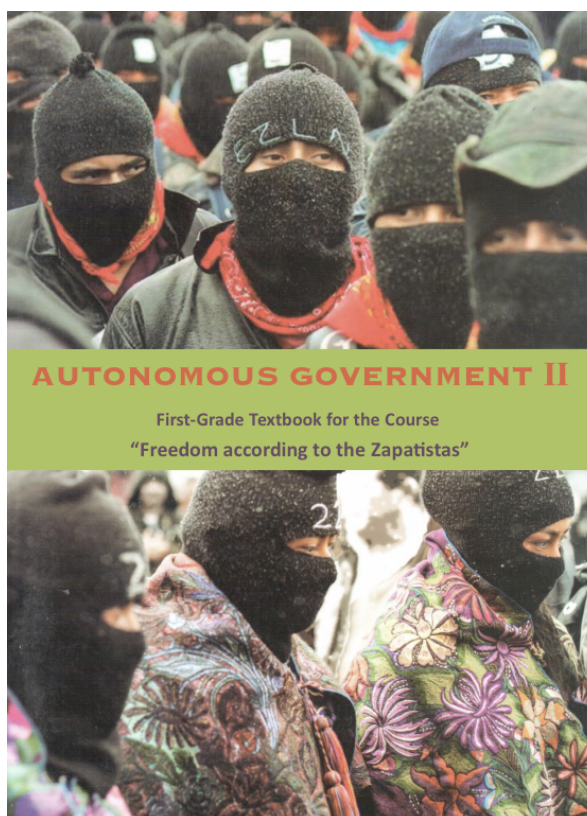


# Autonomous Government II

First-Grade Textbook for the Course “Freedom according to the Zapatistas”

Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional



2014

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**Caracol I: Mother of the Caracoles,  
Sea of Our Dreams**

La Realidad

# Autonomous Education

## **Doroteo (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ Libertad de los Pueblos Mayas)**

I participated in the first period of the Junta de Buen Gobierno, I am the only one who is here from the eight compañeros who were on that team, right now two are working as radio hosts, the rest are not even compas now, their experience can not longer be gotten. We are going to touch a little on how the work has been done.

Autonomous education in our zone began starting in 1997, in that time the association of municipalities was functioning. In that time it began to be considered how to do our education because there in our zone there was a problem with the teachers from the SEP system (Department of Education), starting in 1994 they began to have many problems with the towns. Some began to appear as spies, others began to use the army to be able to transport their school supplies, many things took place with them, so it was decided to suspend their entry into our zone.

We were seen forced to begin our own education although in some towns they were already doing it per se. To form autonomous education we had to think if the same curriculums from the SEP were given or if we were changing, we decided to change. In a meeting of councilmembers, compañeros from the CCRI, and leadership compañeros, all gathered in what today is the site of La Realidad Caracol, it began to be considered what our children have to learn, what of the government's educational system has to change.

We began to see many things and we came to conclude that where we cannot change anything is in what is mathematics, very exact matters which there we could not change anything, we had to teach it just how it is. Another is in what is reading and writing, nothing can be changed because that was universal.

But it was discussed and analyzed what things had to be seen in the matter of history, it was thought that many things needed to be changed and that it was necessary to select in the area of history from the SEP what things were good for our children and youth and what things were not. Other history topics went along being taken out and put, including our own history as the EZLN and of other social movements which had taken place during history. Like this plans and curriculums were being made. After that it was taken to the towns so that the parents would see what other things they needed to be learned in the autonomous school.

After the curriculum was put together it was seen how it is necessary to divide those topics, those things that were going to be taught, this is how the study areas were born in our zone. It came out that we were not going to call what was Spanish in the SEP "Spanish," it was called "languages." History and mathematics stayed with the same name, an area was included which is called "Life and Environment" where it is also seen about nature, about the life of the animals, everything that in the SEP was Natural Sciences. Another area was seen which is called "Integration," in other words all the things that were necessary to study and which did not fit in

any of the other areas had to fit there, for example the study of our 13 demands (housing, land, work, health, nutrition, education, independence, democracy, freedom, justice, culture, information, and peace).

Then came the towns' task of naming their education promoters. The task of the authorities is to find who was going to train them, contact was made with a group of solidary people from Mexico City, who are called "semillitas del sol," and they were the first trainers for our education promoters.

Like this the generations took place, then came more necessities and other trainings for other generations were given, but the first compañeros who received the training with the solidary people who came from Mexico City were those who began to give the trainings to the following promoter generations. Like this what today is the groups of education formers was born, like this we have come up until now.

Those training courses were 6 months long, 20 days of training and 10 in their town, at the end of the six months an evaluation was done. After that evaluation the trainers told us:

"There is a gap, there are many compañeros who have not managed to pass the topics." That then was the task of the first Junta de Buen Gobierno, where what we call the "leveling" was organized, a period of two permanent months in the Caracol for those compañeros who remained behind, who did not manage to pass the topics.

But before all this it was discussed in the towns about how it is necessary to document the studies of the child, the youth who went to the autonomous school, the study certificates were talked about, the report cards. Finally we came to conclude that for us it was not necessary, that the important thing for us was that our children learn to read and write, to do math, and to do many things, that they learn to carry and direct all the work that is necessary for our people.

We concluded that a report card or a certificate of study is not necessary, it was thought that it was the same in the case of an evaluation, an exam, that a certain number of questions is going to be given to the students and if they passed it and answered right that one then passed well, we also concluded that that was not right. The right thing was for them to demonstrate with actions, that is in their work, in the performance of a position, then that youth is indeed learning, we consider that that was going to be the best evaluation.

# Justice

## **Doroteo (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ Libertad de los Pueblos Mayas)**

In the matter of justice in the first period of the Junta de Buen Gobierno many cases, many problems, were attended to. The problem was that since the compas know that the Junta was one body more than the Council everyone wanted to come to the Junta to resolve various matters; sometimes they did not even take the municipal agent or the council into account and they went directly to the Junta, that happened because it was not seen what things did and what things did not correspond to the Junta attending to.

What did correspond to the Junta is a problem that we had there in that time and that today still we continue having although a little more controlled, which is the trafficking of undocumented people. When we began in the Junta de Buen Gobierno we had that very serious problem, the trafficking of undocumented people, our territory was a place where they always moved those people and the zone was plagued with those who are called “polleros.”

There were polleros everywhere, we were surrounded by that, so it began to be seen that they were passing right under our noses and we saw them, it had to be thought what to do with that. Action had to be taken to control that problem within our territory and vigilance groups began to be made from the compañeros of the Junta de Buen Gobierno in the Caracol center, in the communities, coordinated with the towns which communicated with us when they saw this, the municipalities also collaborated.

The municipality where this problem was greatest was the municipality of Libertad de los Pueblos Mayas, because there is an enormous river, it was the place where they moved with boats. We had to coordinate with the municipal councils so that the work could be done there and like this achieve the detention of some of those polleros, during our period 9 polleros were detained, including a Guatemalan who was there six months paying his punishment.

That Guatemalan pollero worked on the construction of the San José del Río Hospital bridge, because there the community is on one side, then there is the river and on the other side is the hospital, to be able to cross it is necessary to cross a suspension bridge. In that time there was a solidary person who offered their support for the construction of the bridge and in that time was the construction, that fucker saw the starting and finishing of that bridge’s construction, and like this many others worked on different tasks.

The funniest thing for us was that since the polleros who we detained remained six months on a job, we supposedly were punishing them, for us it is the punishment so that they correct themselves, go to work, finally one of those fuckers one day thanked us for having punished him. The thanks that he gave us was that he told us that for him it was not a punishment.



“You put me in a school,” that is what he told us, because he says that now he is a brickmason when he never thought if he was going to be that, “and now I can build houses and I go to build whatever I want.

That is the punishment that we apply, in other words instead of having them in prison we take them out to work. Of course, they leave their goods in the town but something good is taken. That is what we think, that is how we do justice, I do not know if it is good or is bad but the thing is like that. That is how it has happened with everyone, something is always taken.

It happened like that with the issue of justice, but also there since we began the liquor problem was very serious. We are not talking about those who are not *compañeros*, we do not care if they drink, they die, or what happens to them from being drunk, we are talking about the *compañeros* and there this booze problem existed within the *compañeros*.

We tried to make a rule and we launched the proposal to the towns that they make a rule, that they send their proposal how they want the rule and it did not arrive and it did not arrive. Finally we came to think that maybe they did not understand how making a rule is, we even came to make a question form, for them to answer those questions of ours and from there know what they think about that problem. After that we did take out a result, but after we published the result everyone who did not agree passed over us and our rule did not work.

Months later, years later, in one of the towns in a municipality which is called Libertad de los Pueblos Mayas they reported to us, being in the Junta, that there was a death of the *compañeros* because of liquor. We began to see the problem, we put the one who killed the *compa* in jail and meanwhile we discussed in the assemblies, because there we did not have a plan on what to do with someone who is going to murder, independently of what the motive is, but we did not have a plan there, that is a rule, we began to discuss what punishment we are going to give him, how much time, how, have him 10 or 15 years in jail or what?

While we did those consultations with the towns the family member of the deceased person came to agreement with the family members of the one who killed, that they are going to pay a quantity and they had already accepted it and they arranged the matter. From there again since we thought that there was no longer going to be another murder and it was not discussed again about a rule for that type of problem, it remained like that.

Based on that problem of the murder and the alcohol it continued to be talked about, that was taken as an example to talk in the zone about what problems liquor brings, we talked with the *compañeras* about what the *compañeras* have to do to avoid that. We went as a Junta to talk with the *compañeras* of the town where the murder happened, the *compañeras* rose up very furiously but it is because it was very recent. Years later that town began with the same problem again, in other words the *compañeras* could not do anything there. Like this it continued to work for us and it continues to work for us, things are seen like that in matters of justice.

# Balance among the Autonomous Municipalities

## **Doroteo (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ Libertad de los Pueblos Mayas)**

The problem of disequilibrium in the solidary aid to the autonomous municipalities also took place in our zone. In that time a town had obtained assistance for a 3 ton truck and that town had it, during the period of the association of municipalities that truck passed into the hands of the region to which that town belonged, in the moment that the Junta de Buen Gobierno was formed that truck passed to the hands of the Junta. It was decided what the role of that truck is going to be, having it stored there or what, but since there was a passenger route from Margaritas to San Quintín, there this truck was put to work. That truck made its profits, from there 20 thousand pesos were given to a town and 50 thousand to a region, up to now we do not know how that is going.

In that period a general store was created, it is in the Libertad de los Pueblos Mayas municipality. During that period of the first Junta de Buen Gobierno it was organized, in the time of the coffee harvest, the purchase and sale of coffee because we already had a truck, maybe everyone knows about it, we call it “el chómpiras,” and with that we could sell about 150 sacks of coffee or more, and we were left with 45 thousand pesos free of profits, which worked for some expenses of the Junta de Buen Gobierno.

