueva sociedad. Se puede decir que nosotros tenemos aquí el análisis más intenso de todos los economistas modernos, pero se necesita probar que ese análisis al mismo tiempo, produce la construcción o que el análisis mismo es la construcción.

Analizando por ejemplo la concentración del capital, Marx demuestra el proceso de la formación de la primera fase de la nueva sociedad. Es todavía la fase de un estado o de una construcción de la comunidad, no completamente libre, pero como esta construcción es la herencia de la construcción capitalista o de la centralización capitalista, entonces se ve ya la nueva construcción en la investigación de la construcción caduca.

El método dialéctico es, por decir así, el método del capitalismo mismo. La relación entre el trabajador y el capital, es desde este punto de vista, una relación dialéctica. Como las formas capitalistas son la preparación de la construcción socialista, es también el método dialéctico la preparación de un método simple. El socialismo no necesita más la dialéctica, porque la comunidad es en el relacionada clara y simplemente. La comunidad significa la desaparición del análisis y de estos métodos de la investigación. De esta manera vemos como el mecanismo mismo de la sociedad produce el estilo, el método, las formas actuales y venideras. *Con esto comienza una nueva época de la ciencia, es la época del análisis constructivo o de la aplicación perfecta de los métodos de la sociedad misma.*

Que Carlos Marx tenía un corazón grande, esto aparece muchas veces en su obra cuando él ilumina por ejemplo la miseria del proletariado en Inglaterra. Estas páginas son de una energía enorme y de una [illegible] humana. Se puede decir que el pulso de toda la obra como de toda la vida de Carlos Marx, no es un pulso crítico destructivo, al contrario, un pulso de un profeta moderno positivo. Nada más falso que decir que Carlos Marx quería destruir. El quería *construir* y esta construcción está en el sentido de Carlos Marx, la continuación del progreso técnico del capitalismo, en un sentido socialista. *El socialismo no significa destrucción*, no, *de ningún modo*. Al contrario, él es el freno de la improductividad de la época pasada o presente y lógicamente debe ser la ciencia del aumento efectivo de la productividad y no la ciencia de una productividad limitada por la disminución. El fundamento de la productividad, es decir, de la fuerza del trabajo. *Una sociedad que no puede explotar completamente la fuerza del trabajo en favor del trabajo mismo, no puede ser una sociedad efectivamente productiva.*

PROXIMAMENTE SE DICTARÁ CONFERENCIA EN EL PATIO DE LA SECRETARIA DE EDUCACION PUBLICA

El Prof. Alfonso Goldschmidt, sustentará una interesante conferencia sobre Rusia y Alemania, dedicada a los obreros en ruina de Alemania: hablará también sobre el tratado de Versalles y la miseria de los niños germanos.

Esta conferencia se verificará antes del día 15 del presente mes siendo, el costo de entrada de cincuenta centavos.

DAREMOS AVISO OPORTUNO.

CLASES DE ESPERANTO.— Próximamente el profesor Anaya abrirá un curso breve y sencillo del idioma internacional Esperanto, para los trabajadores en general.

A fin de organizar las clases, se ruega a quienes se interesen por ellas comunicar su nombre y dirección a la Redacción de "EL MACHETE". Apartado 2703, México, D. F.

NOTA. La continuación de "El Corrido"—La Caída de los Elicos y la construcción del nuevo "Orden Social" correspondiente a este número, aparecerá en el número seis de "EL MACHETE"

POR EL AGRARISMO COMUNISTA

Por ANTONIO HIDALGO B.

La primera manifestación franca del deseo popular de iniciativa en la región mexicana, la solución del problema de la tierra, fundamental por tratarse de una familia destinada de modo particular a vivir de la agricultura, ha sido observada a raíz del movimiento armado sostenido con tanto vigor por los hombres que acaudilló por diez años el líder suriano Emiliano Zapata. Las tendencias y las reformas de justicia indiscutible que desde entonces se debatían, han sufrido por razones naturales, modificaciones en la forma aunque la esencia se ha conservado. De entonces para acá, la población rural había con gran convencimiento de las donaciones de ejidos, de las restituciones motivadas por los atentados de los latifundistas y con toda llanura los trabajadores del campo, bien encaminados a resolver el problema alcanzado el horizonte. Simultáneamente con este problema ha empezado a resolverse el de la organización social entre nosotros, aprestándose en general todos los mexicanos, para llegar mejor preparados al momento decisivo de la lucha social que afortunadamente dará fin de una vez por todas con la organización burguesa en que vivimos.

Excepto contadísimas excepciones, en la extensión del territorio mexicano han imperado el régimen de la gran propiedad individual, cuyos orígenes siempre espurios, que de sobre nos son conocidos. Y de esta perniciosa situación, vino la población campesina a plantar su soberanía dentro de los límites del régimen de la pequeña propiedad agraria. Mediante la acción salvadora de la Revolución, llevada a cabo de modo muy principal por los campesinos armados, el obrero del campo, el "peón", consciente de su papel, exigió y obtuvo, la pequeña parcela que le había sido robada por los latifundistas o la dotación de terrenos de los ejidos, por su esfuerzo personal, bahería de obtener lo necesario para su subsistencia, colocando a la vez la primera piedra de la solida consunción en que se sustenta su independencia moral.

