

Solidarity Trip to Chile, Bolivia, and Wamapu

*to sharpen the struggles for our
collective liberation, cachai?*



In September and October, 2010, a group of anarchists from North America traveled to Chile, Wallmapu (the Mapuche territories, occupied by the Chilean and Argentinean states), and Bolivia to meet with local anti-authoritarians, learn the histories and current situations of their struggles, and make the connections necessary to strengthen real and long-term solidarity between anarchists in North America and people in struggle in these countries.

We came at an important time, less than a month after a major wave of raids and arrests targeting anarchists in Santiago, during a crucial and highly supported hungerstrike by Mapuche political prisoners against the antiterrorism law and the repression of their struggle, and at a low point in the once colossal social movements in Bolivia, which have now been co-opted by the leftwing government of the indigenous president, Evo Morales.

With the blog (chileboliviawallmapu.wordpress.com) our purpose is to share the translations and articles we wrote during and after our trip to spread what we learned and to facilitate the spread of solidarity and the use of this model of intentional solidarity trips, which could help improve anarchist connections in other parts of the world.

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THE MAPUCHE STRUGGLE IN SOUTHERN CHILE

I have spent the last few weeks traveling with a group of friends in Chile and talking with folks about the Mapuche struggle here. There are many communities in resistance – this article reflects the individual perspectives offered to me from members of different Mapuche communities, as well as my own analysis.

Thirty-four Mapuche political prisoners are currently in the 77th day of a hunger strike which they will continue ‘to the ultimate consequences’ or until the state stops using the terrorist law to persecute the Mapuche struggle. They want the state to do away with its system of double jeopardy and are demanding civil, not military, court process for all Mapuche political prisoners. General demands also include the demilitarization of Mapuche communities under long standing occupation at the hands of the Chilean police and freedom for all Mapuche political prisoners. Two of the Mapuche prisoners were released on conditional bail. Though they are continuing their fast they took some time to sit down and talk with us about the Mapuche struggle. We were also able to visit the prison in Temuco to talk with some of the prisoners on hunger strike inside.

Since 1999 the Chilean state has made a habit of prosecuting Mapuche political prisoners under the anti-terrorist law. Previously, Mapuche were persecuted under a domestic security law. Mapuche political prisoners currently suffer a system of double jeopardy – they are frequently processed concurrently in military and civil trials. The military courts usually incur longer sentences. There exists little illusion of judicial impartiality in prosecuting Mapuches – evidence is frequently manufactured and secret anonymous witnesses make a generous living regurgitating police fabrications. Under the anti-terrorist law witnesses are allowed to give secret testimony in the Chilean courts, and because their identity is protected it is much harder for the defense to cross-examine them and much easier for them to give false testimony. One of the prisoners we spoke with has been in prison for 2 years under pretrial detention.

The Chilean government recently passed a new version of the terrorist law that combines some of the worst of the civil and military process – charges that include injured police still garner the heavier sentences of the military courts, and police can now offer protected anonymous testimony. International financing is further penalized with some small concessionary changes to the Mapuche like lighter sentencing for arson. Overall, we are told the new modifications to the anti-terrorist law are even worse for communities in resistance.

The Chilean parliament seems to be hoping that no one will read the contents of the new law. No doubt the Chilean president, Piñera hopes that press articles glossing over the specifics and talking about general ‘modifications’ to the law will position the government in a beneficial light. The government has taken great pains to use the media and the recent bicentennial celebrations to create and propagate a false sense of national unity for the future of Chile. Piñera has stated that now is the time to leave all criticisms of the Chilean state in the past, and the hunger strike of the Mapuche prisoners is a fissure in that crystal ball.

The government wants to put on a good face, offering “dialogue” with Mapuche communities to end both the hunger strike and the general resistance, but it has not responded directly to the clear demands of the hunger strikers. The government has offered to not apply the terrorist law to the current hunger strikers’ cases but will make no concessions on future applications of the law. The government has also put forth the Aracaunia plan which it is spinning as a development initiative in the Southern territories. It’s supposedly funded to the tune of 4 billion dollars, though the government won’t actually tell the Mapuche representatives what the plan concretely involves.

Mapuche communities have good reason to fear more money flowing into the municipal coffers of the Southern territories. The police are an occupying force put in place by the state to protect the interests of the multinational corporations in the region. State funds help train the elite police units that kill with precision. Mapuche communities exist under a veritable state of siege. Police come into Mapuche communities, beat, shoot and kill without consequence. Although they use militarized police in place of the military, make no mistake, there is a war being waged in Southern Chile.

The Mapuche fight on multiple fronts using a wide array of tactics against police and transnational business occupation of their land. Timber logging, electro-hydro interests, and increasingly mining companies frequently feel the force of Mapuche strikes against the machinery of resource extraction. Timber company claims are felled or burned, the land retaken. Tourist cabañas, hotels and other rural development projects end up in smoke. Retaking territorial lands from transnational companies is an important part of growing the community holdings for use by the next generation. Mapuche resistance is strong and its inheritance in each subsequent generation is evident. The violence, torture and imprisonment which Mapuche youth experience at the hands of the state guarantees a continued legacy of community struggle.

No deaths have resulted from these actions, only property damage. This property damage is demonized in the media and prosecuted as terrorism. The soft glove and the iron fist still go hand in hand in Chile. Those the state can’t bring to the table will continue to be criminalized in the media and im-

prisoned by the courts. The creation of the “Mapuche terrorist” as a prime figure in the public eye is important for the construction of a stacked judiciary designed to send Mapuche resisters to prison for longer and longer stints. Many Mapuche targeted under the terrorist law choose to go into clandestinity rather than gamble their freedom in such a hostile judicial climate.

There is a certain sick irony in the Chilean state using the label terrorist for Mapuche warriors. The tactics of the state actually come closest to creating the widespread feelings of fear that normatively define ‘terrorism.’ The vicious and arbitrary way police lash out at Mapuche communities can only be accurately described as a form of state terrorism. Within this context, soothing offers of government dialogue only ring false.

The discourse of offering to talk, while concretely offering very little, gives the government the illusion of fair play. Any parliamentary democracy using the kinds of horrendous violence the Chilean police have made a habit of needs to make such disingenuous efforts to maintain the illusion of public peace. The good will the government wants to represent in the press by suggesting a dialogue was notably absent last week when the parliament passed the new modifications to the anti-terrorist law. If the government really wants dialogue they would do well to temper the unspeakable levels of violence that currently resonate loud and clear in Mapuche communities.

The Mapuche struggle has been characterized by many of the folks I’ve spoken with as a struggle for independence from Chile. It is important to understand – the Mapuche are not the “indigenous of Chile.” Many Mapuche communities consider themselves a separate nation, one that has been resisting incursion into their territory since the failed Spanish invasion, and don’t identify with the Chilean state or any other government. The territorial lands now under occupation by the militarized wing of the Chilean police were once known as “the Spanish graveyards”.

The anti-terrorist law continues the unbroken line of repression that can be traced back to Spanish colonialism, and has not stopped under the democracy. The first prosecutions of the Mapuche as terrorists happened under the Socialists in the late 90’s. Changes of the Chilean government have changed some specific experiences of repression for the Mapuche, but not the basic parameters of the state of war. None of the legal tinkering of the modified law or the debate in the press get to the root of the issue: tactical government repression safe guards transnational business interests.

The Chilean state needs the territorial lands of the Mapuche so that it can continue to create the illusion of a healthy neo-liberal economic boom; an economic boom which is heavily based on unsustainable resource extraction. The north has been tapped while mineral speculation in many parts of the

south is just beginning. In many ways the Chilean state needs the Mapuche, or at least their lands, but the Mapuche do not need the Chilean state. There is no way to fit the Mapuche nation into the Chilean state.

The Mapuche will not so easily be brought to their knees by false multicultural delusions of the Chilean state. That identity holds no currency for the Mapuche. The democratic state has offered only a hollow second class citizenship to the Mapuche – not taking into account the level of territorial independence needed in order to maintain their way of life.

The Chilean state has made an honest assessment of the situation and understands Mapuche resistance to assimilation. The continued hardening of the terrorist law, the consolidation of the military sentencing guidelines into the civil code, and the empty gestures of dialogue are tactical steps which allow the continued occupation and criminalization of Mapuche communities to be more palatable to a wider social democracy. Mapuche repression on the part of the Chilean state happens at the behest of capitalist interests and no amount of social democratic discourse about dialogue can obscure that. The Mapuche will continue to resist any attempts to recuperate their struggle within the discourse of the Chilean state and they will continue the fight for the survival of their people. The hunger strike continues...

THE STRUGGLE FOR LLEU LLEU: MAPUCHE COMMUNITIES FIGHT TO SAVE THEIR LAND FROM TIMBER AND MINING COMPANIES

Late September. It's just another day in the community of Juana Millahual. Jose Llanquileo is driving a team of oxen pulling a heavy iron plow, clearing furrows in the hillside for a spring crop of potatoes, barley, and onions. Nearby, Angelica is starting a fire to burn away the last traces of pine and eucalyptus planted by timber companies on stolen Mapuche land. Today, the sun shines and the wind blows softly through the tepa trees on the banks of Lleu Lleu, one of the cleanest lakes in South America. On another day, it wouldn't be at all out of place to see a hundred heavily armed police backed up by jeeps, helicopters, and armored personnel carriers, knocking down the doors of one of the small houses to conduct a raid or search for a fugitive. The rural indigenous communities on the banks of the lake, peaceful as they seem on any day when the police don't come around, are a source of fierce resistance to capitalist investment and neoliberal development.

This community, similar to many of its neighbors, is in a process of forcefully recovering hundreds of hectares of their traditional lands which have been usurped by timber companies. Forestal Mininco, which is controlled by one of the richest families in Chile and partners with the IFC, the private arm of the World Bank, operates thousands of hectares of pine and eucalyptus plantations just around Lleu Lleu. Where there used to be farmland or native forests, the timber companies have planted genetically modified pine and eucalyptus in homogenous rows, at great detriment to the health of local soil, watersheds, and biodiversity. The exotic tree plantations, which produce mostly for export, drain the water table and steal food directly from the mouths of indigenous communities.

In 1879, Jose's great grandmother held 10,000 hectares of land on the banks of the lake, or approximately 25,000 acres. Now, the community of 21 families only has 300 hectares, though they have a claim on another 1,000 hectares currently covered in Mininco tree plantations. Between 1881 and 1883, the Chilean state finally succeeded in invading and conquering Walmapu, the Mapuche territories, slaughtering a large part of the population and attempting to extinguish the culture, language, and religion of the survivors. On the other side of the Andes, the Argentinian state also conducted a similar invasion of Mapuche lands. "They called this the Pacification of Araucania," explains Jose. "They said they pacified us. For us it wasn't like this. It was genocide."

Throughout all the previous centuries, the Mapuche had fiercely guarded their independence. After losing several wars and having all their attempted invasions thwarted, the Spanish crown was forced to sign the first of several treaties with the Mapuche nation in 1641. In 1825, the new Chilean state recognized the Mapuche nation and all its territories south of the Bio Bio river. Roughly all the lands between Concepcion and Puerto Montt, and a corresponding chunk of Argentina, belong to an independent Walmapu, according to several centuries worth of treaties.

For the first decades of occupation, the Mapuche had to fight simply for survival. Most were pushed off their lands or shot down by the new landlords for the smallest acts of resistance. In the 1970s, the forestry industry took off, spurred by the neoliberal policies of the Pinochet regime. Since the transition to democracy in 1990, talk of human rights, development, and even autonomy has entered mainstream political discourse, but the state and media have colluded to an increasing degree to control the Mapuche struggle. Precisely because the Mapuche have never forgotten they are an independent nation or surrendered to the occupation of their lands, those in power have to do everything possible to situate the “Mapuche conflict” in a discourse of poverty and marginalization, insofar as the problem can be managed by humanitarian agencies, and domestic terrorism, when it becomes a police problem. But as Matias Cachileo stated, not long before he was shot in the back and killed by police during an action on a large estate in 2008, “We are not the indigenous people of Chile. We are the Mapuche. We are a people apart.”

Jose Llanquileo is finishing out a five year prison sentence for burning pine trees on a Mininco plantation. He’s served four years already, and now gets weekly furloughs to go back to his community on the weekends and help work in the fields. Outside the prison in Temuco, he explained why their struggle poses such a big threat to the Chilean state. “More than anything else, they’re scared of our ideas. The so-called Mapuche conflict doesn’t have a solution. The demands we have necessitate a break with the framework of the state. What we demand is sovereignty and Mapuche independence. We consciously propose the historical foundations of these demands.” Later, walking down a street bedecked with Chilean flags marking the recent bicentennial celebration, he scoffed. “The bicentenary is a lie. These lands have only been occupied by Chile for 130 years.”

The struggle for the land took a turn in the early 1990s when Mapuches began forcefully reoccupying land that had been stolen from them. Early organizations like Consejo de Todas las Tierras popularized the tactic of symbolic land takeovers, in which the people of a community would occupy a plot of land for a day, rebuilding a collective consciousness that the land was theirs, and the landlords and forestry companies were the usurpers. Later, the Coordinadora de Arauca Malleco, C.A.M., developed a practice of “productive

recovery” that moved well beyond symbolism. From now on, the purpose of land takeovers would be to permanently recover stolen territory. Community members and C.A.M. activists would destroy tree plantations and plant crops on recovered land. “C.A.M. was to the Chilean state what Al Qaida is to the U.S. government,” joked Llanquileo.

It’s no surprise that the Chilean state quickly began applying the antiterrorist law in a conflict whose only human victims were Mapuche. “The government is more interested in protecting private property than human life,” says Sergio Catrilaf, a Mapuche activist charged under the antiterrorist law and facing 18 years of prison. He’s accused of possessing weapons and explosives. “But they don’t have any fingerprints. There’s not any kind of biological evidence connecting me to those materials. It’s a pure frame-up.” In the frequent raids on Mapuche communities, “they never find anything illegal. They only find illegal materials when they’re arresting someone. Isn’t that suspicious?”

Catrilaf is one of dozens of Mapuches facing heavy sentences under the antiterrorist law, which increases penalties, allows secret witnesses that cannot be thoroughly questioned by the defense, and inverts the presumption of innocence. In these circumstances, buying testimony and fabricating or planting evidence become standard police practices. For this reason, Catrilaf and 33 other Mapuche political prisoners have been on hungerstrike since July 12, demanding a demilitarization of Mapuche lands and an end to the use of the antiterrorist law against them.