We also tried to buy corn with the compañeros of the zone and bring it to Oventik. We did it on one occasion but we failed from the beginning because we had problems with the very compañeros who gave us corn in bad conditions and that is not right among compañeros, like this is how that attempt that we made with the compañeros from Oventik did not work.

In the first period of the Junta de Buen Gobierno the necessity was seen to improve the San José del Río Hospital and an ultrasound device was purchased, it was a bit expensive, more than 300 thousand pesos, but there that device is right now and it is being useful in San José del Río. Also there during the period of the first junta car stickers were being given to whoever, Zapatistas and non-Zapatistas, then it was suspended because those who are not Zapatista or are not compañeros begin to use them for other ends, they took advantage of it for the trafficking of undocumented people, trafficking of wood, and said that they were authorized by the Junta de Buen Gobierno and they respected them. Seeing that, it was suspended for those who are not compas.

There also was a group of moto-taxis who is on the coast, in Huixtla, compañeros and non-compañeros worked a good time, but the day that the evil government decided not to respect them with that sticker they put all of them in prison. The same a group of taxi-drivers in the city of Motozintla came to ask for their stickers that because with that they could work, they were warned of the consequences and they were told that we do not respond for whichever problem,

they were given their sticker, days after they discovered that really they are not Zapatistas all of them were put in jail. Since we had warned them that we do not respond well we did not do anything and up to today we do not know about them.

Speaking of disequilibrium and all that had taken place when the municipalities were not controlled, a group of solidary people from Italy called “El estadio del Bae” had already prepared a project for a stadium in a town in the municipality called San Pedro de Michoacán. Upon arriving to the Junta that project was changed, it was talked about with those who were supporting, it was changed for something in health, if some day you come to the Caracol you are going to see the herbalism laboratory which is constructed, it was in place of that stadium.

Finally a project that when it is not thought of well it happens like that, it was a project of some solidary people from Italy called “Ya basta,” they asked for a project to be prepared and it was considered in some towns, municipalities, which are going to have a soap factory. At the time that it already was ready it was seen that it is big and burdensome, the compas said that they are not going to be able and we got ourselves into problems, as they say, those from the Junta against the wall. What do we do with the solidary people if our towns say that the project no longer? Finally we managed to convince the financers, the solidary people, and we changed it, it was divided up in the municipalities by percentage, three municipalities invested it in the purchase of cattle.

But in a municipality which is called San Pedro de Michoacán, which received a quantity of 200 thousand pesos, they invested it in a medium-duty bus and that was not consulted with the people, the authority self-commanded. What happens when one self-commands is that they replace the people then, and they said:

“A bus is nice, we are going to buy a bus.” I do not know what it is called but it is neither a bus nor a minibus, it is something in the middle.

They bought one of those medium duty bus, which they paid for with 91 thousand pesos and 110 thousand pesos remained. The first trip and it is left on the side of the road, they fix it. The second trip, it is left on the side of they road. They finished the 110 pesos just on fixing the bus, finally it did not work, it stayed stopped, they went to put it in a junkyard where they only paid 10 thousand pesos. Of the 200 thousand pesos that project went on to be turned into 10 thousand pesos.

Things like this is what I can remember, compañeros, what happened in the first period of the Junta de Buen Gobierno in which I was in office. Other things could be left but as I say, I am the only one here from my period, but that is what I can tell you.

# Work of Autonomous Government

## **Roel (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ San Pedro de Michoacán)**

How does our Junta de Buen Gobierno relate with other Juntas?

In our zone we have had problems with the territorial question, it has happened that compañeros who are very stuck to the boundary there are times which they have that problem and they are not able to resolve it because they think that it is still their territory. In those cases we have to intervene as a Junta and for that end we have to put ourselves in agreement with the compañeros of the other Junta, for example with Garrucha because we border them, also with Morelia which we have resolved territorial problems so that the compañeros are clear where yes and where it no longer belongs to them. It has been tried to be done directly but also the internet matter has worked well to communicate and letters, including directly going to the place of the acts. That is a way how we are relating with compañeros from other caracoles.

Also we have had legal problems, when the official government has our compañeros and they imprison them. We had to live an experience when they took land from the compañeros from San Manuel, they live in the Montes Azules reserve, they took land from that population and imprisoned three or four, they shut the families up in some warehouses.

As a Junta de Buen Gobierno we cannot make a treaty directly with the official government, in that case we had to use a means which is the Fray Bartolomé de las Casas Human Rights Center, through them what the Junta goes saying about the steps which are going to be taken is done. It is a way in which we the Junta de Buen Gobierno of our zone have asked to resolve some serious cases which have come up, like that of the compañeros from San Manuel, we see that this way of working has given a result because those compañeros have gotten out of jail.

Another experience of our period was an initiative of the Junta, what is called BANPAZ, which is the Zapatista Autonomous Popular Bank. It was an initiative because we saw that in our zone a problem came up, in that time there were many compañeros who came to ask for a loan in the Junta but we did not have authorization from the towns to give those loans.

It turns out that in a community in our zone there was a child who was receiving support because he was sick, when that was made known in an assembly of authorities, men and women, agents and commissioners, they began to say:

“Why is only that child being supported if in the zone there are many?”

It was when that idea of the bank was born, thanks also to the idea that the first compañeros had, for example from the CCRI, of the command of the unit in our zone, who had that idea per se when they carried the health and commerce work, but since the work passed to the hands of the councils the bank thing remained in the idea. So then when we as a Junta took that idea to make it go, it was then that we proposed what it is that is being thought about doing, it was

proposed in the assembly. The compañeros took it to talk about what it is that is being thought about doing, so once they took it to consult the answer came.

In our zone we are used to doing normal assemblies every three months, it is a custom that each generation of the authorities of the Junta should do so that we have that relationship with the municipal councils and with the authorities in the towns. So when an initiative is born from the authority, for example of the Junta, that helps us a great deal to make it known and for the proposal to go down to the towns.

On that occasion we did not have great resources, we had a small fund of the profits from a bus that we have there, which is called "el solidario," we have it on the route we think about what to invest the profits on which are had to not spend it on something of the Junta, it was thought about something which could generate more profit from the zone. So with 20 thousand pesos which el solidario had and another 20 thousand pesos that was had from that project that came to that child, the assembly decided that the project as it is going to be for health, that the fund which is being made will be invested in the BANPAZ, because we already had an agreement in the zone that we are going to make it go with those 40 thousand pesos.

It was started up with the 90 thousand pesos and the same assembly had to see now what we are going to do because we already have it, now we have to make a rule, how it is going to work and that is what is most difficult. How it is going to work because we are going to begin to put everything together, the idea is good but what problems are we going to confront, we had to continue in the assemblies which are convened, to make an internal rule so that it works for us and see what things are going to work for us and what things are not going to work for us, so that the following authority can go along bettering those relationships. By agreement of all, of the assembly, it remained that the minimum interest is going to be charged, at 2% of the loan to that compañero and they cannot be cheating, cannot go to use it for other things.

But cases happen which do not turn out well, there are bad experiences, we had problems because since the authority is the one who is signing the paper which certifies that the compa does need the loan for health, then it turns out that the town authority makes themselves an accomplice of the compañeros. A case in the General Emiliano Zapata municipality happened to us, a compa came to ask for a loan with his paper which came signed by the authority and we trusted that town authority, the loan was given to the compañero but it turns out that the compañero did not have a sick person, he used it for other things, for business, he was buying other things.

When it was seen that such a thing was happening and the authorities of the town are loaning those kinds of things which should not be, then it was returned another time to the assembly to define that not only the town authority is going to sign, it has to pass with their health promoter, who sees that the money which is going to be taken out is really for a sickness. Things like that were being accommodated in a way so that we do not confront other types of problems.

Also within the rule of the BANPAZ it was mentioned that only for six months, in other words the money which is being lent to the compañero after six months is going to be returned, we see that the compañeros do need it, the internal agreement goes being improved. But we saw that the time was very little that is being given to the compañeros, six months, and there are sicknesses which take more time, all those things taught us how to go bettering the internal agreements.

Right now the compañeros can take out their loan up to one year, including if during that year the compañero or compañera has not gotten better, so the compañero has the right to go to talk with the authority of the Junta to extend the time of their loan explaining why they need more time. Also there are compañeros who are trusted who already have the loan and it appears

that they forget about the payment, the authority begins to think that the *compañero* no longer wants to pay it because he does not come even to talk to explain why he has not paid, but the authority does understand the one who goes and explains and gives them another time-period because they are explaining their motive.

We saw that the BANPAZ is functioning well, the *compañeros* in the zone realized that it was going well. I think that it was working like this for one year with the little bit of resource which we began, with the 90 thousand pesos that we had at the beginning, but after one year we said that we had a brotherly tax of 300 thousand pesos that we had collected from a company, we launched the consult on what to do with that money to the assembly.

“What can we do with those 300 thousand pesos, *compañeros*? Because there we have it and we do not want to misspend it.”

So the assembly once again defined that since they saw that they are being benefited in the loans that are being done, the assembly decided that the 200 thousand pesos will be invested once again in BANPAZ, and with the other 100 thousand pesos the women *compañeras* would be supported. It is a decision of the assembly, not of those of us as a Junta, because they saw that the *compañeros* are being benefited who need to take out a loan.

In BANPAZ we had 290 thousand pesos of investment in total, the first 90 thousand and the 200 thousand pesos from the brotherly tax, currently we have 575 931 pesos. That is of the 290 thousand pesos, 285 931 is what it has generated in profits on the 2% minimum interest which is charged for the loans, which is what the zone maintains right now in the role of the BANPAZ.

## **Eloísa (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ San Pedro de Michoacán)**

The assembly agreed to give us 100 thousand pesos as *compañeras* so that we would see what we can put it to work on, that money was from a brotherly tax. In that moment, when they gave it to us, as *compañeras* it was not thought about what it is going to be invested in, we had it stored for more then a year, but a little while ago it began to work, an assembly was convened of local authorities, of just *compañeras*, the locals accompanied by some regional delegates and it had been sent to say in the towns that the *compañeras* thought about what that money can be invested in.

In that meeting we gathered the information that the *compañeras* gave and came to the conclusion that it is going to be done more or less like the BANPAZ is, we call it BANAMAZ, Autonomous Bank of Zapatista Women Authorities. We did this because in the towns or in the regions sometimes there is a desire to make collectives but there is nowhere to get any fund of money to support us to initiate a collective. It was said that it is going to be exclusively for collectives of *compañeras*, be it in the town or in the region, so it was said that in the small towns 3,000 pesos are going to be given, in the big ones, 5,000 are going to be given, and in the regions 10 thousand pesos are going to be given, with a payment of 2% interest. In that fund is how the 100 thousand pesos are working.

