

# **The anarchists and the Mexican Revolution**

**Práxedes G. Guerrero (1882–1910)**

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## **Praxedis G. Guerrero (1882 – 1910)**

Praxedis Gilberto Guerrero was born on August 28<sup>th</sup> 1882 in Los Altos de Ibarra, Guanajuato state, the sixth son of a very rich land owning family. After attending both primary and secondary school in Leon, he went to San Luis Potosi in early 1900. Here he worked as a labourer in the Cerrceria de San Luis and later in the Fundacion de Morales before returning to Los Altos de Ibarra some months later. For the next year or so he assisted his father in the family business, making several trips as its representative to Puebla, Mexico City and Laredo.

In May 1901 Praxedis was accepted as a correspondent on Filomeno Mata's anti-Diaz journal 'Diario del Hogar', but whether this was a full or part time post we do not know. Later that year however he joined the Second Reserve of the army, rising in November 1901 to the rank of subteniente of cavalry.

By 1903 he had become interested in the anti-Diaz Liberal movement that had been founded two years before, and began to read their publications in particular Camillo Arriaga's 'El Demofilo' and Ricardo Flores Magon's 'El Hijo del Ahuizote'. At the same time he began to read the works of Bakunin, Kropotkin and Malatesta, which were at that time difficult to obtain, although Kropotkin's 'The Conquest of Bread' had been published in pamphlet form by the opposition journal 'Vespar' during the preceding year.

On April 2<sup>nd</sup> 1903 a demonstration of 10,000 liberals, in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, protesting against the re-election of General Bernardo Reyes as state governor, were fired on by federales under the command of Reyes himself. 15 protesters were killed and many more wounded. When the news of this massacre reached Praxedis he resigned his military post in disgust and returned to his family's hacienda in Los Altos de Ibarra. He worked there as an agricultural labourer until September. 1904 when he, together with Francisco Manrique and Manuel Vasquez, two fellow workers on his father's hacienda, decided to leave Mexico and find work in the United States.

Crossing the border at El Paso, Texas, Praxedis and his two companions made their way to Denver, Colorado, where he and Manrique found work with the mining firm of 'The Colorado Supply Co.' In early 1905 they left Denver and after working for several weeks as wood cutters in El Dorado, California, they arrived in San Francisco in March. Here Praxedis began to publish 'Alba Roja' (Red Dawn). Unfortunately nothing is known about this journal as no copies have survived, but from the title we can assume it was of a revolutionary nature, most probably written for the benefit of Mexican workers in the U.S. Whether a success or failure, 'Alba Roja' ceased publication when Praxedis left San Francisco in the middle of the year and headed for Pueblo, Arizona, where he worked for some time in a coal mine. Towards the end of 1905 he moved yet again, this time to Morenci, Arizona, where he found more permanent work in the foundry of the 'Detroit Copper Mining Co.'

In the following year, 1906, the first contact was made between the 'Junta Organizadora del Partido liberal Mexicano' and Praxedis, when in May Manuel Sarabia, representing the junta, visited Praxedis in Morenci. The Junta, which had been formed the preceding year in St. Louis, Missouri through the initiative of Ricardo Flores Magon, aimed at coordinating all anti-Diez revolutionary activities both by exiled groups in the U.S., as well as groups within Mexico itself, and probably knew the name of Praxedis through 'Alba Roja'.

The month following Sarabia's visit Praxedis founded the group 'Obreros Libres' made up of Mexicans working in the mines of Morenci. Praxedis himself was the president and Manuel

Vasquez the, secretary. The group in fact was an auxiliary Junta to the Junta of the P.L.M. Regular collections were made and the group was able to send funds to help the main Junta in St. Louis.