After over 70 days of the hungerstrike and accompanying protests and media attention, the government has made the hollow gesture of offering to drop the terrorism charges just in the cases of those currently facing trial. They also modified the antiterrorism law to decrease the penalties for some charges and increase the penalties for others, while ending the double jeopardy that allows the state to try people in civil court and military court for any crimes against the police or state. The media have presented the modification as an important change, but hungerstrickers, their family members and lawyers have determined the changed law will actually make it easier for the government to punish its opponents.

Despite the repression, the tactic of productive recovery has generalized. Dozens of Mapuche communities are in a process of land recovery, removing exotic trees and planting gardens, restoring their ability to feed themselves and ending their dependence on government assistance programs and capitalist economics.

The people of Juana Millahual have been busy recovering the first few hundred hectares of their thousand-hectare claim for fifteen years. In the beginning, the process was more dangerous. Police guarded the plantations jeal-

ously, and it was risky business damaging trees, blocking logging trucks, and carrying out other actions to force the timber companies to abandon a plot of land. The courts decided they could take no action when both the community and the company displayed valid titles to the land in question, and since then all the families in the community have been able to come out and farm the land on a collective basis.

But the repression hasn't stopped. Several community members targeted by police on fabricated charges have had to go on the run, or have been imprisoned. Jose and Angelica were living underground for three years, evading charges of illegal association, a statute of the antiterrorist law, before being captured. They spent a year in pretrial detention and were ultimately acquitted for lack of evidence, though Jose was imprisoned on the arson charges. Their first child was born while they were underground.

One of the primary purposes of the antiterrorist law, and police repression in general, is to remove obstacles to development. "The biggest problem is the advance of capitalism, in the form of investment on our lands. This is one of the principal threats that the Mapuche face because it means the exploitation of natural resources. These resources are on Mapuche lands, so investment means the expulsion of the inhabitants," Jose explains. "Even while we're recovering our lands, this investment is going on, which endangers everything we have achieved."

In addition to forests, Mapuche lands contain silver, gold, coal, and a high potential for geothermal and hydroelectric electricity. The area around Lleu Lleu is specifically threatened by a secretive mining project that community members only discovered by accident when survey antennas were being installed to map out mineral deposits. In particular, developers want to exploit scandium deposits. Scandium is used in the aerospace industry and the production of aluminum alloys. The community members mobilized to oppose the mine, holding protests and destroying the antennas. When the governor came four years ago to publicly announce the project, community members swarmed him and even destroyed his vehicle. The police had to rescue him, and the project disappeared for awhile. Now, mining interests are back, discreetly approaching families in the region one by one, offering them money for the mineral rights or paying them to move out. People organizing against the mine have been unable to ascertain when construction might begin, or what international corporations are investing in the project, so they are focusing on building popular opposition.

What's plain is that any mine in the area would contaminate the lake, which has remained clean for so long precisely because it is surrounded by traditional Mapuche communities. "Unlike Western society," explains Jose Llanquileo, "the Mapuche don't see humans as the center of the world. We don't

think humans are the perfect species that can dominate all the other species. We understand that we are just a part of the world.” Lleu Lleu is especially important to all the communities around it, because “we fish in the lake. We feed our families with those fish.”

Mining has already destroyed the environment in the northern part of the Chilean state. It would be doubly tragic if that destruction came to Lleu Lleu because of the many successes local communities have had in protecting the environment, removing tree plantations, restoring food sovereignty, and supporting the return of native tree species. Because investors and project developers are being so secretive, it’s hard to know how best to resist them, but for now local activists are spreading the word about the mining project and preparing to block any attempt to begin construction, building off the collective strength that is a direct result of years of struggle for independence.

“Today it falls upon us to fight. That’s all,” says Mauricio Huaquillao, another of the Mapuche prisoners on hungerstrike, who is facing 80 years in prison. “Against the multinationals, timber companies, mining companies, threatening the little space we have left.”

The fight of the Mapuche is far from over. They’ve resisted colonialism for 500 years, achieving a number of important victories already. By refusing to submit to the “institutionality” of the Chilean state, they reveal the connections between colonialism, international investment, and police violence on one side, and on the other side food sovereignty, freedom, health, and the environment. What could human rights or democracy mean in the context of the state and capitalism? As Jose Llanquileo puts it, “They stole our lands. How can we dialogue?”

The Mapuche are not the oppressed underclass of Chilean society. They are their own people, and they will solve problems of poverty, hunger, destruction of the environment, and judicial persecution on their own, by recovering their traditional lands and way of life and winning independence at the economic, political, cultural, and spiritual levels. They have a tough battle, going up against an international complex of investment and resource exploitation, and the state’s well developed politics of antiterrorism. But the Mapuche have defeated stronger opponents before. As they say, *marichi weu*. “Ten times over we’ll win.”

Forestal Mininco is cooperating with the International Finance Corporation, the private sector arm of the World Bank, to manage and harvest tree plantations on the lands of small and medium landowners. Through grants and microloans under the guise of sustainable development, the IFC is paying Mapuche community members as well as estate owners to grow lumber for export instead of growing food.

The IFC has offices in Washington, DC. It was set up by the Chilean government together with ITT. ITT has offices and interests all over North America.

Arauco, the other major timber company operating on Mapuche lands, has a US subsidiary, Arauco USA, with offices in Atlanta, Georgia.

Mining in Chile is directly subsidized by CORFO, the Chilean Economic Development Agency. CORFO has offices in Los Angeles, New York, and Boston. Major companies they have convinced to invest in Chile include Citigroup, IBM, and BBVA.

WITH LAND, WITHOUT THE STATE: ANARCHY IN WALLMAPU

*“Walmapu Liberado
Con Tierra, Sin Estado”*

The guards at the Temuco prison search us over, and lead us into a room off the main hallway. The four men come in a little later and begin telling us their stories. They choose their words solemnly, and take long pauses. Seventy days without eating has taken its toll. “Our bones hurt, we get dizzy, tired, we have to rest a lot, lay down a lot. It’s uncomfortable going so long without eating. But we’re going to go until the final consequences. We’re putting our bodies and health on the line for the Mapuche people.”

They start with what we already know: the reasons for the hungerstrike, the Chilean state’s use of the antiterrorist law against Mapuche warriors, and the long history of their struggle. When they find out we’re not human rights activists, but anarchists, they smile and warm up to us a little more. After all, the human rights organizations have shown concern for the Mapuche once they end up in prison, but have never taken a position on Mapuche independence. One of them tells us: “First Nations have given a deeper sense to the word ‘anarchy.’ We were the first anarchists. Our politics is an anti-politics.”

Foundations

José Llanquileo is four years into a five year sentence for arson. For three years he was living in clandestinity with his partner, Angelica, and for a year was one of the Chilean state’s most wanted fugitives. In 2006, the two were finally captured. She was acquitted on charges of illegal association, under the antiterrorist law. He was convicted for burning pine trees on a forestry plantation belonging to a major logging company, as part of a land reclamation action. Now he gets work release during the day, and furloughs on the weekends, so he has time to take us around Temuco, introduce us to the hungerstrikers, and tell us his story.

We’ve come here as anarchists, to learn about the Mapuche struggle, to tell about our own struggles, to see where we have affinity, and begin creating a basis for long-term solidarity.

Fortunately, we can start on a good foundation. The leftists have had a patronizing attitude towards the Mapuche, says José, but “the anarchists have been very respectful, and shown lots of solidarity. I think we should be grateful for that.” He’s clear, however, that the Mapuche’s struggle is their own. Marxism was influential at a certain moment, but they are not Marxists. One

could characterize the Mapuche way of thinking as environmentalist, but they are not environmentalists. They have affinity with anarchists, but they are not anarchists. “We are Mapuche. We are our own people, with our own history, and our struggle comes directly out of that.” Contrary to the assertions of the leftists, the Mapuche are not the marginalized lower class of Chilean society. They are not the proletariat, and the idea of class war does not correspond to their reality. Consequently, they may find some affinity with the revolutionary movements that developed in the context of class war in European society, but these movements do not adequately address their situation.

“The Left consider the Mapuche as just another sector of the oppressed, an opinion we don’t share. Our struggle is taking place in the context of the liberation of a people. Our people are distinct from Western society.” Moreover, the Mapuche people have a proud history of fighting invasion, resisting domination, and organizing themselves to meet their needs and live in freedom, so their own worldview and culture are more than sufficient as an ideological basis for their struggle.

This point is stressed by nearly everyone we meet, and I think our ability to become friends and *compañeros* rests directly on the fact that we respect their way of struggle rather than trying to incorporate them into our way of struggle.

I want to be upfront with the people I meet, with whom I want to build relationships of solidarity, so on the first day I tell him my motivations and assumptions. The comrades who put us in touch already told José I’m an anarchist, and informed him of the kind of work I do, so the fact that he invited us into his community and took time off to guide us around is a good sign. I let him know that many US anarchists already have a little familiarity with the Mapuche struggle, and our understanding is that their culture is anti-authoritarian, and they organize horizontally. Is this correct?

José says it is, but I notice a little eurocentrism on my part, a difference in worldviews, when he automatically replaces my word, “horizontal,” with the word “circular,” to describe Mapuche society. There is no centralization of power among the Mapuche, who in fact are a nation of several different peoples, living in different geographic regions, and speaking different dialects of the same language. The land belongs to the community, and it is maintained collectively, as opposed to individually or communally. Each community has a *lonko*, a position generally translated as “chief,” but each family has a large degree of autonomy, and many decisions are made by the whole community in assemblies. *Lonkos* are usually men, but have been women as well. There are other traditional roles of influence: the *machi* is a religious figure and a healer. Men and women can become *machis*, but they are neither chosen

nor self-appointed. Those who have certain dreams or get inexplicably sick as children, and who demonstrate a certain sensitivity, will become machis. Then there is the *werken*, the spokesperson, a role that has taken on explicitly political characteristics as Mapuche communities organize their resistance. Historically there were *tokis*, war leaders that different communities followed voluntarily, though currently no one plays this role, as the Mapuche have not gone to war since being occupied by the Chilean and Argentinean states in the 1880s.

I ask about gender relations and how the Mapuche view things like family structure and homosexuality, making clear my own feelings but also trying not to be judgmental. José says the Mapuche family structure is the same as in European society, and there is a great deal of conservatism, pressure to marry and have children, and disapproval of anything that falls outside of this format. He thinks that maybe it didn't used to be like that, and perhaps the Catholic missionaries and conservative Chilean society have changed traditional values. In any case, the women we meet during our limited time in the communities are all strong, active, vocal, and involved, and in the homes we stay in there seem to be a sharing and a flexibility of roles. The people in our group, meanwhile, don't try too hard to present as heterosexual or cis-gendered and don't have any problems.

It's an exciting time to be in Wallmapu. All the communities in resistance are united behind the hungerstriking prisoners, but behind the scenes, important debates are taking place. The hungerstrike, based directly on the ongoing struggle (all the Mapuche prisoners are accused or convicted of crimes related to land recovery actions, such as arsons targeting the forestry companies, or related to conflict with the Chilean state, such as the seizing of a municipal bus or a shooting that gave a good scare to a state's attorney), has focused the Mapuche nation and captured the attention of the entire Chilean population. It has won a popular legitimacy for the Mapuche struggle, undermining the demonization of the direct tactics they use and weakening the government's position in casting these tactics as terrorism. In this situation, the Mapuche can go beyond calls for greater autonomy or land reform within the Chilean state.

"The so-called Mapuche conflict doesn't have a solution. The demands we have necessitate a break with the framework of the state. What we demand is sovereignty and Mapuche independence. We consciously propose the historical foundations of these demands [...] Our struggle is fundamentally opposed to capitalism and the state [...] I believe we have to open a space internationally to spread our demands. The Mapuche struggle has to be internationalist, as the struggle of a people. Many of the things that affect us,

like capitalism and the states that represent it, the US, the EU, are an enemy to peoples, First Nations as much as oppressed classes around the world, and that's a point of concordance."

"The biggest problem is the advance of capitalism, in the form of investment on our lands. This is one of the principal threats that the Mapuche face because it means the exploitation of natural resources. These resources are on Mapuche lands, so investment means the expulsion of the inhabitants," José explains. "Even while we're recovering our lands, this investment is going on, which endangers everything we have achieved."

After a few days, we leave Temuco and head for the hills, to the town of Cañete, and then to the first of a couple autonomous Mapuche communities in resistance we've been invited into, in the area of the lake Lleu Lleu, south of the city of Concepcion. Mapuche communities have two names, or rather, the place has a name, and the group of people has another name. José's community, Juana Millahual, at Rucañanko, sits on a steep hill above one arm of the lake. It is a small community, with just a few dozen families. José's brother is lonko. The houses are mostly small, rectangular, wooden buildings sitting atop low stilts. José explains that the traditional houses, the ruca, had thatched instead of tin roofs, but these have been mostly burned down over the decades of struggle.

The oldest knowledge they have of the community is in 1879, when José's great grandmother had 10,000 hectares. Now the community only has 300 hectares, but they are in the process of recovering 1000 more hectares, 220 of which they have occupied. "In these territories there is a profound transformation where big capital has exploited natural resources and where the Mapuche are trying to recompose their spaces." They're recovering their traditions and parts of their culture that were nearly lost, and when they retake a plot of land, they take it out of the hands of Capital "which says it exists to serve man and must be exploited. When the Mapuche occupy it, there is a revolutionary change, a profound transformation to the social, cultural, religious, and economic fabric." When they recover land, their machis come and the whole community performs a Ngillatun, a major ceremony, to purge it from its time as private property and to communalize it.

At his house, during his weekend furlough, José tells us more about the Mapuche history. The Mapuche territories used to extend from near the present locations of Santiago and Buenos Aires, Pacific coast to Atlantic coast, south to the island of Chiloe. Farther south, on the southern cone of the continent, other peoples lived. They were hardy nations that survived the extreme temperatures without problems, but were mostly exterminated when the Euro-

peans came.

José explains that *winka*, the term the Mapuche have given to the European invaders, simply means “new Inca.” Before the arrival of the conquistadors, the Inca nation were already engaging in a sort of regional imperialism, which the Mapuche wanted no part in. The Inca armies got as far south as present-day Santiago, where they were defeated and consistently prevented from advancing any farther. When the Spanish arrived, the Mapuche treated them as just the most recent invaders, and defeated them as well. It’s a point of pride that the Inca, who had an advanced, centralized civilization, fell easily to the conquistadors, while the Mapuche, who were decentralized, never did. What the Spanish couldn’t understand was that there was no single Mapuche army. Each group of communities had their own *toki*, and if the Spanish won a battle against one group of warriors, as soon as they advanced a little farther they’d have to face another one.