## **Johnny (Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno)**

As a government also it is thought, it is analyzed, it is discussed, how to create collective work as a zone so that afterward there is somewhere where the work is going to be sustained, so that the various tasks function which have to be done as a government. We have to discuss what we are going to do when the support from other compañeros does not arrive, we have to think about collective work.

A collective cattle work was considered as a zone, it was an initiative of the Junta de Buen Gobierno, it was submitted to the assembly, it was discussed, it was thought and it was approved that a collective cattle work is going to be done. That began to be done thanks to aid which came from a solidary brother and with that the cattle project is had and also a zone milpa was made from all the municipalities which also is going to serve us in order to achieve some things with that.

The brotherly tax which is handled there is that 10% is charged for businesses, to the government, which wants to make a road opening and repavement, 10% is charged to them. That tax which is going to be charged has worked for that aid of 100 thousand pesos which was given to the compañeras who made their BANAMAZ fund, it has worked also in health for buying an autoclave for the hospital, a part has served for the construction of the Junta de Buen Gobierno office and some of the expenses which were made there.

Also it is controlled when the road is made, those from the CTM which are the ones who handle the whole question of transportation rounds. A problem happened with them there, they used their concession and they did not give a chance to a transportation-rounds group which is from Las Margaritas, which is "Macoma," it is a rounds group, those from CTM wanted to handle their concession and not allow the others to work.

"In Zapatista territory that is not allowed" we told the ones from CTM.

As we saw that the rounds group from Macoma are the ones who need that work, we saw that the ones who are causing problems are the ones from CTM, so an arrangement was come to with Macoma and they right now are those who are controlled by the Junta de Buen Gobierno, that rounds group is being controlled, CTM does not go to work there in Zapatista territory.

Also the question of road permission the Junta de Buen Gobierno does directly, the town does not do it, the municipality does not do it. We had a problem there with a municipality that they without the permission of the Junta authorized, gave permission, not directly with the construction company but with the road boards in the communities and authorized there without the Junta knowing, then when we ordered to call those from the construction when they were doing the study, it was presented before the Junta and they presented the permission that the municipality had given to them, that was a problem that happened to us there. We had to resolve that issue because the Council self-commanded without consent from the Junta and they authorized, that is why we intervened as a Junta de Buen Gobierno because we are clear and the zone is clear that the Junta is who is going to authorize those things.

# Autonomous Health

## **Eloísa (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ San Pedro de Michoacán)**

Regarding health, as coordinators, Junta de Buen Gobierno, and the autonomous councils of our zone, we have gotten together and have promoted the points of sickness prevention. We have formed 48 prevention points which we see that they are the most important points which we must have to prevent sicknesses, now we have 47 points because it was seen that there was a point that coincided with another point, it was joined to the other one and that is why 47 prevention points remained, that is what is being worked in all the zone. The health coordinators in the municipalities and the regions are watching over that, they are seeing if it is being fulfilled or not.

Also in the health issue two editions of a book have been made to train the health promoters. It began with one edition, the first edition was just divided there in our zone, the second edition also was divided to the other caracoles. That was because the necessity was seen of the health coordinators needing to have a material to train the other new coordinators and as it was not there, there were just brochures or information on sheets, so it was thought about making that book. In the first edition the subjects that existed were less, in the second edition it was completed with other newer topics, like herbalism, which is already in the second edition of the book. Also those books were given to the solidary doctors who are helping us.

The resource for the book came from a project, for the edition we were supported by solidary compañeros who helped us to edit that book, but the words that are there, everything that goes in the book are words of the coordinators and health promoters, including we as a Junta de Buen Gobierno, among all it was seen what it is that is going to help for the health promoters.

Also a dental prosthetics laboratory has been constructed, which thanks to the support of the solidary brothers and sisters from Greece well it could be done, as a government we saw that it is a necessity as part of the health of our people. It could be constructed, now the laboratory is constructed, there are now compañeros trained who do that work.



# **Caracol II: Resistance and Rebellion For Humanity**

Oventik

## Autonomous Education

**Abraham (Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ San Juan de la Libertad) As a Junta we are working and controlling the various areas. Education, here in Caracol II, began much before, in the Junta we do not know very well how that role was from the beginning. Education began first, then the Junta de Buen Gobierno began.**

In that time, before '94, the idea had been per se carrying a people's education, for the people and by the people. They are ideas which were suggested before but could not be concretized in any way but there are the evil government's official schools, that idea was being nourished little by little and over several years we had it stored.

Then in 1994 our demands came out publicly, one is education, but only in words, our demand as education is just there but there is not a recipe to know how to begin, how we are going to construct that education of the people.

We asked other compañeros how we should do it.

"I don't know but the demand is there," we asked the leadership compas, "the demand is there, some day we are going to have good education."

But how is that good education of the people, for the people, and by people, put into practice? No one knows. It is like this where it was a bit lazy from the beginning that each one could begin their education. There in our zone the idea began on how to take education but in an isolated way.

Some regions tried to begin because they saw that it was a need to begin their education for the people, but there were no ways, nor was there with what. There was the battle from the beginning but finally, starting in 1996, when we were already about to sign the San Andrés Accords, it was already here seeing the idea, discussing with the compañeros, those from the comité were already the ones who did, the ones who thought, the ones who began.

On one hand we can say that the idea did occur but not only us, but also it is always discussed with the compañeros, before there were not even autonomous authorities but the people had as its authority, like this it was done in our zone. In other zones who knows how they did it, but in our zone any agreement, any plan, any proposal or idea was discussed with the local and regional compañeros. What do we do? How do we do it? So there among all the idea emerged for work like health, education, and other things.

Like this the idea of having an autonomous education was born but it began to solidify beginning in 1996, before the signing of the agreements, we know how the San Andrés Agreements are and we have an idea, there it was discussed a great deal on indigenous autonomy, beginning there the impulse was made for education to begin then. But how if there is not with what nor

with who to do it? There the people were but the people, the same as everyone, they were asked how we should begin, when to begin it, with who to begin it, who is going to give us the idea on how to do it. Like this all of us are in doubt but however it may be no one made the idea of carrying or beginning education.

So the idea was born among several *compañeros* and then the discussion was amplified and it was seen among all the need to begin a school. It is certain that first secondary education was considered. What a great madness if the people do not have studies, if here it is about the people not having studies, they do not know how to read or write, what stupidity beginning or talking about secondary education. However it may be, a secondary school was considered taking still the idea of the official schools, not being able to find the best way to say it and that is why it was called secondary education.

It was something funny when it began like this and then it was analyzed among the towns, among *compañeros*, they were not autonomous authorities like now, they were local and regional persons in-charge and other representatives, it was thought about what education we are going to begin. Literacy? School that is more or less formal? Primary or what?

The ideas began to come out. It is true that in the evil government's schools per se they do not teach well, we are seeing it, sometimes the teachers do not even come but however it may be there were many youth, there were many children who finished primary school. In that time education was different, it was bad per se but however it may be they learned a little more, because then later those who finished their sixth year did not even know how to read. But much before, those of us who have passed through the official school, remembered a bit, those who had third and fourth year knew how to read perfectly, they knew math, although it was not much but they knew how to add, subtract, divide, and all that, the third and fourth year student knew something. Later those who finished the sixth year did not know how to add nor subtract, much less any other thing, that official education is worse.

However it may be it was seen that there are many *compañeritos* who were finishing primary because, well in the jungle it is different, but in these zones there are many schools but there are no teachers, the somewhat drunk teachers come one or two days a week to give their class, but however it may be there are youth who finish their primary. For that reason the thing about beginning with secondary was said, taking into account that it is supposed that they already finished primary and many *compañeritos*, *compañeritas*, wish to continue their studies, but where are they going to study if there is not a secondary school here, it is necessary to go all the way to San Cristóbal, all the way to Tuxtla, when are we going to get there, when are we going to have a place in those cities so that we can study secondary education?

So we came to the conclusion that better to begin a secondary school, we are going to create a secondary school. How? We too were in the clouds, we asked ourselves, but how? What idea do we have to begin a secondary school? I think that it is where sometimes it is said that they begin with official teachers, I explain it so that we do not carry confusion.

In that time there were *compañeros* who had a little bit of studies, not much, some had secondary education which per se they studied over there with their own money, others had high-school which they also studied with their own money, some in Tuxtla, others in San Cristóbal, others in other places. We also had *compañeros*, children of *compañeros*, and some also were definite *compañeros*, even local and regional delegates, who per se were teachers, that is they worked in the school, they were definite Zapatista *compañeros* in that time, now they are definite *priistas*. So in that time there were definite *compañeros*, they were even local and regional

delegates but from being compañeros who know a little, who understand a little bit, then we got together with them to see what we should do. What do we do with our towns? What do we do with our children. There is this idea, there is this dream, but how do we do it?

The idea was born then to get together here in this place, not as many as those of us who are here now but there was a good team of compañeros and also some Zapatista compañeros who were teachers. We got together here, there is this idea, there is this dream, how are we going to begin it? In that assembly many discussions were born instead of good ideas. That how is it possible that we are going to be able to begin an autonomous school if we do not even have the idea with what money, with what personnel. There the discussion began and it could not advance, only some compañeros say let's go in, let's begin, but with one person it is not possible, we have to get together, we have to think among all what we are going to do.

Like this the task was given to several compañeros of having to think how it is necessary to begin. Upon not having the best way for how to begin the study, autonomous education began, like this we said in that year but we did not even dream in that moment about having a school, an autonomous education for all the communities, of course, we thought that it was of all the towns, of the whole zone, the idea is to carry an autonomous education from all the communities. Like this we began but we said:

"Our countrysides are very big, our towns are many, we cannot begin a great work, we have to begin with something small and that something small has to be going along growing little by little. But it does not matter, let's begin something small to see if some day it goes growing little by little, maybe it is going to take two years," we said in that time.

Like this the fear of beginning did not dominate because we were going to grow with something small, even if it is something insignificant but something has to be considered.

"If we begin mistaken well if we go along correcting on the way" that is what we said, "per se it was necessary to begin something."

In this way the idea arose that better to begin the secondary education and we think that the secondary school in reality has to be a training center for the young compañeros and compañeras, so those who want to come to prepare themselves in the first autonomous school, so that later those compañeritos take responsibility. Yes we were mistaken but some left fighting, but also we have the hope that several youth are going to resist, going to understand, and that they can go to work in their town, that they can come to begin education there in their community or in their region.

There the idea was born, maybe crazy ideas but like that it began, in that way secondary school emerged, but there was not with what, so there were some solidary brethren who said:

"I have an idea, I have this plan. Do you accept or not accept? They proposed here to the zone, "I have this possibility to support to create schools.

Here things are not done without consulting, we have to consult the command, do you accept or do you not accept? So those compas, the command, said to us:

"Accept it, if you believe that you can begin like that, accept it."