In September 1906 the first P.L.M., inspired uprising took place in Mexico, but owing to ill-organisation and the infiltration of the revolutionary movement on both sides of the border by governmental informers the uprising came to nothing. Many P.L.M., members were arrested both in Mexico and the U.S., including two Junta members, Juan Sarabia and Antonio I. Villarreal, Ricardo Flores Magon narrowly avoiding arrest himself in El Paso. On the run, with the price of \$50,000 on his head Ricardo went to Los Angeles, California via Sacramento and San Francisco. Later he was joined by Librado Rivera and Villarreal, also on the run, and together they founded 'Revolucion' in June 1907, which they published clandestinely.

The activities of Praxedis during this period are unclear. There is some evidence to show that he may have undertaken several missions for the Junta in Mexico after the 1906 rising but this is not sure. However in June 1907 he moved to Douglas, Arizona where he worked in the mines of the 'Copper Queen Co,' and on the 29<sup>th</sup> of that month was appointed the Special Delegate of the Junta. He also began at this time to write articles for 'Revolucion'.

Following the arrest of Ricardo Flores Magon, Villarreal and Rivera by the U.S., authorities on August 23<sup>rd</sup> after their hiding place had been discovered, Praxedis moved to Los Angeles where he assisted Manuel Sarabia and Lazano Gutierrez de Lara in the production of 'Revolucion'. However the journal was forced to close by the U.S., authorities in January 1908 after first the arrest of de Lara and then of Sarabia.

On November 9<sup>th</sup> 1907 Praxedis had his first meeting with Ricardo Flores Magon, when he visited the three imprisoned Junta members in Los Angeles county jail. Following this meeting Praxedis was appointed second secretary to the Junta.

Now the task of organising and coordinating P.L.M., activities on both sides of the border fell to Praxedis and Ricardo Flores Magon's younger brother, Enrique, who had just returned to Los Angeles from New York. After the official suppression of 'Revolucion', Praxedis went to El Paso, Texas where he made contact with various revolutionary P.L.M., groups in that area. He also supervised the shipment of funds and arms across the border to groups active in the northern Mexican states of Coahuila and Chihuahua.

At about this time the father of Praxedis died, leaving him a share in the family hacienda. This inheritance Praxedis rejected.

After months of patent planning and waiting, the time for a second P.L.M., uprising was drawing near. Armed groups on both sides of the border were prepared for action when on June 18<sup>th</sup> disaster struck. The homes of P.L.M., activists were raided in Casas Grandes, Chihuahua after information had been given to the police by an informer who had infiltrated the group. Five days later, on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, Texas Rangers raided the home of Prisciliano G. Silva in El Paso and seized 3000 rounds of ammunition and important documents including a letter written by Ricardo Flores Magon and smuggled out of jail by his companion Maria Talevera. This letter listed many P.L.M., groups within Mexico who were ready to rise up. The U.S., authorities immediately handed this letter over to the Mexican dictatorship, and at their request Ricardo Flores Magon and his two comrades were held incommunicado in Los Angeles county jail.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For further material on Ricardo Flores Magon and the Partido Liberal Mexicano see my article Ricardo Flores Magon and the Mexican Revolution in the Cienfuegos Press Anarchist Review No. 3 Vol. I and my introduction and chronology in 'Land and Liberty' Anarchist Influences in the Mexican Revolution: Ricardo Flores Magon, Cienfuegos Press 1977.

Nevertheless, despite this initial set back the first P.L.M., group crossed the border on the night of 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> and took the town of Viesca, Coahuila with ease, the local police putting up only a token resistance during which one gendarme was killed and one gendarme and one rebel wounded. The insurgents then opened up the jail freeing all who were held there. Making their way to the public square they then proclaimed the P.L.M., manifesto and declared the Diaz dictatorship null and void, After this horses and funds from the public office were expropriated for the revolution. All this was accomplished without harm to any of the civil population. Unfortunately, this newly liberated population believed that the insurgents were not P.L.M., liberators but bandits, mainly because they had approached the town from the U.S. border. In the face of this public opinion the insurgents had no alternative other than to withdraw.<sup>2</sup>

“The evacuation of Viesca became unavoidable,” wrote Praxedis later. “The volunteers of liberty came forth from their appointed stations and left, followed by the looks of love and of hope of the proletarian women whose sympathies had been enlivened by the actions of the true conservers of peace and order, who had voluntarily taken upon their indomitable shoulders the appellation of bandits”.<sup>3</sup>

Once out of the town the rebels dispersed, some crossing the border into the U.S., and others joining other active P.L.M. groups.