During my time in Wallmapu, I think a lot about what it means to be a people. From the traditional anarchist standpoint, a people or a nation is an essentializing category, and thus a vehicle for domination. However, it becomes immediately clear that it would be impossible to support the Mapuche struggle while being dismissive of the idea of a people.

Hopefully by this point all Western anarchists realize that national liberation struggles aren’t inherently nationalist; that nationalism is a European mode of politics inseparable from the fact that all remaining European nations are artificial constructions of a central state, whereas in the rest of the world (excepting, say, China or Japan), this is usually only true of post-colonial states (like Chile or Algeria) that exist in direct opposition to non-state nations. Many other nations are not at all homogenizing or centrally organized.

Going beyond this, though, is it essentializing to talk about a Mapuche worldview or way of life? The more I listen, however, the more I doubt my accustomed standpoint. To a great extent, Mapuche is a chosen identity. Most “Chileans” have black hair, broad faces, and brown skin, while less than 10% of the population of the Chilean state identify as Mapuche. In a context of forced assimilation and a history of genocide, choosing to identify as Mapuche is, on some levels, a political statement, a willful inheritance of a cultural tradition and hundreds of years of struggle, and an engagement with an ongoing strategic debate that perhaps makes it legitimate to talk about what the Mapuche want, what they believe, in a more singular way. At one point, when we’re talking about mestizos, José makes it clear that someone is Mapuche if they identify as such, even if they have mixed parentage. In other words the Western notion of ethnicity, which leaves no room for choice because it is based on blood quanta, does not apply. Also, the fact that the Mapuche call the Europeans the “new Inca” show that they do not have an

essentializing, generalizing view of sameness between all indigenous peoples. On the contrary, many people we met specified an interest in connecting specifically with other First Nations that were fighting back against their colonization, showing that what they cared about was not a racial category, but a struggle.

So if Mapuche is a chosen identity based on a very real shared history, shared culture, and ongoing collective debate of strategy, is it actually all that different from the identity of anarchist? Well, yes: it has a longer history, tied to a specific geographic territory and cultural-linguistic inheritance. Anarchism also contains a greater diversity of worldviews, but on the flipside no one I met tried to present the Mapuche as homogenous, even as they talked about a Mapuche worldview.

In sum, the concept of belonging to a people brings a great deal of strength to the Mapuche struggle. Because the state falls outside of and against that people and their history, I find some elements of the Mapuche reality, of their world, to be a more profound realization of anarchy than I have found among self-identified anarchists. And considering that those anarchist movements that have been able to maintain just 40 years of historical memory (Greece, Spain) are consistently stronger than anarchist movements that have a hard time even understanding the concept of historical memory (US, UK), it is no surprise that the Mapuche, who maintain over 500 years of historical memory, are so strongly rooted that they seem impervious to repression.

Fire

For the third time, I carry a smoldering branch from the cooking fire to the nest of dry kindling I've placed in the brush, and finally it catches, and the orange feathers flap and flutter like a bird stuck in a thorn bush. Despite all the anarchist romancing of fire, I've never before thought of arson like this.

Angelica and José have taken us to reclaimed land, a plot well suited for farming, where the hillside isn't so steep. José is driving the team of oxen over the acre that was cleared last year, pulling a heavy iron plow through the earth to make furrows for sowing potato and onion. The adjacent acre has already been seeded with barley. Angelica, meanwhile, is tending the fire. One fire is patiently cooking our lunch, while its children are spreading through the brush to clear the earth for next year's fields. And my friends and I are helping. Environmentalists starting forest fires, I snicker.

Of course, there's been no forest here for decades. This was a pine plantation on stolen Mapuche lands, identical rows of genetically modified, non-native pine trees planted by Forestal Mininco, a company owned by one of the wealthiest families in Chile. Ten years ago, a number of hectares were taken

over by community members. At first, only the most politically active members of the community dared to participate in the re-occupation, and some others would come out to cook or otherwise give support. When the courts found out that both the community and the timber company held titles to the same land, they declared they could take no action, and on the ground the community members have overwhelmed the forestry employees. Now, it's basically a done deal, and the whole community comes out to farm the recovered land. Each family has its own plot of land that inheres to it individually. The recovered land, meanwhile, is communally owned and collectively maintained. One family will work a specific plot one year, but another family might work the same plot the next year. When needed, the whole community will get together to talk about how to use the land, but they seem to prefer to work things out on their own and informally, within the framework of common understandings of what's proper.

Soon enough, we figure out how to work the wind and fuel, and here and there, flames leap twenty feet to the sky before calming down and slowly gnashing through the thorn bushes and old pine stumps. It's a small section we clear, not even a quarter acre, but it's not bad for a day's work, and the watchword of the Mapuche I meet seems to be "poco a poco." Little by little.

Angelica finds me an herb, *sietevenas*, for me to press against the thorn-cuts on my ash-black hands, and then I walk down to the lake, the Lleu Lleu, to cool off in its waters.

Mapuche land takeovers began in the early 1990s, after the end of the Pinochet dictatorship, with groups like Consejo de Todas las Tierras. They would take over plots of usurped Mapuche lands for one day, symbolically, to remind themselves and the world that it was their land. It was an important step forward, but like any step forward, it wasn't enough. "It didn't frighten the big companies." Angelica tells me how subsequently, in 1998, the C.A.M. formed, Coordinadora de Arauca-Malleco. By developing the tactic of "productive recoveries," the C.A.M. "enraged" the landlords. They recovered land for good, coming in with a group of thirty people to cut down the trees, turning timber plantations into gardens so Mapuche communities could feed themselves. Back in Temuco, when I asked about all the "C.A.M."s I saw graffitied on the walls, José had joked that "C.A.M. was to the Chilean state what Al Qaida is to the U.S. government."

Angelica tells us how both she and José had been members of C.A.M., and it too was an important step forward, but they left the organization when they realized it had a fundamentally leftist way of thinking, "not truly Mapuche. We've always survived because we have our own way of thinking. We can build solidarity with the Left but we can't become part of it; that would be against who we are."

I ask if the land recovery actions sometimes involve replanting native forests. Angelica says that some Mapuche are replanting native tree species, and perhaps it needs to happen more often, but for now they are focused on planting gardens so they can win the ability to feed themselves, and create their independence at an economic level.

Later, she tells us about living in clandestinity. “For one thing, you don’t have any peace of mind. On top of that, you can’t plan for the future or have any projectuality. While you’re eating breakfast, you’ll be keeping your eyes on the road outside, ready to run at any time.” One time, a caravan of 400 cops with buses, tanks, water cannons, and jeeps came to arrest them, a huge display of force to show the futility of resistance. But Angelica saw the caravan when it was still on the other side of the lake, and they ran for the hills. “The whole path was green” with uniformed police.

Angelica gave birth to their son while the two were underground. Eventually they were caught when a neighbor became an informant for 500,000 pesos (about a thousand dollars). Angelica spent 4 months in pretrial detention and went through three trials, but was ultimately acquitted of “illegal association” under the antiterrorist law. Before being accused she had almost completed university, everything except the final exams, but it was a Catholic school and they wouldn’t let her take the exams in jail so she never got her diploma. Now, in her community on the banks of the Lleu Lleu, she smiles at the thought of university.

On the way back from the fields, José has me help him return the oxen and the plow to the neighbors from whom he has borrowed them. He talks to the oxen in a special language or touches them on a shoulder with a long stick to guide them through the turns, and they need no more prompting than that. As we walk he tells me more about the Mapuche worldview. “Unlike Western society, the Mapuche don’t see humans as the center of the world. We don’t think humans are the perfect species that can dominate all the other species. We understand that we are just a part of the world.” In turn I tell him about debates anarchists have had, regarding animal liberation, ecocentrism, and veganism. When we reach the neighbors’ house, the oxen bow their heads so we can untie the yoke, and then they wander off in search of hay. We take a shortcut back to the house, following the path he and Angelica used to escape the police, a few years earlier.

We don’t want autonomy

Daniel and Miriam live in the community Juan Lincopan, at Ranquillhue, with their three daughters. The community consists of about 300 families living on 400 hectares, and is trying to retake another 1000 hectares. They live amongst gentle, rolling hills, partially forested, above the northwest part

of the Lleu Lleu. Alongside their house, which they've just finished building themselves, Daniel and Miriam have a large garden, and higher up on the hill a field for potato and barley. Someone in the community owns a tractor he rents out for plowing, otherwise they would plow with oxen. In their garden they practice organic agriculture, though they haven't yet begun to implement this practice in the fields.

They have chickens and a steady supply of eggs, dogs that live in the space under the house and warn of anyone approaching, they make their own bread and cook and heat the house with a wood stove. The house has a water connection but no sewage; all the graywater drains into the garden, and at the edge of the yard is an outhouse.

Proudly, Miriam shows me a line of trees they have planted near their house, all native species like the notro, haulli, arayan, and hazelnut. "We found the seedlings up in the mountains and brought them down here," she explains. The top of the hill is still covered in exotic eucalyptus trees, which drain the water table, but they're harvesting the eucalyptus for firewood and slowly replacing them with native species.

They want their daughters to go to school at least until they learn how to read, but there doesn't seem to be any great pressure to attend. During the days that we stay with them, one daughter seems to be playing hooky permanently. Miriam says she likes to bring her daughters along on land recovery actions so they can get a sense of the struggle, and an understanding that all this is their territory.

In the past, most young Mapuche went to the cities but now an increasing number are staying in the country. What they really need now is an independent school in their community, that will not train Chilean citizens but will be based in the Mapuche worldview.

Both Daniel and Miriam used to belong to the C.A.M. but they have since left it. "The C.A.M. came from the outside and did their work very well, but after the actions they'd leave, and who would receive the consequences? The community. We don't think that's a good strategy. We work inside the community to make the struggle from the inside. Even if it takes 15, 20 years."

C.A.M., though it was the most radical Mapuche organization until recently, proposes autonomy instead of independence, meaning that the Mapuche would receive cultural and political rights, and perhaps their own regional government, within the Chilean state. Some of their lands would be returned to them, though ownership would still be formulated according to the existing capitalist laws. An increasing number of Mapuche are beginning to think that the time has come to openly propose independence, restoring the

pre-1880 borders, as guaranteed by multiple treaties with the Spanish crown and the Chilean state, and restoring a sovereign Wallmapu, self-organized according to its own cultural traditions, circular, ecocentric, decentralized, and nonhierarchical.

We talk with Daniel and Miriam about all the similarities between the struggles in Wallmapu and in Euskal Herria, the Basque country. The Basques have won an autonomous government within the Spanish state, and some cultural rights for the preservation of their language, coupled with an even stronger repression that applies the antiterrorist law, torture, and long prison sentences against anyone who fights by any means for the full independence of the Basque people. If that's autonomy, "then we won't fight for autonomy," laughs Miriam.

As the Mapuche struggle strengthens, the repression also becomes more effective. In the past, the police would come into Mapuche communities and get lost, but now they know where everything is. Now there are also police experts who know Mapudungun, the language, and there are more infiltrators, like one university student from Concepcion whose testimony led to several arrests, and who is currently working in Mexico, they say. "Bachelet," the Socialist president who preceded Piñera, "had two faces. She showed a nice face, and then sent in the repression. There was more repression with her than there is now."

In fact, a number of young Mapuche were killed by police during the previous government. Three cases are best known, and their names grace the walls of many towns and cities around the Mapuche territories. Alex Lemun, shot in the head near Angol. Matias Cachileo, shot in the back in January 2008 on the estate of a big landlord, his body fell into a canal and had to be fished out. Mendoza Colliu, shot in the back in August 2009. "All of them were shot from behind, none in the front," Daniel explains gravely. "They were all running!" Miriam adds, and they start to laugh.

They talk about how the struggle is growing beyond the exhausting cycle of action, arrest, and support, and how they need to develop a legal aid organization, as a shield, to function alongside the more militant parts of the struggle.

The Mapuche are by no means victims. These confrontations have taken place during a forceful struggle for the recovery of their lands. At Ranquihue, there used to be some trailers where timber employees lived, watching over the usurped lands. Around the 2004, the houses were set on fire, and the workers and their families were burned out. Then the state set up a makeshift command center where a number of police lived, to guard the timber plantation. Chile's strategy of control is highly legalistic, so instead of hiring

mercenaries or paramilitaries as they might in other countries, the timber corporations rely directly on police protection.

Around 2006, it was time for the police to go. This time, the community members didn't come in the night, but in the daytime, in their hundreds, and forced out the police. Since then, that particular pine plantation has been unprotected, and the community has begun clearing it so they can plant fields. Up until then, the forestry company wanted to rent out land right on the banks of the lake, the Lleu Lleu, to build a tourist hotel. The local Mapuche would receive employment, Daniel relates with disgust, working at the hotel for the tourists, selling them vegetables, cleaning their toilets. After the police were forced out, the hotel project was put on hold. Some tourist cabins owned by outsiders were also torched around this time. Around Ranguilhue there are a few vacation cabins owned by Mapuche and rented out in the summers to generate some income, but they are low key and exist on the terms of the community members themselves.

There is, however, a problem with indigenous capitalism. Daniel and Miriam relate one story of a community member who used his lands for small-scale agribusiness, and others who kicked out the logging companies only to continue to harvest and sell exotic trees on that land. But the only companies able to buy the lumber were the very same logging companies, so in the end they didn't care who controlled or managed the land as long as it continued producing under a capitalist logic. Recreating capitalism within their struggle is a recognized danger.

And then there are Mapuche politicians. There are those who work with the government, and those who try to form political parties to co-opt the struggle, "but there is no Mapuche political party, it doesn't exist, because we closed the door and they're left on the outside."

"The Mapuche can have their independence, but if they lack the spiritual side of things it's nothing. A Mapuche without newen is not Mapuche." Newen, they explain, means strength, but it is also the strength of nature, or the energy one receives from the natural world. "The time when the sky goes from dark to light is when you receive all your strength." Accordingly, there is a specific Mapuche ritual that one undertakes in times of difficulty, getting up before dawn to ask for strength and draw on the power of the world.

Timber!

A fifty year old pine tree, standing one hundred feet tall, does an incredible thing to sound as it falls towards the earth. First, when it first starts to lean, you are incredibly attuned to every creak and crack of wood. Then, as soon as nothing is left holding it up, the gravity of its fall pulls all other sounds

with it into an acoustic black hole, and the whole world goes silent. Then, just before impact, you become aware of a terrible wind, as all the thousand branches pull faster and faster through the air. Finally, when the great tree hits the ground, you feel the thunderclap in your very bones, as if for a moment, you are the tree.