We accepted and it is when it entered, I do not know if it is known in other places, there is a group which is called "Schools for Chiapas," those solidary people began to say that they are going to support with the construction of some classrooms. We said that yes and in that way the secondary school which up to today is called a secondary school, but it is the ESRAZ, Zapatista Autonomous Rebel Secondary School.

Like this it was born, but those compañeritos who we got together in that time who did not enter, but there were some compañeros who said that they are going in, those compañeros who said yes said:

“That is good, we put you in-charge of this work. Think about how you are going to do it, use your initiative, use your thought to see how you are going to begin it.”

“Well,” they said then, “that is very easy because I have an idea.”

An autonomous school has to begin, it has to be very different, there are many things which we are not going to change even if it is what is given in the official schools, we could invent another mathematics but we still have not gotten to that level, meanwhile we’ll use the mathematics that there is everywhere. Like this it began with clarity that there are things that we are not going to be able to change per se, that it is not necessary, for example mathematics, we are going to have to learn better, improve it because there are many times that what is given it is not that it is bad but that those who handle that curriculum have another interest, but there are things which per se are good.

In the beginning some young men and women were changed, the youth continued to come, each year they were going in, the students go along increasing. Those who already finished decided in what area they can go to cover their position because we do not have another level of study, they enter into work, in the health area, in community radios, in other areas, with theory and practice they go advancing.

Like this autonomous education began, but when the caracoles were formed the Junta de Buen Gobierno began to coordinate and see a little how the education work is going. This area has its general coordination which carries the record of the schools, the students, like this the Junta has a relationship with those from education.

A little while ago, two years ago, the Junta, the commissions and also the secondary education coordinators met to analyze what more we can do with education. It was analyzed that there is nothing more to do except begin the autonomous primary school, because before there were primary autonomous schools but not many, not at the zone level, they were in some communities, in some municipalities. Two years ago we began the Autonomous Primary School at the zone level, the towns were gathered to begin primary education.

It began because there were then young men and women a bit trained, those youth were invited to come to be trained even if they had not passed secondary school, they had only finished their primary education in the communities. Before, two or three years ago, the young people studied in the primary schools, and we invited those who had finished their primary school to come get trained in a workshop. When they were already trained, they took their 20-day or one month class, according to the plan, when their classes or their workshop began they went to teach the children in the communities. Like this that education began and for the moment like that we are and there the education promoters are working.

# Autonomous Health

## **Víctor (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ San Juan Apóstol Cancuc)**

I was a member of the first Junta de Buen Gobierno, from the year 2003 to 2005, but autonomous health had already began, it was created much earlier, before '93, it was from the initiative of the CCRI compañeros, it was not an initiative of the Junta de Buen Gobierno.

The “Guadalupana” which is in the Caracol center is a central clinic, that central clinic has begun to be constructed in 1991, 1992. Why was that clinic constructed? Because in that time this community was completely out of communication, it did not even have electricity, nor a road like the one that there is now, there was not a way how to move the patients to the cities, there were not clinics nor health houses on the part of the state nor federal government. For that reason we the towns had to organize ourselves to think how to construct a health house or a clinic and we had to organize ourselves, like this in the years 1991 and 1992, the construction began.

When we were doing the construction we had to send some young people, young compañeros and compañeras, to receive training for health, so that they would work when the construction was finished. In the year 1992 the construction finished and the clinic was inaugurated, the small clinic, it was not like it is right now, in that moment it began to work with its respective health promoters.

Before our armed uprising, in 1992 it was like that. After the year 1994, after the armed uprising, it was seen that it was not enough to have a single clinic in this center, in the year 2000 the micro clinics were constructed in different parts of our zone, in various municipalities of our zone, for the moment we have 11 micro-clinics, 12 with the central clinic.

The central clinic is that which coordinates all the micro clinics and there is a general health coordination. The general health coordination is that which coordinates all the work in the micro clinics, the work in the central clinic, and coordinates the health promoters in all the micro-clinics in the zone.

Health is the first work that we had, the first work area that was constructed, it is one of the tasks something big in this zone. When the clinic was constructed it was not a state nor federal project, but rather it was aid which we found from an independent foreign friend, but the people gave the labor, all the materials, the blocks and everything, the people had contributed it.

When the Junta de Buen Gobierno was formed there were few micro-clinics, currently there are several who are coordinated with the central clinic; the general coordination has the record of how many micro-clinics, health houses, and promoters there are. Although the general coordination carries the whole record it always turns-in the information on how it is going to advance to the Junta. As autonomous government what we did was we began to make contact, relationships,

with the general coordination of this area and we also accompany the general coordination in the visits to the micro-clinics, when it is necessary to go to visit or enliven the health promoters.



# Transit

## **Esaú (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ San Juan de la Libertad)**

With regard to transit we are going to chat a little although we have not made many things. In this zone there are many cars for our Zapatista compañeros who belong to this zone, those who work or those who do not have a concession, the compañeros presented in this Junta de Buen Gobierno where they asked for the sticker to be registered as Zapatistas.

As there are many cars which they call “chocolates,” there are many illegal cars, what the Junta did was to not give a paper however it may be, first the cars were checked well to see that they were not illegal, and also we gave some requirements which the compañeros who asked for the sticker had to bring for the Junta to give them their paper, their sticker. The driver has to have their license and also other papers which are to prove that the car is legalized, if they have those papers they have to bring them and we and those who know about cars, we are going to check the number of the motor and everything, if it coincides with the license or with the circulation card, if it squares up, the Junta gives them that paper.

The evil government also at times respects them in this zone when they have this paper well it means that they are legal because the Junta already saw them or already checked them and that is why they have that paper. It is one of jobs which the Junta also made. That paper is just for a year, they give a fee of 20 pesos and when it is up it is no longer valid and they have to come another time to the Junta to ask for another 20 pesos so that something is left with the Junta for that paper.

## Collective Work in the Zone

Here in our zone Los Altos we barely have collective work at the zone level, in fact we have discussed about this, we have analyzed, but this becomes difficult for us because here in our zone we barely have land, that is why there is not somewhere to realize the collective work.

Although we want to realize collective work like cattle, milpas, plantings, whichever plan, but we see that it is difficult that is why we do not have collective work in our zone, because when a collective work is realized in the zone a bit of land is needed, that is the problem that we have seen in our zone. In the communities, in the towns, they have begun very little, very little, like just garden work, at the municipal level there is barely any collective work it is worse at the zone level.

What we did here with the projects is not like the other caracoles, which have many collectives, we in this zone do not have collectives due to a lack of land, we have land only for our consumption, that is why we do not have collectives in the zone. What we do with projects are constructions, we finished doing a construction to have tap water, in that project the Basque government supported us.

In the various projects is where we can find what the solidary compañeros from other countries support us with. Here in the Caracol center an organization supports us which is called OSIMECH, this organization is in charge of doing projects, but not only are they in charge of preparing them, but rather we analyze among all what project we can do. Among the members of the Junta de Buen Gobierno, those who work in OSIMECH and also the compañeros from the CCRI, all together, we analyze what project we can do with brothers and sisters from other countries, for example the Basque Nation, that country helps us a bit.

OSIMECH A.C. also helps us with the project of the three areas (herbalists, midwives, and healers), and in the health area, they took out their small project, which is needed in health there it is spent. We have to justify what is being spent with notes and with receipts, because we know that those who support us want what is bought from that project with invoices. In this way we are working with that organization OSIMECH, we are supporting among all, among collectives which we are making.

## **Problems with Other Organizations**

### **Abraham (Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ San Juan de la Libertad)**

There are times which problems in the communities arrive between Zapatista compañeros and people from the political parties, it is what becomes very difficult for us to solve. If there is a problem between compañeros it can be solved but when it is with people from the parties it is difficult because we know that the parties provoke us, like this it has happened to us in other communities.

For example we have denounced the problems of the compañeros from San Marcos Avilés, we have denounced it but the evil government does not respond. The problem of San Marcos Avilés began when autonomous primary education began there, that problem continues, the compañeros are suffering that problem, also it happened like this in other communities. Those problems could be controlled a little bit only saying to the compas that they too should not provoke, the parties can do what they want to do but as Zapatista we are not going to respond.

There are other problems where we cannot do anything we only ask the Frayba for a favor, the Fray Bartolomé de las Casas Human Rights Center, also that center is giving us a hand, in that way we have achieved a little, well we do not have another way, just with the Frayba and with denunciations. But although we denounce a problem the evil government since it does not have ears, here in the Caracol many problems always arrive with the political parties.

# Commercialization of Coffee

## **Roque (Autonomous Council. MAREZ San Juan de la Libertad)**

The first years in which coffee was exported was beginning in the year 2000, still there was not a Junta de Buen Gobierno. The commercialization of coffee, as Mut Vitz, was founded in the municipality San Juan de la Libertad, this society worked for two years with pure directors.

The coffee commercialization association was legal and had its norms and criteria in a commerce rule just like that of the other countries, so we took a bit the idea on how to work the fund which was had there. According to the fund rule, of just commerce, it is necessary to leave a percentage in accordance with international sales, it is necessary to leave five dollars per bushel, according to the volume which the association exports a quantity will remain for the fund.

The problem that the directors saw is that the funds from the society were not being gathered, there has to be funds in that association but it was seen that it was being spent just like that, in other words no one controlled it. In the year 2000 we gathered the regional persons in-charge of the region in which the association was, which encompasses four municipalities. We were beginning to chat about what can be done so that it has its fund, because that fund is for the infrastructure of the association itself.

An agreement was come to among the regional responsible of that region, so we began to form compañeros so that they can control their income, 12 of us compañeros were forming, but in the first year 6 of us were left, 6 disappeared. Many times when we were named in our town as if we did not want to take the position because we knew that it is something difficult, for example, in that association it was necessary to have some experience with mathematics.

In 2002 the compañeros named me to control the entries and exits of that association. We began to form the fund and it was seen that it can be controlled, the directors no longer spend what they want to spend, but rather we among regional delegates, among the four municipalities we were seeing it. The way is sought to place a fee on the commissions, how much is spent on fares and the distance to where they are going to the commissions, it was an agreement of the regional delegates; if someone is going into a commission they have the right to buy their food but not to spend it on anything more. Like this the fund was being increased, in the year 2003 we already had an exportation volume of 5 to 6 containers of coffee which was sent to different countries.

In the year 2005 there was already a fund of 800 thousand pesos, so we did another meeting to think about where that money is going to be invested because the fund was already increased. An agreement came to construct a store because it was a necessity to have a place where coffee could be stored at collection time, but it is not a project but rather is from the production itself, from what is exported. As it was seen that it cannot be constructed with that quantity of the fund 50 cents were left per kilogram and the store was constructed with a little more than 800 thousand pesos, that was made with the effort of all the members.

Afterward there was another necessity because we saw that since coffee is not sold with shells it is necessary to rent machinery so that they can shell the coffee. We saw that the exportations had increased and we were left with a larger fund, so then in 2005, 2006, it was seen that there are funds and we looked for a way to buy the machine to shell the coffee. In 2006 a machine was bought but the members were asked first if the machine can be bought, we know that that the machine takes money, we got estimates and we found that it cost a little more than 1 million pesos.

