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John Ahni Schertow
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Diana is a Spanish anarchist living in Boston. She works with children and is a member of the Boston por CIPO-RFM collective. This essay is from The Northeastern Anarchist #11 (Spring/Summer 2006)… which also includes essays on Especifismo, Organizational Dualism, the Quebec 'national question', participatory economics, and much more!

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situation, particularly in regard to indigenous peoples' political rights. Evidence of this deterioration is the political crimes, inter-community conflicts, detentions, and criminalization of social struggles.

The most recent attacks include the imprisonment of various CIPO-RFM members for opposing repression and land theft in San Isidro Aloapám. As of December 2005, 15 of them still remain imprisoned. Also, since July 2005, the community of Soledad, Sola de Vega, a village with a CIPO-RFM majority, has been surrounded by state-aided paramilitaries, who are blocking the entrance to food and medical supplies, and have orders to kill any CIPO-RFM members who try to pass.

The CIPO-RFM makes it clear that it does not want to transform the world by being in power. Its members believe that true power comes from the collective, from the community; therefore they promote and develop the organization of the people. Free association, direct democracy, autonomy, mutual aid, and collective work are the base of their daily lives, and ground their perspective of the liberation of their people and all others around the world who suffer under the modern forms of domination.

Repression

> "The solidarity of others is our own defense."
> – Praxedis G. Guerrero, Puntos Rojos (1906)

The CIPO-RFM explains that what hurts the government most is that "we will put an end to their economic and political institutions, we reject their salaries, private property, the state, and political parties."

Even though the CIPO-RFM has a policy of peace and coexistence and rejects the use of violence to resolve conflicts, their history has been marked by persecution and repression. Since the creation of the organization in 1997, there have been 212 people detained, 47 kidnappings, 103 raids by the military, police and paramilitaries in the communities of the organization, 500 arrest warrants, 22 people tortured, and 277 serious injuries.

Some of the cases that stand out are the detention and torture of 106 indigenous people on April 18, 1998, and kidnapping and torture of 46 indigenous people on January 1, 2002. The CIPO-RFM has organized protests, direct actions and sit-ins, demanding the release of their members. In order to build an external solidarity movement, members of the CIPO-RFM have toured Europe in 2001 and Canada in 2005 giving presentations and holding conferences.

Members have been displaced from their communities for fear of being jailed or murdered; hundreds are currently living in the US. Members such as Raúl Gatica and César Chavez García have had to flee as a result of constant harassment and assassination attempts.

Not surprisingly, the government of Vicente Fox has increased the number of soldiers and paramilitaries in Chiapas, Guerrero and Oaxaca. In the early months of 2005, following the election of Ulises Ruiz Ortiz as the new Oaxacan governor, there was a serious deterioration in the social and political

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the Magonistas. They promote a culture of respect for women in every space where they are present—in the community, organization, schools, unions, etc. The group also offers women assistance for education, defense of their reproductive rights, and training in skills such as handicrafts, baking, farming, and radio. Women are represented in all posts of responsibility, and also organize workshops in the communities to combat patriarchy. The result of these efforts can be seen in women's leadership in environmental struggles, such as the fight against genetically modified crops.

University researchers have discovered that between 20 and 60 percent of traditional corn varieties of the CIPO-RFM's communities are now contaminated with modified genes from imported US corn. The CIPO-RFM rejects the use of chemicals or pesticides, and use only techniques which improve traditional agriculture maintain self-sufficiency in food production.

They mobilize against destructive free trade agreements—the Free Trade Area of the Americas, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and the Plan Puebla Panama—in order to maintain their way of life, their customs and traditions. They view the imposition of capitalist free trade as a means of turning them into wage slaves, destroying their biodiversity, exploiting their land and water for industry, and patenting their medicinal plants for the profit of multinational corporations.

The revolutionary strategy of the CIPO-RFM is to protest against the genocidal and repressive forces of the state and capitalism, but at the same time, to create counter-institutions which meet the political, economic, and social needs of the communities. In the political sphere they have created directly democratic assemblies; they have formed cooperatives to meet their economic needs; and they have developed a range of social projects such as the women's anti-patriarchy workshops, an indigenous center in Oaxaca City, and educational programs.

CIPO-RFM. A work plan is elaborated, and a commitment to struggle is agreed upon.

The CIPO-RFM supports its members in the solution of agrarian problems, in protecting and recuperating communal farmland and forest. Here the idea of "Land and Freedom" is materialized in the form of communal property. The land belongs to the community and to those who work on it: the families who work the land own their harvest.

This idea of self-management goes beyond working the land, extending to the field of politics. Important decisions are made collectively, in community assemblies. All representative posts within the CIPO-RFM are assigned by the assemblies, and are unpaid, recallable positions.

The Magónistas are currently developing communal schools with an indigenous and Magónist focus, staffed by indigenous teachers. They offer occupational workshops for young people, study groups, and workshops promoting and spreading their cultures, languages, and traditions.