It's a sad thing to kill such a great tree, especially with a tool so crude as a chainsaw. But death can also be an occasion for joy. This tree should not be here, and in its body is held fifty years of richness, that a colonizing company tried to steal, but that will now be returned to the soil from which it came. Next year, there will be a fire, and the ashes will come back as potatoes or arayan trees.

We spend the day walking through the plantation, cutting down trees here and there, staying on the move. At one point we pass the burned out remains of old trailers, spraypainted with Mapuche slogans, and the flipped over, rusted wreck of a police car. Here there was a battle, a victory. The land reclamation on this terrain is a new one, but already a field has been plowed in its midst. Next year there will be more. Little by little.

On the road fifty meters away, a big red pickup truck stops abreast of us. It could be company workers, or undercover police. We run into the woods. The struggle continues.

Clandestinity

It's late at night when we're taken over winding roads to the place where Juan Carlos Millanao is hiding. He's on the run, living a few months now in clandestinity, accused of a crime under the antiterrorist law. The prosecutor is seeking 73 years imprisonment in his case. He tells us his story.

He left his community at 16 years old, and lived in the city for nine years, homeless, learning a few different trades in order to survive. In 1990, he returned home, but found that no one was talking about struggle. So he went to Santiago, where he found a job in a mine in the north. For ten years he worked in the mine, occasionally coming back home to bring money and participate in the struggle, leaving again before he appeared on the authorities' radar. For years he supported the struggle and evaded arrest. After ten years of work, his community finally took over the estate that had usurped some of their lands, and he returned home to live and think about independence. "I have to fight for my people," he says.

"The Mapuche struggle has all it needs," he tells us. "And we're always three steps ahead of the state." They're very strategic, he explains. Once, they took over an estate surrounded by a moat and electric wire and guarded by police.

Hundreds of people came to protest and confront the police at the front of the estate, and then others appeared inside the property, behind the police, and burned it down. The police never figured out how they got in, he chuckled.

Clandestinity, explains Juan Carlos, rarely lasts more than two years before the fugitive is caught, but going on the run can show contempt for state justice and a refusal to submit to their institutionality. The time on the run can also make things more difficult for the prosecution, as witnesses are lost or change their story.

At another point in the conversation, he explains how important the lake is to people in that region, and how it's no coincidence that it's kept so clean. Earlier, we had been brought across the lake on a little motor boat, because travelling from one side to the other was almost impossible, but usually the lake is undisturbed, and a motorboat will never be left in the water when it is not in use. He jokes that if any tourists came and tried to jet ski on the Lleu Lleu, they would be taken care of. "We Mapuche are very good with a rock and sling," he smiles.

When I ask about their relations with the anarchists, he agrees that they give good solidarity, but the Chilean anarchists "lack newen." The spiritual side is completely missing, and that's a great weakness, he says.

The hungerstrikers in the Temuco prison also underscored the importance of their spirituality. Their machis had been able to visit them and tend to them while they were locked up, and this support allowed them to go much longer without eating.

Little by little

Mauricio Huaquillao, one of the hungerstrikers in the Temuco prison, told us: "We want to rebuild our people, and this project directly leads us to confront the state by all means possible. Until now we haven't had any armed organizations. We're dangerous for our ideas."

The best solidarity is based in personal relationships and reciprocity. As anarchists continue to support the Mapuche struggle and attack those who repress them, we also gain a great deal, as the Mapuche burn out the shallow foundations of State and Capital in one corner of the world, and continue to develop a profound struggle we can learn a great deal from.

We also have been struggling for hundreds of years, but we need to revive these roots in order to gain strength from them. We can see that there are a hundred paths of struggle, and a hundred kinds of anarchists who are not

anarchists, comrades who are different, and separate, but reflect a little of ourselves, in our shared love of freedom and hatred of domination. As anarchists, we do not need to belong to the same organization as them, use the same strategy, or adopt the same worldview, to fight together and apart as comrades, because we are against the world of forced centralization.

Hopefully, they will succeed in moving from autonomy to independence, and hopefully we will succeed in finding roots in rootless countries, and developing a strength that goes far deeper than repression.

For Land and Freedom, we continue.

IN CHILE, TWO KINDS OF TERRORISM

At a September 14th symposium on the Chilean anti-terrorism law, the lawyer Julio Cortes pointed out that the frequent use of the law despite the absence of any real terrorism in Chile illuminates its fundamentally political, persecutorial character. Historically, terrorism was first used by the new bourgeois state against the old order. Only later did the phenomenon of terrorism from below emerge.

September 11th in Chile is an interesting day. While much of the rest of the world follows the US-driven discourse of the War on Terror, Chileans remember the state terrorism at work in the 1973 military coup by General Pinochet against the socialist president, Salvador Allende. Ultimately thousands of political opponents of the new regime would be tortured, disappeared, or executed. Once the dictatorship transferred seamlessly into democracy, with many of the same people remaining in power, and without revoking any of the neoliberal economic changes violently forced through by the dictatorship and under the direction of economists trained at the University of Chicago, people began commemorating September 11th with massive protest marches. The marches typically go from the city center to the General Cemetery, where there is a memorial to the victims of the regime, and where the day usually ends in heavy rioting against the police. At night, in the poorer neighborhoods, which received the brunt of state terrorism under Pinochet and continue to be the prime targets for police violence under democracy, people traditionally set up burning barricades and fight the carabineros and military special forces that come to antagonize them.

This year, the media and the government made a concerted effort to minimize the disturbances. On September 18th, the state is set to celebrate its bicentennial anniversary, and it has already spent millions on whipping up the population into a fervor of patriotism and national unity. President Piñera, whose rightwing National Renewal party supported Pinochet in its early days, has made the facile declaration that this September 18th would mark the final unification of the Chilean people and the resolution of “past” problems. This unification has been based on a heavy dose of state terrorism, in which usage of the anti-terrorist law has played an important role.

The problem is, from its inception Chile has been a violent fiction. Much of its territory stolen from Peru and Bolivia and all of it stolen from indigenous nations, in the 1880s the Chilean state finally accomplished what the Spanish conquistadors failed at in 300 years of warfare: the violent conquest of the Mapuche nation. And throughout the early 20th century, a government led by robber barons and close with American and British investors carried out some of the worst massacres ever visited on the radical labor movement. Neither of these conflicts have gone away.

The Mapuche are still fighting for their territorial integrity against white landowners, the Chilean military, and forestry transnationals. Some Mapuche groups are seeking greater autonomy within the Chilean state, while others are struggling for full sovereignty. And the movement of people fighting against the ravages of capitalism is becoming increasingly libertarian, as the communist and socialist parties all renounced the struggle and scrambled for positions in government after the transition to democracy. A hundred years ago anarchists played a major role in the workers' movement, and starting in the '90s they became prominent again, as punk music spread new forms of cultural resistance the traditional left wouldn't touch, and as many ex-combatants from the armed leftwing groups that struggled against Pinochet developed a critique of their own internal authoritarianism.

To squash the Mapuche struggle, the state has frequently used the Pinochet-era anti-terrorism law against activists and warriors accused of such light acts as setting logging trucks ablaze or threatening landowners. The situation has reached such absurd proportions that after one altercation in which a landowner sustained what could only be categorized as "minor injuries," prosecutors subsequently spoke of "terroristic minor injury."

Thirty-four Mapuche prisoners are currently on hunger strike, most of them since July 12, with a list of four demands:

- *An end to the anti-terrorist law and its application in cases against the Mapuche.*
- *An end to the double jeopardy by which Mapuche can be tried in civil and military court.*
- *Freedom for all Mapuche political prisoners.*
- *A demilitarization of Mapuche lands.*

Their struggle has received support across Walmapu (the Mapuche lands), from anarchists, and from the broader Chilean left. In Santiago, the capital of Chile, which has never been a bastion of the Mapuche struggle, the walls are covered in graffiti and posters calling for their freedom, and there are weekly protest marches and Mapuche cultural festivals that regularly draw over a thousand people.

In order to defuse the situation before the bicentenary, the government proposed a modification of the anti-terrorist law. When the Mapuche prisoners and their supporters rejected the reform, declaring that it did not meet their demands and would only make things worse, the government retracted the carrot and brought out the stick. On the weekend of September 11th, police

arrested three spokespeople for the hungerstrikers while they were on their way to the hospital in Concepcion to visit some of the prisoners who had been transferred there so they could be force fed intravenously. The arrests have been widely denounced, as they make it impossible for the coordinating committee of supporters to make joint decisions and declarations. It seems certain that the hunger strike will continue through the bicentenary celebrations.

On August 14 of this year, police in Santiago and Valparaiso raided seventeen houses and three anarchist social centers, two of which they closed down, in the process destroying one of the country's most important anarchist libraries. Police arrested fourteen people, accusing them of "illegal association" and the "planting of explosive devices." Over the past couple years, a number of clandestine groups have taken responsibility for a string of small bombings targeting government institutions, banks, multinationals, the media, and other targets. The bombings were all carried out at night, and no one was ever hurt. In May, 2009, one anarchist, Mauricio Morales, died while transporting a bomb. Over the same time period, the media have consistently tried to mobilize fear and panic, and present the anarchists as public enemy number one.

Enabling the police to make their case despite a total lack of evidence, the media described the open social centers and libraries as "command centers." During the raids, no explosives were found, but the media reported "traces of TNT," which in reality were nitrate traces that could have come from a plethora of benign sources. The people arrested were public anarchist organizers, many of whom did not know each other, but the media portrayed them as a hierarchical clandestine organization (a necessary component for the "illegal organization" charge) with leaders and followers, and a detailed chain of command. In fact, Chile's leading newspapers were somehow able to release more information about this terrorist organization than the police could present in their accusation.

After the initial bombardment, there has been something of a media blackout on the case. Ten of the detainees are in maximum security prison awaiting trial, and the other four are on conditional release. Their supporters are trying to spread the word about their case and build solidarity.

The Chilean government, which is building close ties with the European Union and the United States, is especially concerned with its public image abroad. After the collapse of the Argentine economy, relatively prosperous Chile has taken over the role of neoliberal poster child for South America. But as is true everywhere, that prosperity comes with an ugly underside. What the politicians in Santiago are wishing for more than anything else this September 18th, their independence day, is that the citizens keep waving

their flags, keep believing in the illusion of national unity and social peace, and that they believe in the myth of only one kind of terrorism, the kind from below, and trust their government to protect them from it. Despite the opposing histories that manifest on September 11th between the US and Chile, it's really not so different here, on the other side of the world.

SEPTEMBER 11TH RIOTS IN SANTIAGO

On September 11th, 1973, General Pinochet launched a coup, with backing from the US, and took over the government of Chile. Twenty years ago, in 1990, the military dictatorship transitioned peacefully to a democracy, in which much of the old guard remained in power, and none of the neoliberal economic changes forced through by US-trained economists under the dictatorship were reversed.

Every year on September 11th, people again take to the streets throughout Chile to show that the struggle against capitalism has not ended. During the day, in Santiago, there is a march from the city center to the cemetery, where many victims of the Pinochet regime are buried, and at night many of the poblaciones, the peripheral urban ghettos which were major sites of struggle during and after the dictatorship, throw up barricades and riot. In past years, police stations have been attacked, and both police and people have been killed.

This year's march convened at 10 in the morning. Thousands of people were gathered behind a multitude of banners. Hundreds carried red flags with the initials of various communist parties, including the FPMR, a Marxist guerrilla group that engaged in armed struggle against the Pinochet regime. Many Mapuche flags and banners were also present, whereas the anarchists seemed at first to have a smaller presence this year, due to the heavy wave of repression that has been directed against insurrectionary anarchists and that culminated in a wave of raids and arrests on August 14.

The march headed north as police maintained a relatively light presence, visibly trying not to provoke any confrontations, while large reserve forces waited generally out of sight, shadowing the march from a block away. The government of Sebastian Piñera, the millionaire businessman from the rightwing National Renewal Party, which supported Pinochet when it was first created, has declared that the upcoming bicentenary celebration on September 18th would mark the end of all divisions in Chilean society. In an awkward call for unity in a televised speech on the 11th, Piñera declared that three out of every four Chileans were either minors or not yet born at the time of Pinochet's coup, so it made no sense to remain "trapped" in the hatred of the past.

Evidently, a precondition for that unity was the suppression of the anarchists. Insurrectionary anarchist social centers in Santiago were raided on August 14, along with several homes, and 14 people were arrested, charged with illegal association and responsibility for the wave of over a hundred bombings that has targeted the institutions and property, but as of yet not the persons, of the elite. The evidence is scanty, and the case is being held together above all by the media.

The media, ultimately, would become the major target of Saturday's march.

The crowd of ten thousand chanted slogans, blew horns, and banged on drums as it moved through the streets along the preplanned route. The walls soon became covered with anarchist and Mapuche graffiti, along with the occasional message from the more radical Marxist groups.

The traditional Black Bloc had not formed at the back of the march, but when the protestors passed a government building, black masked figures suddenly emerged from within the crowd to smash out all its windows. A few leftists tried to stop them, and the entire crowd silenced them with chants of "los pacos de rojo son los peligrosos!", *the red police are the dangerous ones*. Time and again, when anyone tried to stop or discourage property destruction, a large part of the crowd around the anarchists responded with this chant. And generally the crowd proceeded with little incident. A few small fires were lit, a TV van parked along the route attacked, and more graffiti put up on the walls.

Finally the march reached the general cemetery where the memorial to the victims of the Pinochet regime is located. A stage had been assembled on the street outside. The speaker spoke of the recent repression and talked about the Mapuche hunger strikers, the families of those disappeared by police, the miners, the students. Anarchists were noticeably absent from the list, though that same speaker would soon call for solidarity from the anarchists when the situation started to take a turn.

At one point in the march about twenty *encapuchados*, masked ones, ran off to stone police who were hiding on the next block over, though the confrontation was shortlived. Outside the cemetery, the police forces were nowhere to be seen, although a small group of commanders was visible on a distant hillside, next to a TV van, surveilling the protest.

Now there were more masked anarchists, and a much larger crowd around them who clearly wanted blood. A slight majority of the mass listened attentively to the speakers on the stage, though almost immediately the communists put their flags out of sight. It seems they have direct orders to take down their flags whenever there might be a riot, so that on the news there are never pictures that show both at the same time.

In less than half an hour, the crowd at the back got rowdy. A TV van was parked directly in their midst, and in one moment people began to throw trash and then rocks at it. The journalists quickly got out of the way, and the van had all its windows smashed out, and "the press lies" written on it. The surrounding crowd chanted their approval: "La prensa burguesa no nos interesa!" *The bourgeois press doesn't interest us*.