Since the quantity of money to buy the machine did not add up we asked the members if it necessary to buy it, we asked the members if a percentage could be left in accordance with their products and the agreement came out, one peso per kilogram of the members' product was left. The machine was bought and in 2006 the installation of the machine was finished then with the storeroom constructed. The members made the effort, in total they were close to 2 million pesos which we spent between the storeroom and the machinery, aside from the labor which the members contributed to do the work.

In 2007 we were working calmly but the moment in which the directors were called to San Cristóbal, in Enlace Civil. What happened was that the personnel from Tax Services arrived, they asked what assets the association has, we were left surprised because we do not know what it was about, we said that there are no assets. As they saw that we said that we do not have anything then those personnel who came to Enlace Civil brought a book, they took out a sheet of paper.

"I know what they have in the society," said those people and they took out the account number of the society, "right now, from this moment you cannot make any movement nor withdrawal from what you have in the bank account."

The quantity of money which the association has was a little more than 400 thousand pesos which were in the bank. One part was then a coffee payment to the producers because it was not possible to take out the money at once and when this happened we then did not know what to do. On that date the account was frozen, up to today those 400 thousand pesos are frozen.

We reported in the Junta de Buen Gobierno this problem which had happened, but later those from Tax Service called us in another time, we went to San Cristóbal, but since we as peasants to not have very much study, we did not have accounts for the association who could present their declaration before Tax Services and since the society is legal, we had to contract an accountant.

On that date the accountant, we do not know if it is that they are going to betray that society or someone betrayed them, no one knows what happened. The problem was that in the declaration which arrived to Tax Services it says that in the sale of coffee nothing was exported, that everything stayed in national sale, this is what Tax Services told us, but the entries of money were from other countries and there it is that the problem arrived.

We thought what to do, and once that path was blocked we presented in the Junta de Buen Gobierno and there it was seen that there was coffee that the directors of the society had given on loan, as if the overstepping is in two parts, and since the buyer it was not known if they are going to pay or not going to pay, here in the Junta the members and the authorities of the two municipalities, Magdalena de la Paz and San Juan, met to see that problem. And then it appeared that one part where they had given the coffee, well there were ex-directors who were charging little by little, that is the corruption that there was in the coffee commercialization society which you heard about.

When it was discussed how to resolve that problem the agreement that came out was that those compañeros were going to be imprisoned but it was not done. One of the directors had a

pickup truck, the truck remained impounded and like this what the directors had taken was paid for.

Where it was not possible to resolve things was in Hacienda, it was not possible because the accountant presented that sale in exportation was not done Hacienda was going to charge a fine of 1,800,000 pesos.

It is no longer possible to do anything because we know that in this society where we were working no project nor bank loan was received, nothing, we only had the sales from what the society was working.

There were 600 producers who were integrated into that coffee commercialization society, but since there was that problem and up to now there it is, each one who was working because it is not possible to cover that fine quantity that Hacienda put on us. Until now knowing by how many millions it has increased because it has generated a fine for not presenting that report.

But before those problems it was seen that it is possible to work among compañeros, it is possible to control. We saw that in this work group although a little bit but we could control, those of us compañeros who were there, 6 people, we controlled the entries and exits, the products, the quantity which was gathered, we had it on hand although not the money but we had all the papers on hand.

Upon giving the price of the product to each producer well we had to take it out, not the board; the board then only explained to the members what it was going to cost per kilogram, we did the accounting. Like this we worked in that time and although there were problems it was seen that we can do that work among ourselves as compañeros.

# Difficulties which Autonomous Government has Confronted

## Abraham (Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ San Juan de la Libertad)

The work which exists now, maybe the majority of the work areas, began before the birth of the juntas de buen gobierno, some began in 1991, others in 1990, others in 1996. That is a problem that the authority compañeros and compañeras have, as much the Junta de Buen Gobierno as the autonomous governments in each municipality, we realized that they have a great lagoon, a lack of knowledge of the work which began before.

The problem that we see is that there are compas who are autonomous government but do not know what there is in their municipalities, they do not know if there is an autonomous school, do not know if there is a health house, do not know if there are health promoters, do not know if there are education promoters, do not know what work there is there in their municipalities. The same with the Junta de Buen Gobierno, worse still because they have to know about many municipalities to control and they do not know all that, how the work began.

In one part it makes sense because as they say, “we are simple support bases,” we have not been able to orient or generate consciousness better in our support bases. There is a lack of knowledge about all the work areas and that is what happens, that is the truth, that is what happens here in our zone, we are sincere in saying that here we lack very many things, there we go staggering with many little things, with great difficulty. However it may be we realized that even the compañeros themselves say:

“It is that we do not know, it is that we are not familiar. How do we do it if we do not know how it is?”

So there was the necessity a little while back, we said that we are going to meet, authorities, above all the Junta de Buen Gobierno which has to control the zone, we are going to meet so that the compañeros and compañeras of the Junta de Buen Gobierno have an idea on how they are going to govern and what it is that the towns in this zone are doing.

It is the only way that we found although it is not they only one that there is, in that moment it was the only thing that we could do, meetings where sharing experiences on each work area, health, education, agroecology, several areas were missing which were not in those meetings.

The majority of the work areas in this zone explained their work in assemblies so that the Junta de Buen Gobierno would take up the idea, for them to know how the work is in each area, how they began, what they are doing, what are their problems, difficulties, needs, all that, the experience began to be shared.

That was monthly, it was a bit tough in the beginning but they had to come each month because it was the only way to understand what is being done, how it is being done, if it is advancing, if it is failing, for those who are authority to at least have an idea.

In this way the compas of the Junta de Buen Gobierno began to know what is happening, but other members of the Junta de Buen Gobierno began to enter, it is the difficulty that we have here, they now know a little, they now understand a little, they now begin to make something, and in that moment they leave, they finish their period and another new compañero or compañera comes, it is necessary to begin another time.

The possibility to resolve that difficulty that there was here is that not everyone leaves at the same time, some stay, a few leave and others enter, in that way they are helped a little but however it may be understanding how to control all the work does not cease to be a problem.

We have insisted that the compañeros from the Junta de Buen Gobierno, as well as those from the autonomous municipalities, be concerned a bit about understanding, about knowing how the work is in their municipality. Some compañeros, some municipalities have been concerned, but others say:

“No, it is that we do not have much time, here the problems in our office absorb us,” so there is some of everything, some have advanced, others plainly are still in the clouds.

In this way the Junta de Buen Gobierno goes understanding but still much is lacking, still it does not have a grasp on everything, that is why it is difficult for them to tell the story, worse if we ask them to tell how it began, why it began, where it began.

The poor compas are not going to know how to tell it because they were not even compas in that time, some entered in 1994 and the work began much before, they are right well. Others because they are young, they were not even born yet when the work began, it makes sense why the compañeras do not know those things, there are authority compañeras, compañeros who are very young, so they do not know the history, they do not know many things, it is a real problem that we have in our zone.

Experience is lacking but we are sure that if encouragement is given they are going to learn, going to understand, going to be able. We are sure of that but there still are many difficulties to be able to govern, it is difficult for them to govern but in any way they have to learn to govern. Things are missing but the Junta goes grasping what they are missing little by little, there are several things that the Junta does do, it has learned to resolve problems, to have to grasp their responsibility as the Junta de Buen Gobierno.

The compas said that in their municipality sometimes the autonomous municipal government does not even know how many municipal agents it has, like this it is a little difficult. But it is not like this, the autonomous municipal government works in coordination, in communication, with its municipal agents.

Whichever issue, whichever thing that the autonomous municipal government sees it convenes its municipal agents.

“Here there is a problem. Here there is this, they move their people, take this message. Take it to the communities, consult your people,” they tell them, and so those agents take the task, they take the information to each community.

“The autonomous government says that there is this problem, that there is this thing, that we have to think about it, we have to tell them, we have to decide it,” the agents say to their towns.

Like this the autonomous municipalities have been working, their compañero or their closest relation are the municipal agents. We cannot deny that some autonomous governments do not even consult their agents when they say “we’ll do this,” and when they realize that they already went all the way in and what are they going to do now. But that happened because it did not consult its agents well much less the people, because many times with the municipal agents the



idea comes from the people, then later there is the issue in which the decision on what to do is made, they say that it is done like this, say that it is necessary to do it like this, but sometimes it does not happen, that is the saddest part.

Here in our zone many problems and serious problems have happened, missteps, as our leader compas say, external problems, internal problems. How are the autonomous municipalities resolving it, the Junta de Buen Gobierno? How do they do it? There are things which are not able to be resolved because they are problems which are necessary to see with the official authorities, there we no longer pass, so we seek another path.

When there are serious problems and the autonomous municipal government cannot get together with the official municipal government, the only way to be able to get there is through local authorities, there are official agents, that's what we call them, and there are autonomous agents, so it is attempted first among autonomous and official agents, to see what they manage to resolve there if there is a problem in the community. The Junta de Buen Gobierno is alert, sometimes the agents do not manage to resolve the problem and then the compas come again to say that they could not, that it was not achieved, if the problems get in to the municipality, there we again run into a problem because the municipal government cannot go to sit down with the other official municipal government.

When the problem gets big the Junta de Buen Gobierno intervenes, but it also cannot go sit down with an official municipal president. If the situation is very grave the Junta de Buen Gobierno goes through the human rights center, to see if we can achieve it over there. If it is not achieved by that means a denunciation is made. Here it is necessary to battle with many denunciations and then there is not much ability to write denunciations but however it may be it has been dealt with because it has been necessary with so many things which happen, as in other caracoles, there is the necessity to make denunciations.

# **Caracol III: Resistance Toward A New Dawn**

La Garrucha

# **Support from Solidary Brothers and Sisters**

**Pedro Marín (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno.  
MAREZ Francisco Gómez)**

In our autonomous municipalities and in our Caracol it has always been handled that the solidary brothers and sisters sometimes go directly to a municipality, so from when they arrive to the autonomous municipality the autonomous councils go to inform the Junta de Buen Gobierno. Like this the agreements are related between the Junta de Buen Gobierno and the autonomous councils about all that aid which the solidary brothers and sisters give, so if the agreement comes out to receive a donation it remains in the Junta de Buen Gobierno.

In the Junta de Buen Gobierno we also gather other funds, like the 10% from the works of the priistas which there are in our zone, that 10% also remains in the Junta, it is from works like opening of roads, electricity, and potable water.

There is other work which also passes through our municipality and in the Junta like the repaving of roads or patching, those works which the priistas also have on the roads, just on the road, we no longer charge them the whole 10% because the road is already made per se, only sometimes they fill the parts where it is in bad shape.

