Ricardo Flores Magón

Revolutionary Leader of the Mexican, Anarchist Militias

(1874 - 1922)

Description: ...an important and influential anarchist whose writings and activities had a crucial impact on the Mexican revolution. The Mexican Liberal Party, headed by Flores Magon, was closely implicated in the industrial strikes at Cananea and Orizaba. (From: Brian Morris Bio)

Tags: anarchist, militia, social reformer, mexican revolution, mexican, journalist, activist, revolutionary, theorist.

Quotes:

"The Revolution will be the most serious business we could take in hand. Let us master it as we master other business; eliminating slipshod methods and studying it painstakingly in all its details, that it may be made to yield the best results." (From: "Land and Liberty," by Ricardo Flores "Land and Liberty," by Ricardo Flores Magón.)

"What, then, is the use of Authority? It serves to inculcate respect for the law which, written by the rich and by educated men in the service of the rich, has for its object the guaranteeing them a tranquil possession of their riches and exploitation of human labor." (From: "Land and Liberty," by Ricardo Flores "Land and Liberty," by Ricardo Flores Magón.)

"It was my own good fortune to live for years where we all habitually spake our minds, for we were economically free. It was my subsequent misfortune to be caged for years in business, as conducted in these United States, and to chafe unceasingly at restraints on free speech which apparently my associates took philosophically, as part of the day's work." (From: "Land and Liberty," by Ricardo Flores "Land and Liberty," by Ricardo Flores Magón.)

Biography:

RICARDO FLORES MAGON: VIDA Y OBRA
SEMBRANDO IDEAS
(HISTORIETAS RELACIONADAS CON LAS CONDICIONES SOCIALES DE MEXICO)
TOMO UNICO (4. DE LA SERIE)
1926
EDICIONES DEL GRUPO CULTURAL RICARDO FLORES MAGON APARTADO POSTAL NUM. 1563 MEXICO, D.F.

IN THE MANNER OF PREFACE: THE DEATH OF RICARDO FLORES MAGON.

Ricardo Flores Magón is dead. Generally the news of a death affects me less, but in this case it has been quite contrary. It is not because, after long years of prison and exile, this indomitable freedom fighter has died in prison. A feeling much greater than compassion or personal affection dominates me. For reasons I cannot analyze, this death appears to me as the synopsis of a period and brings about ideas and feelings I find difficult to express with words. I have the sensation that a force, that was essential, has stopped working.
It appears to me that all those who had intimate relations with Ricardo Flores Magón will feel the same as I. Something placed a special seed in him, giving him definite character, regardless of the conditions he was in: he always remained being someone, a strength that had to be recognized, a personality who could not be ignored. Even the staff from the Court of Justice and from the penitentiary, who, because of their unnatural instincts, considered him a violation of the law, I felt, were very much aware of this fact, when I discussed this matter with them.

I believe it was so, because the man was profoundly sincere, so firm in his convictions, that anyone else could have been subjected, reduced to silence, but he had to talk: so firm was his determination to be part in this great fight for the destruction of human slavery, the one, he personally, had to combat and fought until his last moment. He hated oppression, anyone, from the Government or the monopoly of the land, to the religious superstition or high finances.

As a Mexican, he knew how this had ruined the life of his own country; as an anarchist, he understood that this was the fate of the disinherited, to those who had consented to be reduced to the impotence in all the world.

In our greater part there periodically surges a just indignation, but Magón seemed to me a volcano who never slept.

If I recall, it was in San Luis Potosí, about thirty years ago, where Ricardo Flores Magón, then a young journalist, obtained prominence. Frankly said, he reached it by a leap: The Liberal Party had a convention, and, in accordance with their traditions, was directing all their accusations toward the Catholic Church; Ricardo, according to the version I knew, literally overwhelmed the convention with a speech, in which he attacked Porifirio Díaz, omnipotent dictator of México to Wall Street, who was, consequently, the real origin of all the wrongs of the country.