The following day, to the cry of “Comrades, forward to death or the conquest of Liberty!”, a P.L.M., group of 40 men led by Praxedis, Benjamin Canales, Encamacion Guerra and Jesus M. Rangel attacked the town of Los Vecas (today Ciudad Acuna), Coahuila. Although the town had a garrison of over 100 federales, the soldiers, instead of staying in their barracks hid in the homes of the civil population to stop them giving aid to the rebels. After a bloody struggle during which the federales were reduced to only 15 men, the town was finally taken. Because of the insurgent losses though it was decided to evacuate the town. This retreat was led by the wounded Jesus M. Rangel. The price for the capture of Las Vacas was very high. Many seasoned militants lost their lives including Canales, who was killed during the initial attack, Nestor Lopez and Modesto G. Ramirez.<sup>4</sup>

Praxedis crossed back into the U.S. and on July 1<sup>st</sup>, he, together with Enrique Flores Magon, Jose Inez Salazar, Francisco Manrique and 7 other comrades crossed back into Mexico and attacked the town of Palomas, Chihuahua after first cutting the telegraph wires leading from the town. Searching the homes of civilians first to avoid a repetition of Las Vacas, the insurgents finally found a force of 25 rurales locked in their barracks. An attempt to dislodge them though was repulsed. In this struggle Francisco Manrique was killed, and Praxedis and another comrade wounded.<sup>5</sup>

Revolutionary action by other P.L.M., groups took place in other parts of the country. An attack was made on the towns of Matamoros, Tamulipas, but this came to nothing as did an uprising by the P.L.M., group of Janos, Chihuahua. In Baja California the town of Mexicali was attacked by a small P.L.M., force who then headed inland, while an uprising of Yaqui indians in Sonora was led by Fernando Polamarez. Risings that were intended to take place in other towns and areas never materialised because of the mass arrest of militants by the dictatorship after the U.S. authorities had given them documents found in the raid on Silva’s home the day before the revolution. This

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<sup>2</sup> Praxedis G. Guerrero, Episodes of the Revolution of 1908. Viesca, Regeneracion. September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1910.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Praxedis G. Guerrero, Episodes de la Revolucion de 1908 Las Vacas, Regeneracion, September 10<sup>th</sup> 1910.

<sup>5</sup> Praxedis G. Guerrero, Episodes of the Revolution of 1908. Palornas, Regeneracion, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1910.

then was the P.L.M., revolution of 1908. Although by no means a military success it was of the utmost importance in paving the way for the great revolution to come.

Following the ill-fated attack on Palomas Praxedis and Enrique Flores Magon made their way by foot to El Paso via Ciudad Guzman and Ciudad Juarez. From El Paso they went to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where Praxedis stayed to give his wounds time to heal. While he was convalescing he wrote articles for the Liberal journal 'Reform, Libertad y Justicia' of Austin, Texas edited by Antonio de P. Arango and Tomas Sarabia, until Arango was arrested by the U.S., authorities and the paper suppressed.

His wounds healed Praxedis left Albuquerque and went to Douglas, Arizona while Enrique Flores Magon headed for San Francisco. In Douglas he made contact with Jesus M. Rangel, and began planning a third and hopefully successful uprising. After Las Vacas Rangel had led a rear guard action when in August he and a small P.L.M., guerrilla group ambushed a column of federales in the Sierra del Burro, Coahuila, killing 20 soldiers.

In September Praxedis went to El Paso where he was able to organise more revolutionary groups while Rangel went to Oklahoma to obtain funds for the P.L.M., cause from Mexican mine workers.