Like this we are managing, as much the Autonomous Council and the Junta de Buen Gobierno. To decide what to do with that aid what we do is to meet with those from the committee and the maximum assembly, we call all the commissioners, to see what that money is destined for. If it is decided to divide it up then what we do is to divide it up equally according to the numbers of contributors in each municipality. That is what we have done with the 10% and with the donations that the solidary brothers and sisters give us.

# Autonomous Education

## **Artemio (Former Member of the Autonomous Council. MAREZ Ricardo Flores Magón)**

When our education began to function it did not begin in the whole zone, it only began in the municipality Ricardo Flores Magón with the education “Semillita del sol,” and the other municipalities like Francisco Gómez, San Manuel, and Pancho Villa were beginning with an education which they call Yaxalchi. In the municipality Ricardo Flores Magón we came to make an agreement to have that education “Semillita del sol,” it is the same as what the compañeros from La Realidad called it.

That project “Semillita del sol” we saw that it is a package, or rather is a project that is already made, but the municipal and local authorities made an agreement to see how to carry autonomous education. There we battled to discuss, analyze how we are going to do it, with the authorities themselves we came to the agreement that it is more better to make a document.

We called the writing which we made “true education document,” and this document was the one which remained as the principle of autonomous education, where we said the objective that our education is going to have, that the four areas of knowledge are related: mathematics, life and environment, language and history, with the 11 demands. Because we know well that we have 13 demands but since all the demands are not all carried about, the pending demands remain still, so we still made the agreement.

When we then had that document the municipal authorities looked for the trainers, who were some compañeros who were still there, and the collective “Puente a la esperanza.” The training began in the year 2000 but the problem which happened was that the trainers did not want to enter or did not want to pass with that principle that we made with our towns, with that guide that we have, with the document that we made with our people.

One year went by and the authority saw that they did not fulfill the principle that we have, so we suspended the work, about two trainings was all that was done. We did like this and like this a year went by, the training of the promoters who had arrived from the municipality Ricardo Flores Magón remained suspended, there were about 130 promoters, the promoters from the other autonomous municipalities worked with other education projects.

When about two years passed they looked for who was going to come to train our promoters, but someone who respects our principles, and those from the Puente a la esperanza collective returned to continue the training, they said that they agree to respect the principle of our education. Then in 2002 and 2003 the first generation of promoters began, the same ones who arrived first, they returned to receive training.

## Management of Projects

Before when we had a project or donations, the resources went directly to the autonomous municipalities, like this we were advancing little by little with our work but as if a bit divided, as if we did not have an agreement in the zone, the Junta de Buen Gobierno did not have control over the projects which came to our zone, from 2003 until 2007 we were working like this.

This means that when the Junta de Buen Gobierno began to function it could not control this because the municipalities had already become accustomed to each one had control over their projects, that is why as if they did not want to respect that it was the Junta's responsibility. The Junta de Buen Gobierno did not control the projects or the work areas more, in that time in all the work areas we had other health promoters, other education promoters from another generation.

In those years we still controlled what is the opening of roads, repavement, pavement, in those first years although the Junta de Buen Gobierno was already there each municipality had control. It was just reported to the Junta de Buen Gobierno if a roadway opening project of the official government is going to work, they just gave it to them in their knowledge and the autonomous municipalities saw it, the 10% which was charged remained directly in the municipality and in the Junta de Buen Gobierno nothing remained.

That little bit of money which remained in the municipality we did not know how to administer it, we did not invest something in the collective work, the councils which already passed spent everything on the movements, on the fares to go to their shift in the municipality, on food.

In 2007 we saw that it was not good for the work of autonomy to continue like this, the authorities themselves, like the CCRI, the autonomous councils, and the coordinators of all the work areas, also the Junta de Buen Gobierno and the local authorities, we made an agreement that it is better to walk together with our projects, with our autonomy work.

As it was seen that it is not good to go advancing like this in autonomy everything was suspended to do everything collectively, so that the Junta de Buen Gobierno has all the projects in its control, so it can control what is the education project, health project, and projects in other areas. In this way we remained on one path, for example in education, the whole zone still remained to work on the Semillita del sol project.

Before the projects were managed with municipal coordinators among the four municipalities, what was being done also came to the Junta de Buen Gobierno's knowledge but only in the reports, as if it did not administer much how it really was being spent.

An example: for the projects sometimes money is requested for fares, for food, and then in the activities sometimes everything that was budgeted is not spent, so with the remaining money food is purchased and many times the food which was purchased goes to waste or is divided up among the participants, it happened like this in those times. Also on fare, sometimes they took money for more than the fares which were needed, for example for a close trip of 50 pesos 100 pesos were taken, the budgets were not very exact.

Upon entering into our position we do not know and no one teaches us quickly how the work is going to be done, that is why little by little we were realizing how the projects were, how the

project resources were really being spent. We were seeing that there were projects that went over and much was being spent, many expenses were made on food and on fare, that is why we were meeting with the coordinators, trying to explain that it should not be like this because the projects are of the people and the people have to say how the resources should be spent, because like this the work was not really being done formally.

We had to reduce the overexpenses which were being made, like on fares, the Junta de Buen Gobierno had to invest more trying to convince the promoters, the coordinators that they had to do it differently, because they were already accustomed and they said that the project was theirs, and from there it came out for their fares and their food. We had to convince, explain that it should not be like this and we did manage to convince them, we came to agreement and the expenses were reduced, we as the Junta de Buen Gobierno did like this.

New projects were requested and in them the Junta intervened more, not like in the previous projects. With the expenses which were reduced we managed to gather some 45 thousand pesos over 8 months of working the project. A little later it was seen that it is necessary to explain more to the people how this problem is in-depth and so the compañeros from the CCRI and some support commissions asked for the previous invoices to review how the work was.

Like this over years which the project was not worked formally, so now they are seeing the accounts more clearly, there are nuclei of resistance teams who are support commissions, there are the commissions who see how the money is administered from the projects in our zone, like this it is being done now in Caracol III.

We had many faults but up to now we are in those steps which we are explaining. From those projects which the Junta impulses 10% is taken out to have a fund, the plan is made or the agreement is to invest that percentage in something because we thought that one day there is not going to be projects and we discussed what if one day there is not going to be anything with which to buy food and it would be a shame to ask the people for it when they do not have anything.

We said that it is better to send a part of the money which is gathered or the 10% which is set aside from the projects for the municipalities to work it, so that when one day the Junta de Buen Gobierno does not have anything with which to function or with which to make the commission, without trouble it can send the notice to the municipalities who sell the cattle because the money is needed in the Junta, but like this without trouble because the money has been sent to work and have resources.

It is what the Junta de Buen Gobierno in Caracol III did and now it is promoting the work on agroecology trainings, which we see that it is a necessity, because like how there is cattle work in each municipality and in the zone, sometimes the animals die from not knowing how to care for, from not knowing how to cure them. Sometimes they get sick and when we do not have knowledge the money is lost there, it has happened many times that they die, that is why the Junta sought a project to train the promoters so that they learn to take care or cure the animals.

Also a project has been considered so that the compañeros are prepared to know how to care for the animals on small quantities of land, because speaking of cattle large quantities of land or pasture to maintain, speaking of 100 heads of cattle is a great deal of land that they occupy. So the Junta thought that better for someone to be trained to have knowledge of how to work them on small quantities of land.

Another work that the Junta de Buen Gobierno has promoted in Caracol II was the attempt to make a bank, it is called BAZ, Zapatista Autonomous Bank, with an investment of 150 thousand

pesos. What we invested in that bank was with the idea of supporting, of making a loan to the compañeros, if it is for sickness 2% interest is charged.

Although we do not want to say it but if the sick compañero does not heal or comes to die, what was agreed upon in the assembly is to pay half of what has been loaned, the agreement was on 3,000 pesos, so only 1,500 is replaced and the bank loses 1,500, without paying interest in the event of that lamentable death of a compañero or compañera.

There were two agreements, one was that on health, the other is to give loans without it being for sickness, for example if you want to buy a goat or a cattle it can not be done with 2,000 pesos, so they said that 5,000 pesos is what can be lent to a compañero and of those 5,000 pesos the interest was 5% percent because they are going to make their little business or invest in merchandise, it depends on what can be done.

It was done like this, that was in 2009, that agreement which the Junta de Buen Gobierno made with all the towns, but unfortunately up to this date the bank almost went bankrupt because they have only really paid up to the moment 50% of the loans which were made, the majority forgot about what they had borrowed and forgot about their interest.

We thought that with the bank we could support with everything, in the event of sickness, in the event of whichever necessity of the compañeros to help everyone. More or less like this we made the autonomy work, we battled to find the way how to better our construction of autonomy.



# Collective Work

## **Felipe (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ San Manuel)**

Among the collective work that we have in our Caracol is the milpa work, each municipality has to have a collective milpa work in their territory because we do not have a plot specially for the Caracol.

The agreement that we have to make the collective milpa work is that each collective has to work in their municipality, so the municipality makes an agreement with the base to know in what place the collective is done and what is done with the corn which is harvested, for example this year that passed it served to support the compañeras whose compañeros died in combat in 1994. A bean collective was also made and we have the cattle collective at the zone level.

The Junta de Buen Gobierno convened a special meeting to see in what work the little money is going to be invested which it has gathered from the 10% brotherly support. One of those agreements that we have is to do the cattle work, for example the raising or maintenance of steers, because it is what we have seen that gives us the most profit quickly, but the zone does not have terrain to put those animals but the agreement that we have is to send the money to the municipalities so that there that work may be done.

The municipality names its commissions which are those who are in charge of buying the animals, at the same time the municipality names other commissions who are in charge of taking care of the animals, because it is necessary to care for them. For example, if the pastures get brushy the commission informs the councils and the councils send the compañeros so that they go clean the pastures and at the same time are the ones who are in charge of looking after. The profits which are obtained there go to be for the benefit of the Caracol or of the zone.

We also have a cooperative store, where the members of the Junta de Buen Gobierno and the Information Commission are those who are in charge of selling the product that they have and the profit which is had also has been sent to the municipalities to invest in other work.

The collective work has been promoted in the zone meetings. The members of the Junta explain to the councils and authorities of each municipality which is present in that reunion, the importance of making the collective work. Each work or each town decides what collective work it is going to do, or rather what type of work it is going to realize. The municipalities have a milpa collective, bean collective, cattle collective, and store collectives.

The compañeros of each town are also like this, also it has been said to them that it is always necessary to do the collective work. The compañeros in the towns have collectives, some work the cattle a little also, the milpa, they plant beans, and also the compañeras have their work collectives.

Many towns also have a some cattle, sometimes the compañeras have banana or cane collectives, and they have chicken collectives. Those collectives are always made with the impulse of

our authorities, of the CCRI, of the autonomous councils in each municipality, and of the Junta de Buen Gobierno members, they are the ones who have promoted one part of those work collectives.