Some Chilean and US flags were burned in a barrel, and masked anarchists began taking down the street signs and traffic lights while other people looked on, smiling. The speaker on the stage began a plea for solidarity, asking that the “compañeros” not provoke any incidents, begging people to realize that families were present, and children, and people in the graveyard visiting their loved ones, and indigenous people. The crowd in front of the stage having largely disappeared, the rest of those gathered began whistling and shouting, and repeated the chant about the red police. A few twelve year olds were busy throwing stones, a number of families were watching the fun, people in the graveyard were relaxing, unconcerned by the riot outside until police entered and chased them out later in the day. And as for the Mapuche, they themselves were internally divided on the question of violence and politics, and had no uniform position. Earlier in the week, anarchists and others had come out to a Mapuche solidarity protest that marched up the pedestrian street Ahumada to Plaza de Armas, and their participation was respectful, and without any incident. The September 11th protest, on the other hand, has always ended with riots.

The leftist on the stage was ignored, and eventually a group of anarchists broke through the metal doors protecting the metro station Cementerio, which had been closed up for the day. For the next minutes the sound of breaking glass and smashed ticket machines echoed out onto the streets. Still, the police did not come. Some in the crowd wondered, what if they don't let us have a riot? The neighborhood was not a wealthy one, and the few legitimate targets on that block had already been dismantled.

Finally a group of anarchists, followed by many youths and others who wanted a fight, ran up a side street where another media van was parked. They physically attacked a few journalists, who had to run for their lives, and caught another TV van. They smashed it open and looted it, and came back triumphantly bearing a TV camera and tripod, which they threw into their fire.

The media would declare the next day that the police had allowed the riot to develop by being too lenient, though in reality things only kicked off because they took the bait.

After the second attack on the media, police tanks with water cannons drove up from two directions and plowed through the burning barricades. At first the protestors ran away, but soon they charged back in to attack the *lanzaguas*. These tanks are the characteristic crowd control weapon in Chile. They plow through crowds or barricades, and shoot high-powered streams of water mixed with tear gas. Soon the air filled up with the biting stench of gas. A number of carabineros jeeps and armored personnel carriers came behind the tanks, but for the moment no police got out on foot, so there was still no

danger of arrest. The crowd charged the tanks, throwing stones and a couple molotovs, and the tanks sprayed at the crowd, which would run back down the street or take refuge in the cemetery. The battle went back and forth for what seemed like half an hour but was probably much shorter, while an enterprising lemon vendor who had been trailing the march set up shop in the cemetery and sold off a hundred lemons to people suffering the effects of the burning gas. A black street dog, meanwhile, braved the tear gas and barked and bit at the police vehicles, clearly on the side of the anarchists.

Eventually, when the crowd had been worn down and police considered it safer to send in officers on foot, the water cannons charged the cemetery gate, partially entering, and giving cover to a line of police cavalry that stormed in behind them. Most of the Black Bloc had gone into the cemetery, but as soon as the police contingent advanced in after them, the crowd on the street surged in behind the police, shouting “ahora! ahora!” and attacking them from the rear with a hail of rocks. Police reinforcements rolled up and pushed back the crowd permanently, and a little while later more police vehicles came in from the other direction, dispatching a number of cops on foot, so the crowd scattered. Cops reported arresting about twenty people in the cemetery.

The march, though, was just the first event of the day. During the nighttime, every year, people in the poblaciones set up barricades and shoot off guns to mark the anniversary of the coup.

This year was no exception. The night before, in the community of San Bernardo, youths erected burning barricades, and three were arrested. On Saturday night disturbances took place in at least a half dozen poblaciones. People burned barricades and opened fire on the police, hospitalizing at least four of the hated “pacos.” Eighty people were arrested.

The violence was less than in previous years, but it was enough to cast a shadow over the preparations for the 18th, the Chilean equivalent of Independence Day, and to contradict the absurd rhetoric of reconciliation. People gave a strong show of solidarity for the Mapuche prisoners on hungerstrike, and the anarchists showed that even though they have been hammered by a strong wave of repression and presented in the media as Public Enemy No. 1, they still have support, and the strength to attack.

“THE OTHER GODS WERE CRYING”: STORIES OF REBELLION IN THE BOLIVIAN HIGHLAND

Between 2000-2005, from Chapare to Cochabamba to El Alto, the Bolivian highlands were the site of major uprisings by indigenous people and poor people against the military, government, and neoliberal development projects. In 2000, the people of Cochabamba defeated Bechtel corporation's attempts to privatize their water. In 2003, the *Alteños* laid siege to the capital and prevented the privatization of the country's natural gas. On other occasions, indigenous communities kicked out or killed government officials, coca growers defeated the illegalization of their traditional crop, and people from various backgrounds blockaded highways and paralyzed the country to kick out one government after another. These uprisings were continuations of powerful struggles that took place throughout the '90s.

But in 2006, MAS, a socialist political party formed by a convergence of social movements, came into power, headed by Evo Morales, the first indigenous president in the history of the continent, and the first Bolivian leader to receive an absolute majority of the vote in an open election. Because of the history of discrimination against the country's indigenous majority, a comparison could be made to the election of Obama, but the MAS victory is not comparable to just another political party coming into power. A closer analogy would be if the US Social Forum, Greenpeace, Critical Resistance, and Food Not Bombs came together to form a political party, took 60% of the vote, and launched Angela Davis into the White House.

Since 2006, little has been the same. A large amount of land redistribution has taken place, and students, pregnant women, retired people and the elderly receive an unprecedented amount of government welfare, funded by natural gas revenues. But the most notable change has been the total pacification and institutionalization of the social movements, such that now, capitalist development projects worse than any imagined under the military dictatorships are being proposed with hardly any opposition.

To get to the bottom of this occurrence, we talked to unionists, hiphop artists, street theater groups, Aymara storytellers, student anarchists, Quechua rebels, anarcha-feminists, NGO-workers, and others. The synthesis that developed between all these different and sometimes opposed perspectives radically informed my understanding of movement democracy, recuperation, and struggle.

Casa COMPA

Our first stop in Bolivia was at Casa COMPA in El Alto. (El Alto is a slum city built and organized by the residents themselves, who squatted land on the high plateau above the capital, La Paz). COMPA is a cultural center and home to a theater group heavily involved in popular education throughout the city. The building itself is impressive: seven stories tall, built by the residents themselves on top of the original house, with an interactive theater, offices, workshop rooms, a radio, a café, a hostel, and residences. They represent an important slice of the social movements in Bolivia. On the one hand, they use theater of the oppressed and popular education to communicate with a large part of Bolivian society, spreading indigenous histories and histories of resistance, fortifying a street culture by doing performances, illegally at times, in the streets, hosting theater groups for neighborhood youth, and frequently going out into the world with travelling roadshows, visits to schools, and so forth. On the other hand they have adopted a more conciliatory posture to the government, especially now that Evo is in charge, and relied on money from progressive European governments and NGOs, and well meaning volunteers from Europe.

A great example of this contradiction was one theater performance we were invited to. A group of El Alto school children about ten years old were brought to the in-house theater, where they were treated to a participatory performance about the history of Bolivia, starting with the cultures of the Aymara and Quechua, going through colonization and genocide, and ending with mining and the miners' resistance. The performance was impressive, and the children thoroughly engaged. The theater itself was a damn fine piece of work; it included an underground section where a replica of the mine tunnels had been constructed. At that point in the play the children were given hard hats and picks and sent into the tunnels as the plot progressed. However, the play's desired conclusions were deliberately moderated. At the point in the story where the miners rise up, the slogans suggested to the children were "higher wages" and "better tools," even though just ten minutes earlier they had seen how the indigenous inhabitants were basically coerced into the mines. The usual pragmatic justifications we were given afterwards, when we made a general criticism, were based on the age of the kids and what they're presumably able to understand, and these justifications were blatantly false. One kid, without prompting, had yelled out that they should attack the mine boss, whereas another, at the end of the play, when the boss has been run out, asked why they weren't doing anything about the mine owner, a character who had disappeared earlier in the play. Both of these kids were ignored. When we pointed this out, we were told that many schools would not bring their students here if they were too radical. The parents might complain.

The fact that those who made the play chose to limit the desires expressed

within the play to improvements within the existing system rather than encouraging an unbounded process of imagination and self-guided definition of freedom and happiness, nor even acknowledging freedom and happiness as ideal goals in any rebellious action, is really tragic. This tragedy is a typical one, and the age-old mistake of moderating one's own politics in order to reach a larger audience (*through the standard and easier means*—this is the part of the formulation that is always left unsaid) reflects a weak analysis that was widely evident in Bolivian social movements. It seemed to us that this weakness might be related to the easy and total co-optation of these movements, and people we would meet later suggested the same thing. Nonetheless, one would have to be an insensitive purist to ignore that this project of popular education does much to create a context more favorable to rebellion. Those who know the truth of their history and the heritage of their government need only overcome the patently uninspired thinking of union bureaucrats. The call of “everything for everyone!” or “libertad y tierra” overcomes that of “higher wages” if one understands that not so long ago everything did belong to everyone, and this only changed through a violent process of genocide that led directly to the current system.

Tomas' Story

The COMPA people were gracious enough to arrange some meetings for us, and one day we were able to talk to an elderly man from El Alto, who had years of experience with the neighborhood councils that have played a major role in the city's self-organization and in its various rebellions. We all sat down in a spare room at the theater house, and he began to narrate:

In 2003 I fought, like a good Alteño, in the Gas War. From 2003 to 2004 I was the president of the junta vecinal, the neighborhood council, in the barrio of Santiago Segundo. I've lived there for years. Many of us in that neighborhood are miners.

The neighborhood councils elect their leaders, six members who serve two years. They're not paid, and it operates on an honor system. Some presidents, however, are eternal. Every two years they stand for election again. The purpose of the councils is to serve all the *compañeros*, but some people get confused and think its purpose is to serve them by giving them connections to find jobs for their family members. I would say in 30% of the councils, the elected leaders are eternal politicians, and in the other 70% they follow the true spirit of the thing and leave office after two years.

In the good councils, every ninety days there is an assembly to inform everyone about upcoming works and the state of the neighborhood. There is good participation, debate. Council presidents have been kicked out before by the neighbors, for not carrying out their obligations.

So basically, every Bolivian receives 102 bolivianos [about \$15] a year as a sort of tax rebate. The neighborhood council decides where this money goes and the state allocates the money, but they can also reject proposed works. So the mayor of a particular district can sabotage a neighborhood council for political reasons. In this way political parties have influence in the neighborhood councils. The councils are independent but they have to curry the favor of the political party the local mayor belongs to. So political parties will often sabotage the work of a neighborhood council that leans toward a different political persuasion. They can do this by denying their funding requests.

All of the work on infrastructure projects is done by the neighbors themselves. Everyone helps out. Those who don't work feed those who do. But the money to buy the materials now comes in the form of these tax rebates, administered by the government. For a long time now they've been getting this money. But in the beginning the neighborhood councils were started by the neighbors themselves, going all the way back to the very beginning of El Alto, in the 1970s. The councils soon organized into the FEJUVE, La Federación de Juntas Vecinales. The FEJUVE has always been political, since the Banzer dictatorship.

Me, I'm a Communist. The Communists prepared me for the struggle back when I worked in the mines. Then there was the coup that installed General Banzer in 1971. I was arrested and exiled. They had us in the airport, a group of us locked in this sort of a box, like they use for cargo or mail. But there was a little crack I could see through, and there in the airport I saw Klaus Barbie [the Nazi war criminal who escaped to Bolivia with the help of the Catholic Church and worked for the CIA] along with some military officers. So I told the others, "there's Klaus Barbie out there with the military," and we all started singing workers' songs, patriotic songs, very loudly. They beat us severely. Then they put us on the plane and flew us out to the desert. I was in their concentration camps for nine months. South of Oruro. I escaped in 1972.

In the camps we only got one plate of food a week, and we had to eat grass. Once I was ratted out for talking about escaping and they put me in the hole for 3 days. Finally I escaped by walking for three days across the mountains. I had to drink my own urine to survive. It was simple, you just pee in your hat and then drink it up. Then you keep walking. I wasn't captured because they were sure I died in those mountains. But I escaped and went back to work in the mines.

Oh, I was talking about FEJUVE, wasn't I? So, FEJUVE has to approve the new presidents elected into the councils, and the Federation itself is governed by an eight-member board elected at their congress from among the council presidents. They serve for two years also. The FEJUVE is super vigilant. They

take complaints, make sure everything is working properly. Well, sometimes they also side with a particular mayor and ignore a complaint...

The FEJUVE meet every six months. They also have debates, about social themes (they talk about all of society) or economic themes (like what to do with the money) or political themes (like, is the government doing a good job?). They also debate things like the World Bank.

When Goni [Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada , President of Bolivia from 2002-2003, whose tenure saw major popular clashes; he was finally pushed out of power by major disturbances] was investing in all the mines and taking them over, the FEJUVE started a blockade. They would meet to decide whether to organize a protest march, a blockade, or something else, and this time they voted on an indefinite blockade and informed the base. The majority of the councils ratified the proposal, so it was decided. All the councils had to support it. Yes, participation was obligatory. This is called democracy.

The Gas War started in 2003 when the government sent the military against some campesinos who were being framed for an attack on gringo tourists. [At this time, the government wanted to sell the gas on the US market] Some campesinos were killed. So they called a general strike. I stayed here to fight, because the enemy is down below [in La Paz, the capital]. We fought with arrows, rocks, clubs, and slingshots. Some of the miners had dynamite. And we used fireworks to communicate, as a code or a warning, to call for help when a military column was advancing. One day I got shot in the stomach. And many of the young miners, they didn't have experience with dynamite, so they injured themselves by lighting it wrong or not throwing it fast enough. The press said we had grenades but it was all just dynamite.

After we ran out of fireworks we had to use rocks. If we saw the military coming we'd take a rock and start banging it against a metal pole, like this, and everyone would come running to help repel them. And we made the military retreat. We won the Gas War. Now the gas is ours.

My neighborhood, Santiago Segundo, was the site of the first clashes, and the first deaths. In all they killed 61 [67] of us, but we didn't back down.

I looked down and saw that my finger was blown off. This was the 14th of October. Around six in the evening. The conflict began in the countryside on September 20, on October 8 FEJUVE had their meeting and decided on a blockade. They met in the morning, the individual councils ratified it later in the day, and by nightfall the barricades went up. Fighting began the next day.