La condición del latifundista en México, fué siempre la del ahogado. Ni antes, ni ahora ni puede por su adversión al trabajo, poner en explotación la tierra de que se sentía dueño y llamó para explotarlas al verdadero campesino al cual dispar retribuyó con ridículos jornales y obtuvo la colaboración del pequeño burgués que sirvió para construir la clase de los aparceros. Cuando el gran terrateniente tomó en su ayuda al obrero del campo, sus negocios, usando sus mismas palabras, fueron ruinosos. Y así tenía que ser porque ni tenía la preparación técnica necesaria para dirigir los trabajos en el campo, ni traía conocimientos prácticos para trabajar, ni sabía subsistir las riquezas cuyo usufructo estaba robando. Y a pesar de esto, aumentó siempre su fortuna porque continuó siendo ladrón.

Cuando el latifundista dispar evolucionaba, robó el trabajo de los aparceros, como no era necesario aportar ningún esfuerzo y cuanto menos se preocupara mejor serían sus ganancias, se dedicó de plano a la vida de molicie esperando la cosecha, que se repetía cada año, de tender la mano y llenar sus bolsillos para poder sostener sus vicios.

Seriamente observando todo esto por los obreros del campo que convencidos de su riqueza tuvieron que comenzar de la explotación infame de que eran objeto, los vemos al fin enfrentarse contra el gran propietario que los robaba y se transformaron en pequeños propietarios. Su trabajo les sirvió desde entonces, para atender sus necesidades. Ellos que producen la riqueza la usan en el provecho y en el de los suyos.

Pero existen rosas, y por [illegible] de nuevo aparece, [illegible] la diferencia en el aumento de la población y el aumento de la producción, la falta de sistema para poner en circulación lo que le sobraba de lo que había producido para atender a la satisfacción de otras de sus necesidades, la falta de método para apreciar el trabajo que crean la oferta y la demanda, etc., etc., se vino al convencimiento de que el libre es verdad indiscutible, que el régimen de la pequeña propiedad resulta más provechoso y moral que aquel del antiguo latifundista mexicano, la población en general, se encontraría en cierta forma amenazada y que la pequeña propiedad sería que los horrores de una crisis de la producción llegarán a tomar proporciones. Se puede conseguir entre las clases medias (parasitarias también o medias; el obrero de la ciudad sospechó el peligro y con su experiencia en la lucha, opinó sobre el particular.

En riqueza agrícola es indispensable; sin ella no habría manera de coordinar el esfuerzo de todas las clases productoras para satisfacción de las necesidades de la población y fundamentalmente por la necesidad de la gran producción. Se concluye así, que es necesaria la explotación de la tierra en gran escala por sociedades pequeñas y grandes relacionadas entre sí a vistas de la inadecuada de la inmoralidad del régimen latifundista, es indispensable la organización comunista del trabajador del campo. Conseguir que lo que en nuestros días se llaman pequeñas propiedades y propietarios en pequeño, se reúnan para formar la propiedad de todos. La organización comunista en la que todos trabajen y todos produzcan para todos. En esta organización interviene el obrero, interviene el técnico, interviene el administrador y mediante el esfuerzo de todos, la anarquía grave de la crisis de la producción queda eliminada.

Los objetivos que los clásicos pretenden oponer a esta organización y la inconveniencia con los fallos alcanzados donde este régimen ha sido aceptado.

En México estamos en la mejor senda para llegar al comunismo. El campesino mexicano va a la vanguardia sobre este particular y muy pronto se habrá conseguido la grandiosa organización comunista para esta región.

UNA CARTA A LA REDACCION DE "EL MACHETE"

Respetable Director de "EL MACHETE":

Desde el primer número de su periódico he visto que en él se tratan los asuntos relacionados con los trabajadores; por lo que le suplico dar un pequeño espacio a esta protesta mía. Los explotados y ferrocarrileros tenemos ya ocho o seis semanas retrasadas. Es cierto que quien vive del trabajo no tiene dinero acumulado: solo quien explota se vuelve rico. Y ahora para vivir he tenido que empeñar algunos queridos recuerdos de familia; un compañero mío, su pistola; otro, corre el peligro de ser lanzado a la calle porque no puede pagar la renta. Y casos parecidos hay por millares.

Es posible que un gobierno que se dice revolucionario no comprenda este estado de miseria de sus empleados? Y si lo comprende porqué no lo remedia? Unicamente para gratificar a los militares consentidos tiene dinero a manos llenas?

Tal vez tendremos que decir que también los hombres que se dicen radicales o socialistas etc., en llegando al poder, dejan de ser radicales para ser únicamente Ministros, los cuales resultan conservadores, liberales, demócratas, socialistas, son todos iguales.

México, abril de 1924. UN EMPLEADO.

Figure 3.13. "Carlos Marx" historical article written by Adolf Goldschmidt, accompanied by a woodblock print of Marx by Xavier Guerrero, *El machete* primera quincena de Mayo, 1924

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