In the case of the San Manuel municipality, before the formation of the Junta de Buen Gobierno we had a cattle collective. That cattle collective advanced well because we began with 30 animals and we came to obtain up to 120 animals. But we know the evil government's strategy very well, which has always fucked us, there in our municipality a group of organizations that it has controlled got organized and invaded a part of our recovered land.

So that they cannot invade us, we as a municipality are going to intervene, that time we took many compañeros. In that time it was that our cattle collective went down a great deal because we had to mobilize between 100 and 150 compañeros every five days and we for one year were caring for the land where the compañeros were positioned so that they do not invade us again, there that cattle work went down a great deal.

### **Cornelio (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ Francisco Gómez)**

In the Francisco Gómez municipality, in the year 1998 we began to realize the work of a cooperative which is called Smaliyel, in this work each contributor contributed 10 kilograms of coffee, this work was being realized in that way but due to misadministration the base compañeros realized that it was not functioning well.

In the year 2007 or 2006 an assembly was realized to discuss how this cooperative was functioning, they saw that there was no advance and better they decided to divide it up anew with everything that there still was in cash. It was divided up to all those who had given this contribution of 10 kilograms of coffee, a quantity of 40 thousand pesos remaining and those 40 thousand pesos in a regional assembly it was again seen in what way we were going to work it.

In 2008 we began to see what was going to be done, another agreement was made to continue working with that Smaliyel cooperative but now with new authorities, with another way of administering, other members were sought to administer it, but this then was in a very late time, the harvests were already being finished.

That quantity of 40 thousand pesos was invested, with the compañeros from the Morelia Caracol about 2,000 kilograms of coffee were taken out on loan, that's how we again continued with this work. We were advancing again from 2008 until 2010 when other authorities were named.

In the time that we were councils it was seen that there was already advance, we got to 600 thousand pesos and we had begun with 40 thousand pesos. Now what is left is for the administrators, those who are working now, to give us a report again on how it is functioning. In my work period this was how that cooperative was functioning, with the support of some compañeros from Mexico City, from that space that we have in the UNAM.

# Justice

## **Pedro Marín (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ Francisco Gómez)**

The other justice that the Junta de Buen Gobierno is promoting and the autonomous councils is that, for example, if there is a theft of an animal or whatever it may be, we investigate it and when we catch the person who stole the animal what is done is that they return the animal which has been stolen to the owner and ask the animal's owner for forgiveness. The next time, if it happens again, then they will be sanctioned. It is the other justice which the Junta de Buen Gobierno promotes.

Also in matters of justice there are legal problems. At times there are compañeros who are detained, for example, there was a fraud problem for 7,000 pesos, a compañero was detained and then he was accused of another crime when he was already detained, they accused him of seizing 24 hectares of land. The compañero accused of fraud is from the Francisco Gómez municipality, in the La Garrucha Caracol. They accused him of land seizure due to the last name that he has, that it is the same as another compañero that is why they had given him another charge. The one accused of plunder is another person who has almost the same name, there is only a confusion of last name, but since the compañero was already detained they gave him that charge of land seizure and land seizure does not have bail.

We were investigating until arriving with this other compañero who almost has the same name as our compañero who is detained, that other compa belongs to the 17 de Noviembre municipality, in Caracol IV. So the La Garrucha Junta de Buen Gobierno went to the Morelia Junta de Buen Gobierno to resolve this issue. When there is a problem of one caracol with another caracol we among juntas talk to each other, we did the same with this detained compañero. We made a letter between the two caracoles to say that the compañero from our caracol who was detained is not the one who they are accusing of plunder, but we could not declare who the other compa is due to the fact that he also is a support base compañero and is from 17 de Noviembre. So the two juntas worked on this problem but the evil government never solved that problem for us.

## **Caracol IV: Whirlwind of Our Words**

Morelia

# Autonomous Education and Health

## **Gerónimo (Former Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ Lucio Cabañas)**

We as a Junta de Buen Gobierno work more in education, in health, and in production, we focus on doing projects. Education in itself has been worked on since 1996 and 1997, it was being developed in the municipalities but it was not the same, there were municipalities which were already advanced and there were others which still were not.

On September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1999 was when we declared our autonomous education in the zone. I remember that the authorities informed us what was happening, they informed us that the compañeros had to work a great deal, they were discussing for one week what subjects should be given to the children. It was battled a great deal until on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1999 we formally declared autonomous education.

Beginning then practically all the children began to study in their towns, some towns already had their education promoter, or the educators as we called them, the education promoters are simple, it is not that they are teachers, they are young adults who know how to read and write and help with that.

The idea is not for the promoters to know about all the subjects, the idea that was born is that they at least know how to read and write, but when education was formally declared it was then discussed about the subjects which were going to be seen in autonomous education. In that time the subjects were not many, there were three or four, mathematics, reading-writing, history, the history of our organization.

In 2003, when the Juntas de Buen Gobierno were born, they gave us members of the Junta the task of preparing the projects. We as a Junta de Buen Gobierno convened all the compañeros, the whole base in each municipality, for it to be discussed which is the most important necessity.

In that case, now as a Junta, we formed the education structure, the zone commissions were named, the education zone commissions began to function, the municipal commissions were also named and then the education committees in the towns.

As a group we began to discuss which is the most urgent necessity. The necessity which was seen was the construction of schools, what we did was make the project together with the commissions and the Junta de Buen Gobierno, we worked on projects and in the towns and in the municipalities we began to make school constructions.

Not only that, we worked on trainings for the education promoters, because there it is not that we know everything, there are some who do not know but with their knowing something they want to support the children, so in order for the promoters to teach our children well training was sought. The trainings were made for it to be equal, for it to be taught the same to all the children.

Further on we created another study level. How did we do it? What we did is that those who came out of primary school, where we managed first, second, and third grade, so those who finished third grade already know how to read and write, so we saw that it is necessary to take those students somewhere else so that at least they learn something.

Again with the idea of the commissions and the Junta de Buen Gobierno we created another school level, we called that school “Tejiendo la sabiduría maya,” it functioned in Moisés Gandhi, in the municipality Che Guevara, we think that it is a school a little higher. It was one year of intense study because there the students went to live, the support bases had to go to give their service there, to cook their food for the students. Education was advancing like this and finishing one year those students who were in what we say is a higher place returned again to their towns.

Upon returning to the towns they gave those students another position, there another space was opened within the municipality, another space was opened in education, in that time we called it leveling school, then in the municipality the students were concentrated. The first stage of study we said that it is primary, that it is first, second, and third grade.

Then we opened another stage of study which we called knowledge leveling, those who came out of the zone school were working there, they went to give that service. Like this changes in education were taking place, currently in each municipality we have secondary schools.

Also in health it was worked on since long before, some knew something. What was done is that the compañeros who know about health more or less began to raise that work in their town, from there it began to be raised up in the municipalities. Depending on how it was in each municipality when it began, which was before 1994, but after '94 it began to be organized, those who know began to teach what to do in the event of whichever sickness.

Further on some small health houses began to be constructed, there then was coordination with the councils. The health houses were constructed in 2003, when the caracoles were opened, infrastructure began to be worked on, because in that time a little house was made even if from straw, they cut the grass and put it as roof.

When the Junta began to function it began to better the health houses in the towns and then in the municipality the constructions were also made, we handled projects. Some constructions were made, equipment was made and trainings, currently we are working like this in the matter of health.

# **Income and Donations which Arrive to the Junta de Buen Gobierno**

## **Jacobo (Former Member of the Autonomous Council)**

Aside from the entries from infested wood, gravel, stones, and hot springs, there are other entries of resources, for example, if a *priista* community puts in electricity or a road their percentage is charged, that entry remains in the Junta de Buen Gobierno. But the role of the Junta de Buen Gobierno also is how to promote the work, for those resources which arrive to the Junta to be taken advantage of, the proposals are taken in the communities, we make a coordination in the three levels of government, local, municipal, and the Junta de Buen Gobierno to know how that money is going to be spent.

The Junta de Buen Gobierno convenes an assembly of commissioners, agents, councilmembers, to inform that there is a resource, there is money with which a project can be done. Since the representation from the municipalities and communities is there the task is taken to consult with the *compañeros* and *compañeras* what necessity and what we are going to do. In each municipality different proposals come out and they have to be respected, the Junta de Buen Gobierno has to respect what that money is going to be used on.

In the municipalities the largest maybe is 17 de Noviembre, the majority of their communities are new population centers, in this municipality the resources which have arrived have been taken advantage of, the municipality has a cooperative store in the official municipality which is Altamirano, it has a cattle collective and aside from that there also is the education, health work.

The zone, to not lose that resource which arrived, also has a cooperative store in Cuxuljá. We have a cattle collective at the zone level on a recovered plot which those from CIOAC wanted to invade, which is in Campo Alegre and was worked on with the effort of all the *compañeros* from the zone, the wire-fences were made, the work was made, and there is the cattle.

How do we make the cooperatives, for example in Cuxuljá, how do we the support bases contribute? What we do is that since each municipality has regions and the municipalities tell us how many shopkeepers have to sell during a month there in the store, the municipality has to see how many regions it has and there it has to get its shopkeepers. That shopkeeper is not going to make money there, each municipality organizes how we are going to help those who are going to go to sell in that cooperative store. There is a team of administrators, that team of administrators is the one who is in charge of buying the merchandise, of seeing what the merchandise is going to be sold for, of making the semimonthly or monthly accounts to see how much the cooperative store is making.

The same as in cattle-herding, there is a team of administrator *compañeros* to see if it is necessary to vaccinate, if it is necessary to deparasite, if it is necessary to make the pasture or the work which is done in cattle-herding. The *compañeros* from this commission are also not making



money, it is a voluntary service of conscience, the municipality, the region, and the town have to see how to do the work.

Before in the three levels of government there were entries, there were resources, for example, if a bit of infested wood was sold. But the zone is large and sometimes there is a percentage from the municipality, from the town, and from the Junta, we saw that that money was not taken advantage of for all, it just got to the town where that work came out, to the municipality, and the zone, but there are many communities which did not get anything. That is why currently all the resources which arrive go directly to the Junta, it is no longer divided between the communities or the municipality.

If gravel or stones are sold it goes directly to the Junta de Buen Gobierno, and the utility, that is the benefit, helps the whole zone, the three municipalities and their communities, although it is little, it is not much, but it goes arriving directly. Each municipality or each region to which a small contribution arrives is going to come to an agreement if it does a local cattle-herding work, does a milpa work, for example, that the milpa, bean field, coffee field is being done. Also it is seen if there is a group of *compañeros* who have to do their collective because there also are communities, precisely in the new population centers, where the work of the *compañeras* is being done, the bakery, chicken, garden, and also the milpa work.

The role of autonomous government and of the Junta de Buen Gobierno is to ensure that the work is promoted with the resources which are sent to the municipalities, that the work is done and that a bit of profit comes out because it is of no use if a resource arrives, it finishes being spent and nothing is left, it is not seen on what the money went, it is not useful, we do not take advantage of it. What is wanted is for the work which we are doing to be taken advantage of.