On October 12 they got me in the legs with a shotgun. See? You see the scars? The other time [on the 14th] we were fighting off these troops trying

to come up the hill. It was six in the evening, that's when I noticed my finger had been blown off. So I ran off and hid in a corner, and I felt that my leg was wet. I thought I'd pissed myself. Then I saw it was blood, and I found a hole in my stomach. The bullet went in one side, out the other, and took my finger off on the way out. See?

And in the end, we won. Before the Gas War, the natural gas was completely confiscated by transnationals. Now the gas is in reserves so we'll still control it in the future. There's more money in social security now, money for students, money for pregnant women.

Evo is a good man. He knows what he's doing. He knows how to spend the money. I support MAS. You know the miners are organizing a march soon. Not to oppose the government, no. It's a march for dignity, and for social security.

[...]

At this point, Tomas starts talking about his escape from the concentration camp again, and his political education with the Communists. When we ask him a question about anarchists in Bolivia, he says "Anarchy has always existed in humanity. Do you know what syndical anarchy is? Syndical anarchy is when a leader boasts and builds monuments without having the money to do it..." We try to disagree with this caricature but Tomas doesn't seem to notice. He only repeats himself and reiterates some of the earlier points in his story until our interview is concluded.

Yawar's Story

A few days after arriving in El Alto we meet Yawar, an Aymara storyteller, grandfather, and puruma. He invites us to stay with him, so we move out of Casa COMPA and pitch a tent on his little plot of land, where he is preparing a garden and a not-school.

The Aymara people have been living in what they now call Bolivia for thousands of years, at least 4 or 5 centuries since before the start of the current counting, the Gregorian calendar. We're older than the Inca. We've always been agriculturalists, growing potatoes, quinoa, herding llamas. Starting many centuries ago, the Aymara started to build a great city, called Tiwanaku. We had developed our own literature, our own science, our own astronomy, a great civilization. Now the Aymara are not one single people. We've never been centralized. Traditionally we organize in ayllu, who live together in a community and are all related. Then a constellation of hundreds of ayllu organize together in a marca. The Aymara nation consists of many marca, and those who live in one region speak differently from those who live in

another. We also have many gods. Each ayllu has its wak'a, which is a sacred place where the energy of the earth flows especially strong. We make offerings, asking them to provide for us. Here in my garden I have an illa, which is like an amulet. See, when I come in, I give it a little bit of alcohol. And here is the chakana, oriented to the four directions, the different winds. This started with agriculture. Before, the hunter-gatherers didn't have to pay as much attention to these natural cycles, but the agriculturalists were dependent on the rain, on the soil, on a whole process of months of cultivation to feed themselves for the year. So they began to take care of the gods, in a spirit of reciprocity.

When they started to build their great civilization, this required centralization. Different marca were brought together, the lands of different communities were absorbed. This was done largely by the shamans. The shamans of more powerful gods became more powerful. Eventually, they developed a theocracy, and centralized the religion under one God, the Sun God. The Aymara have always worshipped Pachamama, Mother Earth. Pacha is earth, but also space, and time. But as they were building the city of Tiwanaku, between the 4th and 7th centuries on the Gregorian calendar, they centralized religion and political power, under the Sun God.

Many Aymara are inflexible, rigid, when it comes to religion. They turn rites into ceremonies, and then you have specialized priests. This is something I fight against.

The Aymara engaged in this experiment with centralization, they tried worshipping only one God, and all the other gods were crying. But then we decided we didn't want centralization, we didn't want a state. So the people simply abandoned it. Tiwanaku is incomplete. They left it unfinished and went back to worshipping all their gods and living in decentralized ayllu. So as an anarchist I don't need stories from Europe, about Bakunin, the workers. I'm not a worker, I don't work. I can find plenty of stories of rebellion in my own history.

After the Aymara abandoned Tiwanaku, there were hundreds of years of anarchy, a wonderful time in our history. There was no state, no market. The old paths, going all across the continent, remained in existence, and people traded things, but it wasn't for war, it wasn't for profit. They called it the capacñan. Capac means wisdom, the kind that comes from the elders, and ñan is a path. So people would travel all around what they're calling "South America" simply to learn. To trade stories. To meet with other cultures. To grow wiser. It was a beautiful time.

The Inca came later. They were a group of Quechua. They resurrected this myth of the Sun God, and thought of themselves as descendents of the Sun.

They created an empire that went all the way from Venezuela to Chile. They weren't so obsessed with war though. They had an army, but first they would send people, like diplomats, to the communities on their border, to the wak'a, the sacred places, and make offerings, and invite them to incorporate into the Inca empire. But many people didn't want to be integrated. Some of the Aymara, also the Guaraní, different hunter-gatherer peoples living in the jungles, were very anti-authoritarian.

During the centuries after Tiwanaku, there were also the Chukila. They were hunter-gatherers. For me they were the first libertarians. They saw agriculture all around them, they could have started farming if they had wanted to, but they decided to remain hunter-gatherers, living up in the mountains, hunting guanaco. Nomads. Never sleeping in the same place two nights in a row. I hope some day I can be that free!

Sometimes they would trade with the Aymara. We make our cloths from the wool of the llama, it's very thick, warm. But the vicuña has such a fine wool, the looms they would use needed a much smaller shed. You could put a length of the cloth on your hand and it would slip between your fingers. It was highly prized. But the vicuña were wild, so how would they get the fur? With the help of the Chukila. They would take their flutes and play music, and the vicuña would fall in love with them, and then the Chukila along with Aymara people from the villages would make a circle, a corral, around the vicuña. They would kill one as a sacrifice, and then shear the others, and let them out of the circle.

Look at this cloth here. Two colors, the light and the dark. Masculine and feminine. Everything in the universe is feminine or masculine. The earth is feminine, the sun is masculine. For me, that mountain there is feminine, I call her grandmother. For others, the hills are masculine. Notice that with these two colors, the light part has a dark border, and the dark part has a light border. With us, the other is always included, it's never excluded.

Living in a community can be very oppressive. You have to get married, have children, act a certain way. If you're not married, you're not considered a person. But traditionally there would be roles for people who didn't fit in. There were always people on the margins. There were the kéwa, what now we might call homosexuals. They were respected, important. When there were fights or disputes, especially fights between a husband and wife, they would call the kéwa to mediate the dispute. It was thought that they had both the feminine side and masculine side, in equilibrium, inside themselves, so they could understand both sides.

It's pretty clear that there needs to be a pachakuti, a revolution, when the order of the whole world changes. But it will be the women who do it. It needs

to be a feminine revolution. The masculine revolutions failed. The USSR, Cuba, all masculine revolutions. That's not how it's going to be this time. The women know better, they understand how it needs to happen. Me, I try to listen to my feminine side more.

Evo is just another macho revolutionary. That's what's wrong with him. Since he's been president, he's opened how many football stadiums, but not one school! Did you know, he's single. Not married! How could he possibly be a good leader? The leader is not one, it is a pair, male and female, balanced. At the end of the day they go home and argue about all the different decisions, and he gets her perspective and can form more balanced ideas. That's how it traditionally works. But Evo, he's just a macho. Just like everyone else, he's swallowed the lie of development, of progress. What a joke. They talk about poverty. They'll look at someone living high on the altiplano, far from everything, in a little brick house, and say, "how poor that person is!" But those people make their own clothes, grow their own food. People in the cities don't know how to do that. Who's poor? Progress. Ha!

Do you see those hills there? The cliff? It's beautiful, yes, but that's all from erosion. It used to be covered in trees, but with colonization, they cut them all down. The Aymara knew how to mine gold and silver, they conducted some mining, but with the colonizers it was much more, and they cut down the trees to fuel the furnaces and melt the metals. The trees were almost wiped out, and then they started to come back. Just in time for the railroad. The best fuel for the trains was the charcoal from the kewiña, the native tree here. I've planted a couple in my garden. This one is a year old. In five years, it will only be up to here, up to my waist. But just wait: I can show you pictures of old kewiña, high in the mountains, they're immense, unbelievably tall and broad, five hundred years old.

The colonizers planted pine and eucalyptus, exotic species that take up all the water, and they call it a forest. It's terrible. That's why the whole mountain-side is eroded.

Up on that mountain pass is where they caught Tupac Kutari in 1781. He was fighting the Spanish, and going to the Yungas, and he was betrayed and captured there, and then executed. I ask the young Aymara in the neighborhood if they know where Tupac was captured, and none of them do. I try to teach the children, and tell them stories. Too much education, that's the problem. They get sent to school, and it destroys their brains. The children like me, and because I get along well with the children, I'm okay with the parents, even though I don't work.

Did you know the llamas taught us about astronomy? The people near the salt flats of Uyuni would make caravans, bringing salt to the Yungas. They

would load up a great big line of a hundred llamas with a block of salt on each side. The journey would take a month or two, they would go once a year, it was a big occasion. A certain llama, sort of like the chief, would lead the caravan. People had noticed that the llamas would never get lost, when going over the salt flats, over the mountains and the altiplano. At night the head driver would go to the chief llama and see how he was always looking up at the sky, watching the stars. What are you looking at, llama? They found the stars in the eyes of the llamas. After that, we began to look at the stars, and learn how to navigate by them. We were vegetarian, then. We drank the milk of the llamas but we would never kill them.

Nowadays, we've forgotten lots of our history. The ground gets covered in cement, and people lose their connection with Pachamama. It's because the Aymara just want to be gringos. They want a car, status. With Evo, the roads of this neighborhood got paved. Before it was just dirt. Now the people here are proud of their paved road. That's why I'm starting this garden. I'll bring the children here, teach them about the earth, tell them stories. The old people still remember our history, so we have to share that.

There's still a strong tradition of rebellion among the Aymara. Like the Gas War in 2003, they rose up. Dispersed power, just like before. They also kicked out Goni. He had to flee in a helicopter. He's living in the US now. We've kicked out other presidents as well. Dispersing power. But then after these incredible uprisings, people calm down again and everything goes back to how it was before. People aren't so daring, in the meantime.

We don't have anarchist prisoners here. There's not really an anarchist offensive. In my mind anarchism is an urban phenomenon. Here in Bolivia we have anarcho-syndicalists who are just academics, talking about theory. How can you be an anarcho-syndicalist if you're not working? Then there's the anarcho-punks, all very young, in it for just a few years and then they move on. The older ones, the anarcho-syndicalists, say, "Come here, we'll teach you everything you need to know. We have the best theories." And the anarcho-punks tell them to fuck off. They're very influenced by John Zerzan, Hakim Bey, they believe in total liberty, but after a few years they give up.

Right now, we're in a moment of learning, telling stories, recovering our history. We're looking for libertarian roots in our own culture. It's a long process, but soon we'll find it. Soon we'll be ready.

There's a word in Aymara, "puruma." When I found this word, I was very excited. It means "those who live without king or law." Yes! That's me! "Those who live without electricity or police." Electricity or police. You see, it was a Spaniard who translated Aymara into Spanish, and he brought his own cultural views with him, his eurocentrism. King, police, we didn't have

those things. But still you can see, puruma is a very good word to describe us. I often call myself an anarchist, but really I'm puruma. We have our own libertarian traditions, we don't need to identify with a European workers' movement. Anyways, I'm against work. In Aymara, in Quechua, in Mapudungun, none of these languages had a word for work. There was effort, creation. But work creates capital. If we all stop working, Capital will collapse.

It's very prestigious to identify as an anarchist right now. After Seattle, the G8. The social movements that have nearly brought down neoliberalism are not Marxist-Leninist groups like in the past, they're largely anarchist groups. It's not so prestigious to be puruma. We don't belong to a global family like the anarchists do. But I'm trying, little by little, to spread the term.

I think it makes more sense for us. Anarchism, it's against the state, against the market, and that's all very good, but there needs to be more than destruction. Permanent creation, that's what I believe in. And we're creating our struggle, recreating our people and our history, little by little.

Talking with the La Paz Anarchists

People in La Paz tend to view El Alto with fear or suspicion. It has a reputation for being a dangerous place even to set foot. Many *alteños* themselves internalized this reputation. But that changed in 2003, an anarchist hiphop artist from El Alto tells us. Since fighting and winning the Gas War, she says, there is an increasing amount of *alteño* pride. All throughout those years, El Alto was the site of major struggles, and generalized defiance of authority. One of the worst things about the Morales regime, she says, is the near total co-optation of this previously rebellious social fabric. Though Evo is not from El Alto, he is indigenous, like most *alteños*, and he does come from the base of the social movements, so many people feel that one of their own has become president. But beyond this personal identification, MAS has been highly successful at integrating social movements into the functioning of the government, by working with them directly, buying them off, or giving social movement representatives government posts. She invites us to talk about this more at the social center she works with, but unfortunately that day we've already planned to meet with an anarchist group in La Paz.

The La Paz anarchist organization is one of the few groups in the country working against a new mega-development project, a major highway that would cross Bolivia from Brazil to Peru and Chile. This project is a perfect, tragic example of the failure of the anti-globalization movement. That worldwide movement achieved a number of specific victories, and more importantly it animated and spread struggles globally, facilitating the transfer of experiences from countries with active, strong struggles during the '80s to countries that had been pacified by then. But on the whole, the movement

adopted a gravely mistaken strategy of populist communication, presenting superficial, comforting analyses that could more easily build majoritarian support. As such, movement groupings tended to opt for an analysis that faulted neoliberalism and imperialism, rather than capitalism as a whole. In other words, foreign investment or economic policies instituted by a new wave of politicians were to blame, and not the entire system to its very core.

Evo's highway springs from an agreement between MAS and the Brazilian government under the Workers Party. The capital is coming from a Brazilian development bank, and the construction companies are Brazilian. In other words it doesn't fit the negative image of development popularized by the anti-globalization movement. It's not an IMF project being carried out by US corporations. South American capital has developed to the point that now, projects such as this can be carried out domestically. And in fact the national chauvinism implicit in the crusade against neoliberalism (we can recall the mourning of the loss of the nation-state in the popular documentary *Fourth World War*) would encourage people to take pride in such a development project because it's not a foreign venture. This is symmetrical to how Leninism reproduced capitalism by glorifying production, pretending that if production were nominally in the hands of the workers it would serve different ends.

Many socialist chauvinists try to defend their populism by painting Brazil as the new regional imperialist power, the new wealthy foreign enemy. One wonders what excuse they'll come up with in ten years when Bolivian capital has developed sufficiently to carry out projects like this one without any outside investment.