At the beginning of 1909 Praxedis, as the Junta's special delegate, toured the central and southern states of Mexico, making contact with as many active groups as he could. At the same time Hilario C. Salis and Candido Donato Padua were organising P.L.M., activities in the states of Oaxaca, Puebla and Tlaxcala. Both were veterans of the 1906 uprising and Padua, who was the P.L.M. 'Military' commander of the Vera Cruz area had managed to keep a group active since that time. Praxedis was able to keep in contact with these two comrades by letter, using the code name Nihil.

Returning to the U.S., at the beginning of March he travelled through Kansas, Missouri and Illinois enlisting support for the P.L.M., from members of the Socialist Party.

In August he was again in El Paso where he joined Rangel and Andrea Villarreal, the sister of Antonio, who were both engaged in organisational and propaganda work there. The day following Praxedis' arrival though Rangel was arrested by the U.S. authorities for the "violation" of the neutrality laws and sentenced to 18 months imprisonment. After this set back Praxedis went to the south of Texas where he found work for a time in a sawmill, after the U.S. Law machine had started to harass him.

Praxedis' arrival in El Paso also saw the publication of the first issue of 'Punto Rojo', a revolutionary journal he had been planning since his convalescence after Palomas. As most of the other Liberal journals in the U.S., had been suppressed by the authorities, 'Punto Rojo' was of immense importance as it was one of the few ways that P.L.M., members would keep in contact with the movement. For its short life Punto Rola sold 10,000 copies per issue. How many issues it ran to though is not known, and unfortunately as with 'Alba Roja' no copies have survived, although some of the articles that Praxedis wrote for it were reproduced in a small volume of collected works published by the 'grupo cultural Ricardo Flores Magon' of Mexico City in 1924.<sup>6</sup> Soon after the appearance of 'Punto Rojo' Praxedis was forced to leave El Paso, the journal being then run by an American socialist, William Lowe, and two Mexicans, Clemente Garcia and Antonio Velaral.

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<sup>6</sup> Praxedis G. Guerrero, Articulos literarios y de combate; pensamientos cron cas revolucioarias etc., Mexico D.F. 1924.

At the beginning of 1910 Praxedis was working in Houston, Texas until he was forced to move to Bridgeport where he worked in the coal mines there. He was also able to contribute articles to 'Evolucion Social', a liberal weekly of Tohay. At the end of May 'Punto Rojo' was forcibly closed down by the police and a month later Praxedis was forced to move again after the Diaz dictatorship had offered the price of \$10,000 for his capture.

On August 3<sup>rd</sup> Ricardo Flores Magon, Antonio I. Villarreal and Librado Rivera were freed from Florence jail, Arizona, where they had been serving an 18 months sentence for the alleged "violation" of the neutrality laws. They immediately went to Los Angeles where they were met at the railway station by hundreds of P.L.M., sympathisers. At the end of August Praxedis left San Antonio, where he had been working in the railway workshops, and joined Ricardo Flores Magon in Los Angeles. In September the publication of 'Regeneracion' was resumed with Praxedis as a member of the editorial board.

All the Junta members now united, (except Juan Sarabia who was in prison in Mexico) plans for a third uprising were put in hand. Already as early as April P.L.M., 'military' leaders meeting in Tlaxcala had decided, that because of the general unrest throughout the country, the time for revolutionary action was opportune. This opinion was strengthened when in May 1500 armed peons took the towns of Valladolid, Yucatan holding it for 4 days, and the following month 300 peons in Bernardino Contla, Tlaxcala, took the town hall in the name of the P.L.M., and were dispersed only when a detachment of federales were called in.

As they prepared for their social revolution the junta was somewhat surprised to find that Francisco O. Madero, an unsuccessful candidate in the presidential elections held the previous June (Madero had stood for the anti re-electionist Party and after his defeat accused Diaz of rigging the election) was planning an uprising to begin on November 20<sup>th</sup>. Their plans not being fully finalised the Junta contracted as many P.L.M., groups within Mexico as they could and told them to time their uprising with that of Madero. They were careful to also send out a general circular which explained quite clearly the way in which the groups were to act towards the followers of Madero.