## **Omar (Former Delegate of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. Che Guevara Region)**

The donations which arrive to the Junta and the percentages which are charged to party-followers in matters of other projects, the Junta de Buen Gobierno divides them up in the municipalities depending on the percentage or the number of contributors in each municipal and the Municipal Council has to destine it for various work in accordance with the agreements at the municipal level. It is not the Council itself which is going to just be giving more proposals but the general assembly of the municipality is the one which has to determine where that fund which was sent can be worked.

In 2009 we began to think with all the *compañeros* that a BAZ (Zapatista Autonomous Bank) is born within the Caracol, we took out 100 thousand pesos in the Arcoíris store, we also took out 26 thousand pesos from the people's fund, and we took out 20 thousand pesos from the two hot springs. With that total of 146 thousand pesos we began to work the BAZ for the need of the sick *compañeros* in the zone and that there are no longer resources, there is not how they can sustain themselves when they need to find their medicine in other places.

This was born because the *compañeros* go to ask for loans, there are some *compañeros* who at times are lent money, but the interest is 10, 15, or 20%, it is a lot. Out of necessity, as the *compañeros* we are, this BAZ was born so that they can be lent money from that small fund which we have invested. By agreement, the interest percentage that has to be charged is 2% if the loan is for a sickness, and it is paid in three months; if it is for business it is 3%, the maximum for

business is 5,000 pesos, if it is sickness it is between 3,000 and 5,000 pesos, depending on their necessity.

But a problem came which was in the requirements which are asked for to give the loan. Whichever community the *compañero* comes from, they have to request a paper, evidence, where it says that the *compañero* has their need to be lent money, be it for sickness or for business. If it is for sickness they have to present a card for medical attention, if it is in the autonomous clinic or in a hospital where they are treating that *compañero* or *compañera*, if there is not a card the agent and the commissioner of their *ejido* or their town has to attest to it for the loan to be given to them, but if it is for business the agent or the commissioner has to give their signature and also the Municipal Council.

Being tricksters the authorities did a favor for some *compañeros*, when they did the favor of signing and authorizing it increased by one digit, a trickster *compañero*. An example, if they ask to borrow 3 thousand pesos it increases one digit more, they put 13 thousand pesos, just imagine how the *compañeros* who have made that mistake are so alive. For that reason the need was seen to modify it, now in the requirements which are asked for is that the information has to begin from the town up to the Junta de Buen Gobierno. It means that from the agent and commissioner they go to authorize but they have to give the certainty that the *compañero* who asks for the loan does have their belonging, if they have a coffee plantation, if they have an animal, or what they have in its place in order to guarantee the loan, if they are certain the *compañero* is given the loan, if there is not this we are sorry because from that mistake which was made there is no longer trust.

It is like this that the BAZ was born, which also is a project for emergencies. For example, in 2010, at the end of 2009 and in mid-2010, the rain passed heavier and the water current took the houses of the *compañeros*, their animals, their harvests, and some remained without having anything. How is it going to be recovered? How are they are going to construct their houses. That is why within that BAZ they remembered to put what they call as an emergency, also like this they had to give that solution because there was not another way to support the *compañeros* to whom things like this happen. If it is from a problem that the weather or the rain, well the *compañero* has greater right to be lent the money.

The Junta de Buen Gobierno divides up the donations in each municipality, for example Lucio Cabañas just 10 months ago received 68 thousand pesos. A municipal agreement was made that with those 68 thousand pesos they are going to make a BAM (Autonomous Municipal Bank), that is what they called it. The task of those autonomous municipal councils is that it has to give its reports to the Junta de Buen Gobierno, it cannot finish the money like that, this money has to generate its profit. This example is from the municipality Lucio Cabañas, but the three municipalities have like this, they are going to work in various collectives which they agree on.

Twenty-one thousand pesos has been given to the same municipality to plant coffee, now they have already planted it, all that is left is to see if this collective work is going to continue advancing. If they can clean it and they can sustain it this municipality is going to get benefit and if not, later it has to return the money because it can happen that responsibility is lacking. The agreements which are being realized are like this and that is why each municipality has its agreements on where and how they can do the collective work.

# **Caracol V: Which Speaks for Everyone**

Roberto Barrios

# Work of the Junta de Buen Gobierno

## Edgar (Delegate of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. MAREZ Benito Juárez)

Being in the Junta de Buen Gobierno we prepared reports to inform the brothers and sisters on how the work is going, on how the money was spent from the projects that they have sent. But as delegates of the Junta what we are going to say in the reports is not our own work, it is through the reports of each MAREZ, in agreement with what has been said in the projects' arrangements.

Another thing that we the delegates of the Junta de Buen Gobierno are doing is that we make records when some brothers or sisters want to go to visit, or want to go give workshops to the communities, without a record it cannot be done because we do not know who can arrive to the communities where there are compañeros.

Before it was not done like this, I have been a delegate for three years, in my period we began to see what is the record, we knew that before it was not done, there are brethren who just arrived directly like that without permission from the Junta. But it does not mean that we think it, but that we talk first with the towns so that they know, so that it is in their knowledge when a solidary brethren wants to arrive in the visit, so the town then knows, a brethren has to carry their record.

We also make a record when our support base compañeros who have a health problem, if a compañero comes to be sick or is not found in good health we make a record to send for them to go to a hospital, for example the San Carlos Clinic in Altamirano and also in SADEC to see how those compañeros can be supported.

If they go directly to the largest hospitals which the government manages, like those in Tabasco, they are going to pay much more for all the medicine, that is why we are seeing that situation. Also regarding health we are sending the vaccines to the municipalities every three months. We arrive to pick up the vaccines in the SADEC, that is why every three months the children compañeros and compañeras are vaccinated.

In our Zona Norte there is a coffee cooperative, when the compañeros do their meetings we, the delegates of the Junta, are always accompanying those compañeros to see what is dealt with, what agreement they make there or what work they are going to do. We accompany those compañeros who are the coffee cooperative, they have their delegates in each town, those delegates come also to the meetings, for them to know, for them to be able to inform what was dealt with in that meeting of the cooperative.

There are five municipalities which are exporting coffee, they are the municipalities of Aca-balná, Benito Juárez, La Paz, La Dignidad, and Rubén Jaramillo. Those are the municipalities which are exporting their coffee and there are four countries which are buying that coffee: Italy, Germany, France, and Greece.

In the coffee cooperative which there is in our zone there are coffee producers, there are compañeros who are also producers. In the cooperative they are working in a auto-certification way, in other words that cooperative does not work with Certimex, it is auto-certification.

The board of directors is a team of compañeros, aside from this each municipality has its municipal technician, one in each municipality, each community has its local technician, this is what they call the agroecology promoters, they are the ones who are most directly with the people, are the ones who see the work directly how the auto-certification is being done.

The auto-certification is how each producer works, how it is that they do their work in their coffee plantation, on their plot, if they no longer use gramoxone, agrochemicals, all those fertilizers, the local technician is in charge of supervising if each producer no longer uses those agrochemicals in their coffee plantation, he directly visits the parcel. In this way the local technician is related to the municipal technician and like this they coordinate with the board of directors, and the board of directors is the one who gives a report to the Junta de Buen Gobierno, like this the Junta de Buen Gobierno has the confidence that the work is being done like this.

The purchasers where the coffee is exported ask for a document where the Junta de Buen Gobierno says if that coffee, that product, is organic, the buyers ask for a document, a certificate, where it is said that the coffee is organic. During all that work that is being done if the purchasers want to do something or want to do a meeting they always have to come to the Junta de Buen Gobierno, the meetings always are in a coordinated manner.

When they do a meeting the Junta always has to be present and if they want to make a proposal or an agreement they the Junta de Buen Gobierno has to be there. Several years went by in which the Junta could not certify, know if really is a fact that the coffee is organic, if the compañeros themselves are not lying.

Before what the Junta de Buen Gobierno did is that it took it to the assembly, since it is known that the assembly is the greatest authority, the Junta cannot replace, it cannot make its own decision on certifying or putting a seal on a document, but it is until the people says, until the assembly says. If the assembly says or the people say that yes well the Junta does it.

What the Junta has done is an interchange of viewpoints among municipal technicians, there are five municipal technicians which there are in the five municipalities. The Junta took that proposal to the assembly if it is okay like this to prove that agrochemicals are not being used, for the Junta to certify it an interchange of viewpoints from one municipality to another municipality was done, like this it could be proved well that the coffee is organic, up to there the Junta de Buen Gobierno certified it, it made that document.

## **Alex (Member of the Junta de Buen Gobierno. Jacinto Canek Region)**

About cattle-herding in our zone, we have a plot recovered by the zone, by the support bases, on that plot it was the same as is happening in the town which is called San Patricio, which now is Comandante Abel. The same thing happened there but it was resolved and the compañeros remained there again, but that plot was left to the zone, 150 hectares belong to the Zona Norte to work in collective.

It was attempted to work the corn there but it did not work, now we are working in cattle-herding. In cattle-herding we have 101 heads of cattle and we have invested in total 700 thousand

pesos. On the purchase of cattle 513,100 pesos were spent to purchase the cattle and then in total with the wire, the masonry, all that, they were 700 thousand pesos or a little more.

Those who contribute the work are the support bases, the municipalities, they rotate when is necessary to cut the pastures when they are bushy, the municipalities send people but the Junta coordinates it. The Junta de Buen Gobierno has the coordination, it has to see how the pastures are, what is missing. There is an agreement from the zone meeting which it is necessary to name two *compañeros* so that they go to cover the shift to care for that cattle, one month per municipality, the 23<sup>rd</sup> of each month they rotate, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> a municipality enters and leaves on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of the next month; there are two *compañeros* per municipality.

The ones in charge of caring for the cattle are the regional delegates, they are the ones who have to take shifts. If there are some *compañeros* who do not know about the cattle a regional delegate has to go and a cattle- herder who does know about cattle. But the one who is going to control is the Junta, when some animals get sick the Junta has to check about the medicine, as there are donations from there the medicine is purchased, everything which is lacking, the cattle-herders only inform how the cattle are.

The Junta has to be seeing, sometimes every two days, every three days, they have to come to check how they are, if those who are there from the municipalities' commissions ensuring they are fulfilling their work, if they are fulfilling it as it should be. Like this is how we are working in the collective work of the zone, it has almost been one year since we bought that cattle, those animals have been there for 11 months but we still have not sold, we have still not gotten what is the profit but until there we go working.

The objective of that work is for the donations that there are in the Junta to not be misspent just like that on whatever necessity that there is, that is why that idea was created to form a zone collective so that one day we have something to sustain ourselves from, not waiting for there to be some NGO which gives projects for the Junta de Buen Gobierno. We are beginning to work what is the zone work.

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