The special reason for the case, in reality, consisted in that, during that time, the attacks against the Church were popular and certain, while an unprecedented attack on Díaz was full of dangers. This brought to Ricardo the friendship of Librado Rivera, who from then on, participated, according to his destiny, and today lives in the prison of Leavenworth; making him, his brother Enrique, and Librado Dictator Díaz's target of anger. The trio, however, initiated and rushed with great activity an agitation to the determined point, until after many imprisonments, they understood that they could not live in México anymore, so they emigrated to the United States. They started the fire. With daring boldness they had started the economic movement which subsequently threw Díaz to exile. The way I see things, the real man is always the motor of movement; but the road he opens always drives him to the cross.

I am completely sure that Ricardo Flores Magón previously anticipated this with caution, because in his conversation he stoically accepted it as the price that he had to pay. With some frequency he allowed himself to be greatly swayed over his affinities or his antipathies, and rarely could he find a virtue in his adversaries, but in fundamental problems he would always find it just because he never wanted to abandon the fundamental facts. Repeatedly, I considered his sentences unjust, but I frequently observed that he men he had criticized in the past, were the ones, as time passed, who changed into the politicians Magón had predicted. He was the most aggressive and positive fighter, and he acquired friends and enemies by the hundreds.

I got interested in Magón, reading the "México Bárbaro," by John Kenneth Turner; but it was his passionate hate toward a social system that seems to think only about the dollar, which I
openly was attracted to. For many years, my most firm conviction has been that the cult for the golden calf, in the greatest wall the ascendant progress has, and that humanity is obligated to carry out, in regards to the intellectual conquests of recent centuries. I have found many men and women who share this concept with me; however, none so saturated as the one from Magón. I believe Ricardo was fully persuaded that the worst fate for México would be to fall under the yoke of Wall Street. The real fact he saw, was that all humanity was strapped to the wheels of the Powerful Money's Carriage, brutally triumphant and needing to liberate herself, or die. I, myself, believe this fact. My study of the Mexican Revolution and my contemplation of the way plutocracy from there had taken from México all that had values, changed ideas that before were theories, into unbending convictions. Ricardo Flores Mágon was one of the most powerful writers who the Revolution produced. Except for the time he allowed deplorable polemics, he did not waste his time in pettiness; he always touched the main cords with extraordinary firmness. In all the course of his work he would stress the most powerful emotions to the heroic: he asked much of men. I doubt he had knowledge of the writings of Nietzsche; however, he appeared to be another Nietzsche, except for the fact that he was democratic. Nevertheless, in such characters there is always a parallel force: both insist on the best; in the realization of his respective ideal with all forthrightness, and for this realization, no sacrifice was too big.

I have no desire to write a biography or a praise, and I limit myself to some personal reminiscences which give profound recognition about the man. I remember that, having been forewarned that was tentatively persecuted, he refused to hide in a secure place, "because the movement would disorganize." When, and after many months we had him out of prison, under protection, he went directly to the office of "Regeneración" and he had worked for one hour, one more time, with the enormous correspondence to which he dedicated eight hours a day; I never found as active a propagandist, except for his brother Enrique. He lived modestly, and to my knowledge, he had no vices. In fact, he had no time for them.

On my first visit to the offices of "Regeneración," I observed a big parcel box, and then learned that it only contained fliers of "The Conquest of Pan," by Kropotkin, to be mailed to México. For years, these men continued to follow this work, sapping with infinite tenacity and great sacrifice because of their limited resources. Their great idea was the development of revolutionary personalities. They had great admiration for Kropotkin, which in my opinion, was just.

When I substituted John Kenneth Turner as editor of the English section of "Regeneración," its circulation was about 27,000 copies and the newspaper had to make money; but all was spent on advertising. We had between 600 and 700 newspapers in our exchange lists, and we received a lot of news from the "Latino World." Our wish was to unify the Latin opinion in México, and Central and South America, against the plutocratic invasion, and the creation in the United States a very strong sentiment maintaining the perpetuated threat of intervention.

I believe that Ricardo considered the latter as the main work of "Regeneración" and that, for this reason, he opposed the move of the newspaper to México, which I urgently requested a while back.