"... The Junta advises you to rise up in arms using Madero's movement, but not to join it ... attract all those of good faith who are willing to fight; trying all the time to counter-act all Maderist tendencies, so that the Revolution may be made for the benefit of the Mexican people, instead of being a criminal way for the ambitious to gain power ..."<sup>7</sup>

These instructions were signed by all the Junta members.

The Maderists rose on their appointed day but were all but defeated. The P.L.M., now took the offensive.

At the end of November Praxedis left Los Angeles for El Paso where he gathered together a group of 22 men, and on the night of December 19<sup>th</sup> crossed the border into Chihuahua. His plan was to take several small towns in the north of the state and then march on the state capital, Chihuahua. On December 22<sup>nd</sup> the insurgents expropriated a train bound for El Paso, 20 Km south of Ciudad Juarez. They took the engine and one car and went as far as Guzman blowing up bridges and cutting telegraph wires behind them. At El Sabenal they were joined the following

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<sup>7</sup> Circular dated November 16<sup>th</sup> 1910 q uoted ilZ 1).11. rle Santillan, Ricardo Flores Magorn. el apostol de la Revolucion social Alexicana. Mexico D.F. 1925.

day by an additional 25 rebels. That day Praxedis was able to report back to the junta in Los Angeles,

“Until today there has been nothing new. But today the Northwestern Railroad is without bridges. The people are joining us voluntarily, Guerrero.”<sup>8</sup>

In Guzman the rebels divided themselves into two columns. While one, led by Prisciliano G. Silva marched towards Laguna de Santa Maria, the other consisting of 32 men led by Praxedis marched towards Casas Grandes. Their intention to take this town though was abandoned when they discovered that the town hid a garrison of 450 federales. Bypassing Casas Grandes they attacked the town of Janos on December 29<sup>th</sup>. After a long and bloody fight the town was taken by the P.L.M., insurgents, but before the detachment of federales stationed there were overcome they managed to alert the Casas Grandes garrison. Immediately a force of 150 federales together with a detachment of rurales were sent to Janos. During the night engagement that followed their arrival Praxedis was mortally wounded. He died at the age of 28.<sup>9</sup>

In November 1932 his remains were exhumed and taken to the state capital, Chihuahua, where they were reinterred with great pomp. This was done not to honour an anarchist but to honour a mere “national hero” by a so-called “revolutionary” regime that then, as today subjects anarchists to the most brutal torture and murder.

## Writings of Praxedis G. Guerrero

As can be seen from this brief biographical sketch, Praxedis G. Guerrero was above all an anarchist activist. As he wrote to Manuel Sarabia in May 1910;

“ ... I am going towards a practical anarchism to avoid the error committed by many “dogmatists” who have placed themselves outside the masses and have in effect turned a sharp blade into an instrument of blunt wood ...”<sup>10</sup>

Despite this emphasis on the practical and active rather than the theoretical, Praxedis did make a very important and lasting contribution to revolutionary journalism as his few, surviving writings show. These articles, mainly written for ‘Punto Rojo’ and ‘Regeneracion’ for 1909 and 1910 respectively, sprinkled as they are with poetic imagery, show a very clear insight into the ills of an authoritarian society, and offer a libertarian alternative that could be adopted to overcome these ills. Several themes preoccupy these articles, the most prominent being racialism, womens’ emancipation, rational education and most importantly, the necessity for revolution.

As a Mexican worker in the United States Praxedis saw at first hand the prejudice practised by the American bosses and general public against all migrant workers in general, and Mexican workers in particular. Of all ethnic working groups in the U.S., the Mexicans were the most poorly paid. In many towns they were forbidden altogether from public places, and after the revolution of 1908 mine owners in Texas and Oklahoma reduced the wages of Mexicans to prevent them from giving financial aid to the P.L.M.

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<sup>8</sup> Regeneracion, December 31<sup>st</sup> 1910.

<sup>9</sup> Regeneracion, January 14<sup>th</sup> 1911.