Perhaps the most flagrant element of the highway is that its route takes it through TIPNIS, a large national park that is a vital reserve for Amazonian biodiversity. Furthermore, directly thanks to struggles waged in the '90s, it is not a pristine nature park according to the eurocentric models, forcibly cleansed of all human presence; TIPNIS is the home of three indigenous nations who have traditionally lived there, and continue to do so in a sustainable fashion. The highway will not only cut the forest in half, it will encourage and allow illegal logging and coca plantations that will likely destroy whatever remains after construction.

The rightwing governments of Bolivia's past could not have carried out such an audacious attack against their peoples without sparking unquenchable, bloody resistance. It is the triumph of the Left that they have succeeded where their opponents have failed.

The La Paz anarchists tell us story after story illustrating how MAS has accomplished this pacification. Social movement leaders have been bought off,

and social movements have been turned against one another. When a group of workers organized a protest march, MAS got an indigenous group to blockade a road and stop them. Social movements that are disciplined to follow an NGO model, converting them into single issue struggles that any level politician can turn against each other, exploiting conflicting interests and shortages of funding.

Throughout it all, outside Bolivia as much as inside it, the Morales regime has been protected by the same Stalinist dichotomy that has protected left-wing dictatorships around the world. Anyone who criticizes the government is accused of being in the pay of the rightwing or the CIA. In the early years of Evo's presidency, ordinary people would shout the La Paz anarchists off the streets as "imperialists," any time they tried to protest.

Meanwhile, MAS's modest accomplishments have been exaggerated as revolutionary. A fair amount of land has been redistributed, but even larger land redistributions were carried out by military dictatorships in Bolivia's past. It is common to hear people talk about Bolivia's gas as being "nationalized," but the La Paz anarchists pointed out that just as many multinationals are involved as before in the extraction, processing, and commercialization of Bolivia's gas. The only difference is that the government is taxing these companies a little more, and putting the money in a welfare fund that amounts to a few dozen or up to a few hundred dollars a year for students, pregnant women, and the elderly.

Arguably the most extreme change the new government has accomplished is to clean the image of the police and the military. The same institutions that people fought against year after year, that people knew to be murderous and oppressive, are now celebrated patriotically. The La Paz anarchists warn us of a growing militarism in Bolivia. They say that military service is now the essential rite of passage for boys to be accepted as men.

Evo initially faced strong opposition from the Right, but he has proven himself a great reconciler, and much of the rightwing is now integrated into the government. In several situations early in his presidency when there were clashes between popular movements and the Right, Evo had the police intervene on the side of the rightwingers, or stand back and let the well armed conservatives smash the protestors.

Anarcha-feminists we later spoke with in Cochabamba would tell us that fascist hooligans were also integrated by the State. In the past, when they wanted to take the streets they would have to fight these hooligans, and they still did, but now the fascists were taking part in pro-government rallies and backed by the police.

We hear about a new law that would allow Evo to shut down media organizations, and a broad new hate crime law that could allow the government to prosecute its critics. Our new comrades also tell us of the riots in February 2003. Unlike those of October, the February uprising did not fit within any progressive agenda, and didn't claim any victory. It sparked off when the police in La Paz went on strike against low pay and tax hikes. In the absence of State authority, people began taking the streets and attacking symbols of power. The military were called in to restore order, and there were a number of armed clashes between the military and police, and between the military and the people. In two days of fighting on the 12th and 13th, 16 people were killed, along with 10 cops and 5 soldiers.

The La Paz anarchists are a small group, but through protests and propaganda they are spreading a libertarian critique of authority, building resistance against the highway, and working in solidarity with indigenous struggles (most of the group are themselves indigenous).

They believe it is a revolutionary necessity to get organized, and they shared an interesting critique of insurrectionary anarchism with us. One member of their group said that insurrectionary anarchism may be necessary in other contexts, but in Bolivia society still retains enough strength and independence that it could shut down the State simply by self-organizing. After the recuperation carried out by MAS, they fully recognize the need for a critique of the Left, the NGOs, and democratic organization, but this critique can be carried within the activity of revolutionary self-organization. Unlike in wealthier, more thoroughly colonized countries, the argument can be made that the very social fabric needs to be destroyed, but in Bolivia, unlike elsewhere, the government could simply be blockaded out of existence.

After all, the city of El Alto built itself, and numerous indigenous communities in the past years have simply lynched their mayor and declared themselves autonomous. We seemed to share a critique of the Left and of democracy. If there is plenty in their society worth saving, and enough social strength to save it, it makes sense that a revolution here would take a completely different course.

The Water Committees

Our contact in Cochabamba arranged for us to visit a number of Water Committees. It was a tedious day, especially after a sleepless night on the bus crashing down from the Altiplano, but it helped me clarify a number of things.

The Water Committees have often been hailed as a revolutionary example of self-organization, and I was eager to see the extent to which this was true, and to see how this revolutionary potential was faring under the MAS gov-

ernment. Well before the Water War in 2000, neighborhoods in the southern zone of the city, which had no access to water, began self-organizing to build their own pumps, cisterns, piping, and sewage. Dozens of neighborhoods accomplished this feat, and won themselves a much better quality of living than those neighborhoods that did not self-organize and continued to buy the expensive water shipped in daily by tanker trucks. This self-organization, in the spirit of solidarity and mutual aid, undoubtedly also created a strong foundation for the Water War, during which these same neighbors barricaded the streets and fought against the police to protest the selling of SEMAPA, the city water company, to the powerful transnational Bechtel. They won their battle, providing one of the clearest examples of a reversal of the supposedly inevitable tide of neoliberalism.

We visited three different water committees that day. One was a largely technical showing of a new cistern, whereas the other two meetings took place in the decision-making centers of their respective neighborhoods. These two provided an important contrast that delineated the range of possibility within the committees generally.

At the first, which was blatantly the more popular, directly democratic one, we stumbled into a misunderstanding that illuminated a number of weaknesses in the better of the committees. We happened to arrive the day of a general meeting. The meeting was held in an open courtyard and it seemed the entire neighborhood had turned out to participate. Over a hundred people were there, young and old, and they were swearing in the newly elected delegates, holding them at their word to serve the entire community, and opining profusely about various problems, decisions, and questions they faced. When the group of us gringos arrived on the bus with delegates from other water committees who were making rounds, as they do periodically, to meet other water committees and exchange experiences, someone evidently told one of the local delegates that we were representatives from some French NGO that had sent them money. The announcement was made and we were given seats of honor before we understood what was happening, before we could object and correct the error, and subsequently I panicked and played along rather than create a scene in front of the whole group, though in retrospect it wouldn't have been a big deal to explain who we really were.

I was mortified. The situation was extremely embarrassing and acutely uncomfortable, but it illustrated far better than any casual observation could have how readily the committee itself created an internal hierarchy and catered to the assumed status of foreign NGO reps they thought had sent money. Clearly, in this most democratic of spaces, money (and the right citizenship) brought a power unmatched by participation as a *compañero* in the project itself. Interestingly, one person in our group who didn't look like a gringa slipped away from us before being seated in the front row of the

circle. She spent the whole meeting talking with some grandmothers in the back, who eagerly told her that the meetings were boring, the same people always spoke, and they were never women. This, mind you, was in the better committee.

At the other water committee, which exemplified bureaucratic democracy, we were brought into a newly constructed hall—similar in shape and layout to an evangelical church. The building served as their office and meeting hall, and they had paid for it with the monthly water dues given by all the members.

Members of all the committees pay an entrance fee which includes installation, often a hundred dollars or more, which is a major investment for Bolivia's poor, but feasible for those families that at least have a house which can be hooked up to the water network. This fee helps pay for the equipment and materials necessary for laying pipe and wells, though aid from foreign NGOs and governments also pays for much of those costs. After joining each family must pay a monthly rate which goes to maintenance of infrastructure and above all to fuel costs for the water pumps. The dues are significantly cheaper than what they would have to pay otherwise, but evidently some of the committees run a surplus.

This particular committee adopted an aesthetic of success that closely mirrored the ruling system. Their new office was very professional, and the three delegates who met us there carried themselves like experts and dressed in the best suits people of their class could afford. Unlike in the other committee, no one else from the neighborhood was there to meet us.

The most chilling thing they told us, and they said it without a hint of shame, was that if a family were a day late in paying their dues, they'd have their water cut off, and subsequently if any neighboring family gave them water, that household would also have its water cut off.

In other words, they were intentionally structuring their water system to kill the very ethic of solidarity that had made it all possible in the first place.

A Conversation with Carlos and Oscar

Later, we got to talk with Carlos, an older anarchist from the university, and Oscar, an influential union organizer who authored the book *Water War!* We talked about the total co-optation that had been accomplished by the Morales regime, the state of the water committees, and the trajectory of struggle in Bolivia. It was an exciting talk because both of them had been very much a part of the social movement that had defeated itself by winning, Oscar had even been a comrade of Evo's, and both of them expressed the same disappointment and transformation of their analysis that we encoun-

tered elsewhere.

They describe social movements that have been “neutralized or co-opted.” Carlos tells how Evo Morales is planning a “Great Industrial Leap Forward,” by building megadams, highways, and mines. In the case of a new lithium mine, he got the area farmers’ organization to sign on in exchange for some of the profits. In another case he supported a Japanese mining company exploiting silver and zinc in an arid climate and destroying the region through their massive water consumption, by buying off the farmers’ organization that was fighting the project.

Oscar says, “There’s no space to speak, act, or mobilize without being shut down, delegitimized, or maligned by the government. [...] What they care about most is money, money to complete their promises of development. So what the government says is, where’s the money? And it’s in the mines, it’s in the oil, it’s in building highways. Nothing else interests them, just the money. Water—they don’t do anything about that anymore. Health, work, housing... But outwardly they have a very anti-imperialist discourse, and anyone who disagrees with them is accused of being funded by the Right.”

The two criticize the discourse, shared by the government and social movements, of sustainable development, an unboundedly optimistic triumphalism based on the assumption that it would be possible to develop and industrialize while conserving resources and protecting people. Oscar points out that the Workers Party in Brazil, under Lula, is a major influence on this kind of discourse, and Brazil itself has become a terrible regional power whose energy demands are the source of much Bolivian economic policy. An important part of their shared discourse is the image that “the State will deliver.”

Knowing how involved Oscar has been with the water committees, I gently mention what seemed to us as a compatibility between the committees and authoritarian systems. We had only spent one day visiting the committees, and I didn’t want to arrogantly dismiss them when they had also played an important role in past struggles and enabled neighbors to assure their own survival. But Oscar wasn’t so gentle. He and Carlos agree that the water committees as much as the syndicates showed an “absolute lack of internal democracy,” and were “organizations that recreate mini-states.” Oscar adds that “the state structure obliges them to function that way” (as institutions).

We agree that in the infinity of people’s ability to self-organize exists the perfect capacity to organize themselves a new state. Marcela, Oscar’s sister, who arranged this conversation and enters it later on, adds that the water committees arose out of the absence of the State to meet a fundamental need that the State would otherwise have supplied (were it not for its policy of negligence towards the poor southern zone of the city).

We talk about how it is impossible to separate access to water from the decision-making that organizes that access. The neighborhoods are steadily being pushed out of the decision-making processes, and parallel to this the water prices are rising. They have defeated themselves, in part, by opposing neoliberalism without opposing capitalism. “The privatization of the water was defeated,” points out Oscar. The city water company is public, but the water is still commercialized, so people are losing access to it all over again.

At one point I take issue with their use of democracy as a desirable ideal, as when they criticize the water committees or syndicates for lacking internal democracy. I argue that it was exactly their internal democracy—central decision-making authority, unitary and singular outcomes, majority rule, delegation of authority, and compromise among all existing social elements rather than subversion of powerful elements (three of these five characteristics would also exist in the most ideal of direct democratic systems)—that made them recognizable to and co-optable by the State. Because of this centralization and unification of decision-making, the water committees can enact a political discipline that is a precondition for being ruled. In the absence of government, the force that this unified will or the elected delegates must follow is that of the whole of assembled neighbors. But with the arrival of a government interested in co-opting and funding them, the elected delegates will follow that higher power, and a unified political will lacking delegates could also be shunted into the government program unless the neighborhood has specifically cultivated an antagonism towards the State. Otherwise, it would be another social element to compromise with, and as the party with the most resources to bring to the table, the State could make sure any compromise fit well within its program.

I argue that it was a lack of critique of democracy that allowed the Bolivian social movements, which had such a robust practice and analysis in defense of repression, to be defeated so severely. It’s hard to tell if they’re humoring me or genuinely agree with my argument, but they express the need for such an analysis to develop and say that many comrades are moving in that direction. Carlos offers the argument that “when you introduce the discourse of rights, you’re calling on the State” to co-opt you.

They bring up the example of some groups that are trying to help each other get access to water without the State. “It’s a question of strengthening our own capacities.”

Later, we’re able to talk with Fredy, who is helping such a group, la Escuela Andina de Agua, the Andean Water School. The purpose of this group is to preserve indigenous Andean wisdom and technologies of water management, which are communitarian and interrelated with different relations to the land, the mountains, and the forests.

One of the communities participating in this initiative is Comunidad Flores Rancho. The community is 60 years old, has 2000 inhabitants, supports itself through agriculture, and meets its water needs through deep wells. They grow part of their food for the market, and part to feed themselves. They have individual garden plots and communal space too (pastures and the wells). They used to have communal land, even after the agrarian reform, but little by little they gave it away to new families that had emigrated closer to the city. "There's a contradiction or ambivalence between communalism and individualism." Those who come back from Argentina or Spain generally want the municipality to manage the water, whereas those who stayed in Bolivia are more likely to value the idea of communal self-management. In any case, water costs five times more when the government administers it, so at the moment it's a moot argument.

"Community is created via the water," Fredy tells us. "The land no longer creates community because it's individually owned." The Escuela tries to encourage ecological usage of water and also to strengthen the communal vision of water. Previously, the communities in the region got their water from natural springs, the river, and canals. Then everyone had their personal drinking wells, fifteen meters deep, but now it's all dried up, and only very deep wells can reach the water.

Looking at the history of the water committees, a number of contradictions arise. They defeated themselves by collaborating with the government, yet they arose in order to meet a basic need: access to water. You can't criticize someone who doesn't have access to water for talking with the government or receiving money if that's the surest way to get water.

Taking this to its conclusions, it becomes apparent that one can neither ethically nor realistically criticize what people do in order to satisfy their basic needs. If I were starving to death, I might very well steal food from my own friend in order to stay alive. I would certainly be happier with myself if I refused to turn against those who were in the same condition as I was, but I would also be dead, and I can't really advocate an ethics that is so unsustainable.