The communities practice mutual aid in two main aspects: barter and the tequio. Money has little importance internally: it is mainly used to obtain goods from outside the communities, and comes from the sale of hand-crafted goods in the cities, and from indigenous people who have emigrated. The tequio is communal work. For example, when a mill needs to be built, everyone works on that specific construction for free, as it will be a benefit for them all.

In many of the communities, participation in the tequio is also mandated as a penalty for social offenses. The Magónist concept of justice is to benefit the community, as contrasted with the concept of justice expressed by the kidnapping, humiliation, torture, capital punishment, forced labor and exclusion of the prison system.

The organization puts into practice concrete measures to ensure the full respect of the rights of women, youth, and ethnic minorities. The struggle against machismo is a key element for

The Popular Indigenous Council of Oaxaca-Ricardo Flores Magón (CIPO-RFM) is a social and democratic organization formed by 26 indigenous communities in Oaxaca, Mexico, comprised of about 2,000 members. They follow libertarian and indigenous ways and customs. The CIPO-RFM is a grassroots movement whose members work in their communities in the defense of human rights, on communal projects and environmental conservation, and in the provision of basic social needs.

For updated reports on the current uprising in Oaxaca visit The Narco News Bulletin

Liberty, Justice, Autonomy: Building a Magonista Reality

> "When the People Have the conscience That they are stronger
> Than their rulers, There will no longer be tyrants."
> —Ricardo Flores Magón

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A Past of Many Histories

About 60% of the approximate 3.5 million inhabitants of Oaxaca, one of Mexico's southernmost states, are indigenous. Many ethnolinguistic groups coexist in this area, such as the Amuzgos, Chatino, Chinanteco, Chocho, Chontal, Cuicateco,

Huave, Ixcateco, Mazateco, Mixe, Mixteco, Náhuatl, Triqui, Zapoteco, Zoque and the Popoloca. Like Chiapas and Guerreros, other southern states with large indigenous populations, Oaxaca's economy is based on agriculture and mired in poverty. But Oaxaca is unique in how little of its land has been privatized, making it the center of ongoing land conflicts: 80% of the land is still used communally.

The CIPO-RFM formed in late 1997 out of a conglomeration of anarchist, Marxist and indigenous organizations. One of its forerunners was the Magónist Indigenous Movement, an anti-capitalist group which formed in the 1980s in response to agrarian conflicts and social repression in Oaxaca. This group took inspiration from Ricardo Flores Magón, an indigenous Oaxacan revolutionary, libertarian, and a key figure in the 1910 Mexican Revolution.

From 1892 onward, Magón and his followers became "the most active opposition to the Díaz regime at the time, participated in strikes, launched militant uprisings, and tirelessly propagated their views," primarily through their newspaper Regeneración. Magón stressed the importance of indigenous people forcefully defending their communal lands within the overall revolutionary struggle—and the necessity of a social revolution to guarantee their autonomy. According to the CIPO-RFM, Magónism can't be reduced to the ideas of Magón himself: it includes their historical heritage as indigenous people, and the heritage of all the men and women of Mexico and worldwide who have contributed to the struggle.

Strategy and Practice

> "We may not be heroes, guerrillas or revolutionaries here, but we do build our dreams."
> —The Popular Indigenous Council of Oaxaca-Ricardo Flores Magón (CIPO-RFM)

The CIPO-RFM´s slogan is "liberty, justice, autonomy," and its mission is to help the people and the workers organize themselves freely, regardless of membership in the organization. They implement sustainable projects of means of production, services, and commerce. They develop alternative media, including radio stations, internet, and television. The CIPO-RFM frames its activities in terms familiar to all libertarians: mutual aid, self management, free association of communities, solidarity, equality, direct action, and the rejection of the state and electoral politics. All these ideals, interpreted in their own cultural context, are a reality in Oaxaca.

The CIPO-RFM respects the EZLN in Chiapas, but has opted for the use of peaceful rebellion, preferring not to give the state an excuse to engage in open military repression. The CIPO-RFM does not believe that revolution will be spontaneous, but that it is a slow and carefully planned process of organization. It rejects the state and political parties, and is always looking for ways to work with all other organizations, communities and people who are willing to struggle for the liberation of their people. The group is a member of the International Libertarian Solidarity network.

There is a clear process for a community to enter CIPO-RFM. First representatives of the group are invited for a general presentation, in which they explain the benefits and risks of joining. After this initial introduction, a workshop is given on the topic of the importance and necessity of organization. A second workshop analyses different forms of struggle, stressing the importance of a libertarian and Magónista organization. During a third workshop, the community diagnoses its problems and discusses possible solutions. Participants are encouraged to make connections between the problems in their own communities and those of other communities. In a final workshop, called the Basic Council, the community formally decides to join the