<sup>10</sup> Letter from Praxedis G. Guerrero to Manuel Sarabia, 28<sup>th</sup> May 1910, in Articulos de Combate p.124–125



“ ... Racial prejudice and nationality” he wrote “clearly managed by the capitalists and tyrants prevent peoples loving side by side in a fraternal manner ...

“... A river, a mountain chain, a line of small monuments suffice to maintain foreigners and make enemies of two peoples, both living in mistrust and envy of one another because of the acts of past generations. Each nationality pretends to be above the other in some kind of way, and the dominating classes, the keepers of education and the wealth of rations, feed the proletariat with the belief of stupid superiority and pride in order to make impossible the union of workers of all nations who are separately fighting to free themselves from Capital ...

“... If all the workers of the different American nations had direct participation in all questions of social importance which effect one or more proletarian groups these questions would be resolved promptly and happily by the workers themselves”<sup>11</sup>

Racialism was not only practised against groups of workers but also against individual workers. One such case was the lynching of a Mexican worker in Texas for the supposed murder of an American woman. Praxedis wrote in disgust of this incident;

“Where ?

In the model nation, in the land of the free and the home of the brave, in the Land still overshadowed by the hanging of John Brown in the U.S.A., in a Texas village called Rock Springs.

When?

Today, in the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the century, in the epoch of aircraft of the wireless, of the telegraph, of Peace Congresses and of Humanitarian Societies.

Who?

A crowd of white “men” to use the name they like: white men white white.

These men who burnt alive a man were not cannibals, they were not natives from Equatorial Africa, they were not were not wild men from Mayaya. they were not Spanish inquisitors, nor were they troglodytes not were they illiterate, naked men from the jungles; instead they were the descendants of Washington, of Franklin. ,of Lincoln, it was a well-dressed crowd, educated and proud of its virtues, they were citizens of the United States white ‘men.’

Progress, civilisation, culture, humanitarianism. All lies over the calcified bones of Antonio Rodriguez. All fantasies asphyxiated in the pestilential smoke of the Rock Springs bonfire.

There are schools in each town and on each ranch in Texas; through these schools passed the boys who became the ‘men’ of the lynching crowd, it was in these schools that their intellect was formed, it was these schools that produced those who set fire to a loving man and said, some days later, that justice had been done.

In these schools men are educated to go beyond wild beasts.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Programa de la Liga Pan-Americana del Trabajo in Articulos de Combate p.124–125.

<sup>12</sup> Blancos, blancos in ibid p.144–145.

Together with the elimination of racial prejudice, the emancipation of women, was for Praxedis, as indispensable as revolution itself. Speaking at a public meeting devoted to this subject in Los Angeles only a few weeks before his death, he pointed out quite clearly that the main obstacle to the true liberation of women was the bible, that taught the impurity of women, and custom that has translated this into the inferiority of women;

“The child and the woman have always been the elected victims of barbarism, and only in some countries have women enjoyed a few privileges that have placed her above man socially, such as the primitive clans where matriarchy existed. But today women do not yet occupy the true place in society that they should, as women, have ...

... Religion, whatever its name, however it presents itself, is the most terrible enemy of women. Under the pretext of consolation it annihilates her consciousness; in the name of a sterile love, it takes her away from love, fountains of human life and happiness; with rough phantoms sketched in unhealthy poetry she is separated from the real, strong and immense poetry of a free existence.

Religion is the auxiliary of domestic and national despots, its mission is one of taming; caresses or the whip, the cage or chains, all these are employed to obtain the same results. Women are enslaved as a first step, because the woman is the mother of the child and the child becomes a man ..

... ‘Feminism’ serves as a base for opposing the enemies of women’s emancipation. But there is certainly no attraction in say a woman policeman, in a woman removed from her soft sex to grasp the whip of the oppressor...