In the book "The Real México," Mr. Hamilton Fife, today editor of the "Daily Herald," but prior a distinguished traveling correspondent, treats the unexpected fall of Porfirio Díaz, renown in the United States as a great power of the first order, with a strong regard for his rear guard. Mr. Fife observes that Díaz forgot one important factor: a gentleman by the name of Ricardo Flores Magón. I have always seen this observation as correct, and I have considered
Magón's men as those who really moved the power that definitively threw Díaz to exile. I considered it a great win, and a true success--one that epochs are made of. Díaz was the man who, as William Archer said, had sold his country for bagatelle, with the abandon of a child making soap bubbles. His overthrow was the first failure that the plutocracy from the North found in its march toward the South.

When Madero succeeded Díaz as President, he named Magón's brother, Jesús, Secretary of State; and it was then, known news, when Jesús made several efforts to induce Ricardo and Enrique to return to México, assuring them complete security and fast improvement in position. They were poor, having been subjected to repeated persecutions and imprisonments, as inconvenient agitators of plutocratic peace; and in spite of that, they decidedly refused their brother's offers.

It always seemed known to me. It could have been difficult, perhaps impossible, for us to understand the maneuvers of the Mexican way of thinking and the methods of the men, with their Indian blood; however, what is deeply inherited and cannot be denied is that these men--Ricardo and Enrique Flores Magón, and Librado Rivera, who are still in the prison at Leavenworth--were fanatically loyal to their anarchist convictions.

Well, Ricardo Flores Magón has died, and surely, after a life of feverish activity, he sleeps tranquilly; neither praise nor criticism can affect him now. He died in the penitentiary at Leavenworth, where he had five years of the fiery sentence of the twenty he was given for writing articles that damaged the recruitment. He had been suffering for some years from diabetes, and during his last days, he completely lost his sight. He could have bought his freedom by confessing his regret; but this confession was impossible for a man of his nature.

In the past months the organized workers from México had been agitating for Ricardo's liberty, and, upon learning of his death, the Capital's Parliament ordered the tribune to mourn.

The Governor requested to bring back his mortal remains, to give a dignified burial to the one who, when alive, was an incessant fighter for the cause of the emancipation of the masses of México, who, in addition to the whole world, still needed to win; but his comrades had respected his principles and had declined the funeral offered to be paid for by the Governor.

We hope that, inspired by the example of this indomitable fighter, the people of the United States can straighten up and demand freedom for the many political prisoners, martyrs because of their freedom of conscience, who now rest in the galleys of that country. Such a deed would be the most appropriate monument to the life and to the memory of Ricardo Flores Magón.

William C. OWEN.
(From "Freedom," London, December 1922.)


Works:
Author of Magón To Harry Weinberger (March 09, 1921)
Author of Magón To To Erma Barsky (March 16, 1922)
Author of The Anxieties of Iron (November 30, 1914)
Author of The Barricade and the Trench (November 30, 1914)
Author of The Beggar and the Thief (November 30, 1914)
Author of A Catastrophe (November 30, 1911)
Author of Collected Works (November 30, 1922)
Author of The Frock Coat and the Blouse (November 30, 1914)
Author of Justice! (November 30, 1913)
Author of Land and Liberty (November 30, 1915)
Author of Manifesto of the Mexican Liberal Party (September 23, 1911)
Author of New Life (November 30, 1914)
Author of Onwards! (November 30, 1910)
Author of Rewarding Merits (November 30, 1915)
Author of The Rifle (November 30, 1910)
Author of The Right of Property (March 18, 1911)
Author of The Triumph of the Social Revolution (November 30, 1914)
Author of The Two Pens (November 30, 1914)
Author of Two Revolutionaries (November 30, 1909)
Author of Voluntary Slavery (January 21, 1911)
Author of The Worker and the Machine (November 30, 1915)

Chronology:

September 16, 1874: Ricardo Flores Magón's Birth Day.
November 21, 1922: Ricardo Flores Magón's Death Day.

Links:

• Anarchy Archives: Ricardo Flores Magón Archive
  http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bright/magon/home.html
• Anarchist Library: Ricardo Flores Magón
  https://theanarchistlibrary.org/category/author/ricardo-flores-magon
• Wikipedia: Ricardo Flores Magón
  https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ricardo_Flores_Mag%C3%B3n

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