... Liberation, equality, does not try to make man as woman, it gives the same opportunity to both the faces of the human species so that they both develop without obstacle, helping one another without demanding rights for one only, without impeding each other’s place in nature. Men and women have to fight for this rational equality, to harmonise the individual happiness with the collective happiness. Without this there will be, perpetually in the home, the seeds of tyranny, the buds of slavery and social misery. If custom is a yoke then we must break the custom however sacred it appears, In breaking such customs civilisation advances. Some though will say it is a bridle, but such bridles have never liberated the people, never satisfied hunger nor redeemed slaves.”<sup>13</sup>

By far the most important contribution Praxedis made to revolutionary propaganda was on the nature of, and the resistance to, tyranny. A resistance that could only be revolution;

“... Tyranny is a logical result of an illness in society and it’s only remedy is revolution ...”<sup>14</sup>

After objectively analysing the nature of tyranny Praxedis concluded that;

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<sup>13</sup> La mujer in *ibid* pl37-143.

<sup>14</sup> El objeto de la Revolucion in *ibid* p98.

“Tyrants and common criminals are equally subject to the natural laws of determinism, and even though their acts appal and anger us, we must agree with justice on the irresponsibility of one or the other; but without arriving at absolute judgments it can be said that tyranny is the most excusable of crimes because it cannot be committed by one individual acting alone. It only occurs when, at the same time, there are circumstances of great complexity outside the individual’s will where there are powerful men waiting who are more apt and better gifted in qualities for evil. In effect, would a tyrant exercise power over a people who did not give him supporting elements? A common malefactor can commit his evil acts without the complicity of his victim; a despot though cannot exist or tyrannise without the co-operation of his followers and the most numerous part of them; tyranny is a crime of unconscious collectives against themselves and it must be attacked as a social illness by means of Revolution, considering the death of tyrants as only an incident in the struggle, nothing more than an incident, not an act of justice ...<sup>15</sup>

Praxedis also saw clearly that tyrannies were made, in part at least, through national gratitude. Many so-called ‘heroes’ and ‘national saviours’ have been hoisted into power by a grateful people, blinded to the true nature of both the individual and his followers. Of course when they realise what they have done it is too late. Praxedis gives the example of Agustin de Hurbide but history is full of examples, Mexico’s own Madero or Castro to name only a few:

“Gratitude is the flower of servility, the libertarian despises it because it has the odour of a slaves’ prison.

Admiration, which is a great recurring force of the masses gives support to gratitude which is a great forger of chains to perpetuate the yoke.

The people do not owe gratitude to their liberators just as they do not owe love to their tyrants.”<sup>16</sup>

Tyranny as Praxedis saw it, could only be overthrown by revolution, a revolution that would, by necessity, be violent. There was no other way, reformism, pacifism or acceptance of tyranny as a necessary evil all being equally repugnant. He accepted revolutionary violence for what it was and nothing more, and died putting it into practice.

“... We are not looking for a subterfuge to gloss over the violence which unavoidably and by necessity will have to accompany the liberating movement. We deplore violence, it is repugnant to us, but confronted with an enslavement that will continue indefinitely, or the use of force, we choose the temporary horror of armed struggle without hate for the irresponsible tyrant ...

... We undertake violent struggle without making it our ideal, without thinking of the execution of a tyrant as a supreme victory of justice.

Our violence is not justice, it is simply a necessity that fills itself at the expense of feeling and idealism, and on its own it is insufficient to assure for the people the

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<sup>15</sup> El medio y el fin in *ibid* p132-133.

<sup>16</sup> La inconveniencia de la gratitud in *ibid* p106.

conquest of progress. Our violence would have no purpose without the violence of despotism nor would it have any reason if the majority of the tyrant's victims were not consciously or unconsciously accomplices of today's unjust situation. When human aspirations are free to develop in the social milieu then the production and practice of violence would be wrong; but not it is a practical means of breaking old moulds that the evolution of pacifism would take hundreds of years to corrode.

The aim of revolution, as we have said many times before, is to guarantee for all the right to live by destroying the causes of misery, ignorance and despotism, scorning the humanitarian theorists' cry of sentimentality."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> El medio y el fin in *ibid* p132-133.

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