Because survival relativizes ethics to the point of meaninglessness, it becomes apparent that revolutionary projects cannot be founded on basic needs. As long as the State holds all the guns and all the social wealth, they will be able to guarantee survival far better than we can. Furthermore, excepting certain historical moments in certain geographic regions, capitalism wants us to survive. What is revolutionary is exactly everything that goes beyond survival, and that at key points actually makes survival more difficult.

We cannot criticize those who rob others for their own survival; what we

can do is refuse to glorify them as revolutionary. The water committees are engaged in vital work, and they carry it out while wearing the mask of solidarity, which they discard when it becomes uncomfortable. But they, just like our individualist thief, are robbing their survival from the mouths of others: in this case, from their grandchildren or possibly even their children. As long as we use capitalism as the guarantor of our survival, we are robbing our survival from others—from other species, other peoples, and from the future. If capitalism is not abolished, soon there will be no more water around Cochabamba, as the drying wells readily attest. The water committees are an impressive example of self-organization, and they are doing necessary work, but their project is not a revolutionary one and it deserves the exact same level of admiration as the actions of one who wins his water by stealing it from his neighbors. What they gain in (temporary) solidarity, they lack in bravery, for their act of theft, working all together, getting support from NGOs and then the government, stealing from a defenseless future, is probably the path of least resistance.

The revolutionary project, in this situation, is the more difficult one, that insists on creating different relationships within the community and with the land as a less pragmatic, more utopian means for acquiring water.

Las Imillas

With some help from Yawar, we were able to make contact with Las Imillas, a group of Quechua and Aymara anarchy-feminists in Cochabamba. I was excited about the meeting because I had felt so little affinity with the radical feminists we had met in La Paz, for their essentialism, their emphasis on advancing women as individual property owners, their exclusion of trans women, and disapproval of women who love men.

We met with them a couple times, once at the new social center they are creating, and learned about the effect of the MAS victory on the feminist movement. “The women’s movement here was taken apart [...] all co-opted,” by MAS, incorporated “and turned into just another arm of the government.” They describe an opportunistic “utilization” of women within the new government. Meanwhile, MAS policy has also set them back in a number of ways.

The use of gas money to provide welfare for, among others, pregnant women, has been one of Evo’s most lauded advances. Yet this gift, like most government programs, is a trojan horse. In a country in which most people, especially indigenous women, give birth at home and self-organize the births, the welfare money has been used as a weapon to institutionalize daily life. Women only receive the money if they get a medical check-up every month of the pregnancy and if they give birth in a hospital. Thus, the Bolivian government can improve its development statistics, tout its progressive character,

win more funding and positive propaganda abroad, and destroy women's autonomy and traditional birthing all in one go. "It's a form of State control of women's bodies." Additionally, if you have a second baby within 2 years, they take away all your benefit money (which clearly is only a disincentive for poor women, mostly indigenous).

We also talked about the water committees. "In the water committees, the women didn't participate much [...] But when there's a strike or a mobilization or a struggle it's the women who sustain it [...] cooking, feeding everyone, carrying the banners, confronting the police, fighting."

There are usually more women present at the water committee meetings, but they participate less. If a woman talks in a meeting and she's wrong about something, the men laugh at her, so they don't feel comfortable talking. On the other hand, whatever themes are discussed in the assembly are also debated in the homes, so in many families the women tell their men what to say in the following assembly, because they are in charge of daily affairs and understand them better. Then the men will go to the assemblies and express this opinion as though it were their own.

Another project Las Imillas are involved in is La Rebelion de las Wak'a. "Our project is about recovering historical memory, identity." Small groups of Aymara and Quechua people across Bolivia are participating in this rebellion, including Yawar back in La Paz. The wak'a, the holy sites of the indigenous communities, retained their power long after colonization. The Catholics built their churches and cathedrals on top of the wak'a because in the end it was the only way they could get the native peoples to go to church (and in the process catholicism was transformed dramatically, as locals converted the various saints into their old deities).

The rebellion of the wak'a is a long-term project aimed at recovering these sacred sites. At the moment, people are focusing on reminding everyone what the wak'a are, and where they are, with the use of art, including theater but especially graffiti murals and posters. We saw a number of churches around Cochabamba decorated with beautiful murals depicting scenes from indigenous culture or colonization or struggle. Once they have built up the power to do so, the idea is to physically recover the wak'a, one by one.

Bolivia is clearly at a low point in its social struggles, but the conversations we had with *compañeros* there made me feel undauntedly optimistic. They had a long-term perspective, and a perseverance that can enable them to overcome recuperation just as they have overcome State repression time and again in recent years. Many of the democratic models of organization that facilitated

their defeat are models that still retain validity for many anti-authoritarians in North America. The water committees and the neighborhood councils played an important role in creating solidarity, sustaining life, and strengthening social struggles, but once they had helped create this force and the State changed its strategy from repression to recuperation, these same organizations began to kill solidarity and to channel a rebellious vitality into unthinking subservience, in part through dynamics that they exhibited from the beginning. North American anarchists who champion these as revolutionary institutions of dual power are padding the resumé of a false analysis.

By critically engaging with these social movements and illuminating the possibility of entirely different relationships, I think the Bolivian comrades will develop a practice better suited to resisting recuperation. Because we came to them in a spirit of reciprocity, bringing what aid we could, and eager to learn all they wanted to share with us, they greeted us with open arms and I think we all came away stronger. By continuing to build relationships of solidarity, we can help deprive their progressive government of its international fame, and learn a great deal from their experiences of struggle, strengthening our own struggle in the process.

EVO'S HIGHWAY:

DEVELOPMENT IN SOCIALIST SOUTH AMERICA

It sounds like something the IMF would have funded during the regime of General Banzer: a super highway cutting across Bolivia, linking Brazil with Peru and Chile—and thus with East Asian markets, and in the process plowing straight through a vitally important nature reserve that also happens to be the home of three indigenous nations.

Since 2006, Bolivia has been governed by MAS, a progressive political party that grew directly out of the movements that opposed neoliberalism and the oppression of indigenous cultures. Its president is Evo Morales, an indigenous man whose background is in the coca-growers union. Under these circumstances, Bolivian social struggles have made the news much less, compared with 2005 and earlier, when major clashes paralyzed the entire country, as in the Gas War of 2003 and the Water War of 2000, both of which halted key attempts to privatize natural resources.

Internationally, the Morales regime has curried substantial favor from the current manifestations of the antiglobalization movement, and it is no coincidence that in April, 2010, activists and NGOs from around the world met in Tiquipaya, Bolivia, for the People's Climate Change Conference.

Within the progressive narrative, a project like the highway described above belongs to Bolivia's past. But in fact, it is a new initiative, the love child of Evo and Brazil's socialist president, Lula, another darling of the opponents of neoliberalism. And the capital is coming not from the IMF but from a Brazilian development bank, and the construction companies are all Brazilian.

The indigenous nations whose home will be destroyed by the highway—the Moxeños, Chimanes, and Yuracares—were not consulted before the agreement for the highway was signed. The nature reserve where they live, called TIPNIS, is unique in that the indigenous inhabitants are included in creating the management plan for the park, unlike other reserves that simply clear out the prior inhabitants, under the eurocentric assumption that human communities cannot live sustainably in nature. And on paper at least, TIPNIS's constitution prohibits any projects that will have a high environmental or social impact.

TIPNIS used to be the National Park Isiboro Secure. It was converted into the Indigenous Territory of the National Park Isiboro Secure (TIPNIS) as a direct result of strong pressure from below, most immediately a major indigenous march that crossed the country in 1990. In other words TIPNIS

represents a victory of social struggle, from a time when Bolivia was ruled by a government everyone recognized as exploitative and militaristic. It is also one of the most important reserves of biodiversity on the planet, home to 108 mammal species, 470 different types of birds, 38 reptile and 53 amphibian species, and 188 types of fish, on 12,363 square kilometers of land. Thirty-eight of the vertebrate animal species that live there are in danger of extinction.

Adolfo Moye, an indigenous leader from the affected area, explains the importance of the park: “This place is our Eden, because here we have everything and precisely through the heart of our sacred land the government now wants to construct a highway. It’s the zone of refuge from the constant flooding of the [river] Beni. It’s the high ground where all of us, animals and people, find refuge.”

If the highway is built, it won’t only destroy the land immediately in its path. It will also divide animal habitats in half and cut across the migration routes of many species that move from the lowlands to the highlands during the rainy season; it will facilitate the illegal logging of protected trees that survive now only because there is no infrastructure to support logging; it will pollute the rivers; and encourage slash-and-burn agriculturalists to move in and cut down the forest for export-driven coca production (Andean communities grow coca as an important ritual and medicinal plant, whereas large scale cultivation for export goes to cocaine production).

The resolution of a gathering of indigenous inhabitants of the park states: “We are tired of sending cards and resolutions with our rejection of the initiative to construct a highway uniting Villa Tunari with San Ignacio de Moxos, which have never been attended or listened to by the prior or present government.”

In sum, Morales’ populist government proves no different from any other government, both in choosing destructive projects and ignoring those who protest them. The most novel thing about this project, in fact, has been the relative lack of opposition. So far, the only people moving against the highway are the inhabitants of the park and a few small indigenous and anarchist groups in other parts of the country. Before 2006, a project like this might have sparked road blockades and street battles up and down Bolivia.

And in the end, that is Evo’s real triumph: he has made Bolivia’s impoverished people identify with their government, so that it can go on doing what governments have always done. The highway is by no means the only development project of its kind. When there was a growing opposition to a lithium mine that will dessicate an already arid region of the country, Evo quelled the protests by promising the farmers’ organization leading them a

share of the profits. By co-opting social movements rather than repress them, Bolivia's progressive government has accomplished what the earlier military dictatorships never could—it has pacified the country's rebellious tendencies. The various organizations that forced out multiple governments in recent years have now all been brought into the fold. Many movement leaders have been given government posts, and money (from the development projects) is shared with once rebellious organizations.

With generous payouts, radical rhetoric, an increase in welfare that hasn't come close to alleviating the country's poverty, and a chauvinistic development plan that will ostensibly make Bolivia as powerful as its neighbors, the social movements themselves have been turned into the government's first line of defense.

Oscar Olivera, the author of *¡Cochabamba! Water War in Bolivia*, an influential figure in the labor movement, and a former comrade of Evo's, tells me: "There's no space to speak, to act, to mobilize, without being shut down, delegitimized, or maligned by the government [...] What they care most about is money, money to complete their promises of development. So what the government says is, where's the money? And it's in the mines, it's in the oil, it's in building highways. Nothing else interests them, just the money."

Carlos Crespo, an anarchist academic, describes the negative response from former comrades or people in the streets to anyone seen as anti-government. "One can't criticize the government because you'd be accused of playing into the Right, but the Right is destroyed in this country. It's Stalinist!"

There is a growing amount of resistance to the new government, although critics have little ground to stand on, with the entire organizational framework they used to form a part of being co-opted. The day after the interview with Oscar and Carlos, the streets of Cochabamba were blocked off by a protest against a new law that would allow the government to shut down critical media outlets.

Inside Bolivia, discontent with the regime is disadvantaged, but apparent. No one has been fooled more thoroughly than the progressives in other countries who have touted the rise of progressive socialism in South America (Chavez in Bolivia, Correa in Ecuador, Lula in Brazil, and Morales in Bolivia) as a major victory for movements against corporate interests.

They were so easy to fool, one might call their triumphalism "willful ignorance." When all the delegates came to the Climate Change conference in Tiquipaya, the government simply had to cover up all the sawmills lining the main road from Cochabamba, and nobody asked what was behind the curtain.

In the pages of *The Progressive* or *Democracy Now!* one can find plenty of signs of the Left's infatuation with Evo. Even more bizarre is the adulation of arch South American progressive, Hugo Chavez, the model progressive who opted for an electoral victory after a military coup didn't work out. Rafael Uzcátegui, a member of the human rights organization Provea and journalist with the anarchist newspaper *El Libertario*, recently published a book that exposes the Chavez regime to its very core, *Venezuela: La Revolución como Espectáculo*.

In it, he describes how after Chavez took office, his "Bolivarian movement began a process of diluting the very social fabric that had brought it to power. [...] They achieved the rapid institutionalization of the social movements, out of which a body of leaders would be isolated and successively frozen, in the separation of leaders from followers."

Transforming the government into a populist one has not made it any less violent. On the contrary, in 2000 there were 104 police murders in Venezuela, and in 2008, after ten years under Chavez, the figure rose to 247. Between January 2008 and March 2009, Uzcátegui documents 10,103 investigations of police crimes such as abuse, assault, and torture, and only 22 cases in which police were arrested as a result.

But just like the Castro regime before it, and the USSR before that, Chavez can count on friendly publicity courtesy of the champions of social justice and human rights in other countries. In 2007, when pro-Chavez paramilitaries shot student and anarchist protestors during demonstrations against a public referendum that would have extended welfare and made Chavez president for life, *Democracy Now!* refused to run the story.

And, Uzcátegui reveals, when Michael Albert, author and editor with *Z Magazine*, came to Venezuela, he was put up in a five star hotel by the government, and on the very last day of his trip met with grassroots dissidents to tell them how great Chavez's program was. Noam Chomsky's visit went even further in legitimizing the Chavez regime.

Joshua Clover, writing in *The Nation* ("Busted: Stories of the Financial Crisis"), took the chorus of free-market apologists and pseudo-critics to task for their superficial and moralistic explanations of the financial crisis. He deftly argues how blaming lax regulation or human greed operates as a cover-up for the inherent boom and bust dynamics of capitalism, that quite aside from human greed, the imperative for capital to reproduce itself, requires investors to go out of business or to speculate against future earnings, no matter how irresponsible market conditions require them to be in the process.

Similarly, criticizing neoliberalism or yankee imperialism without criticizing

capitalism itself creates a mythical past, in which the same sorts of destructive development projects and exploitative practices did not exist during the Keynesian period, and a mythical future, in which the same atrocities will not occur if new investments are backed by Brazilian or Bolivian capital. And failing to understand that a government, whether under the leadership of a progressive or a neoconservative, will continue to do what governments have done for all of history, is to condemn ourselves to the repetition of past failures, to set our sights low and become apologists for the resulting disappointments.

How pathetic it is to lose by winning. Fortunately, not everyone at the base of South American social struggles have given up the fight. In Bolivia, resistance is brewing at the grassroots, as indigenous and anarchist groups in TIPNIS, Cochabamba, and La Paz spread the word about the highway, and build opposition. Hopefully, activists in other countries won't aid those who are silencing them, just to preserve their own illusions.

SOLIDARITY AS ACTIVE RESISTANCE: CREATING MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS IN STRUGGLE

I approached this solidarity trip to Chile and Bolivia with a certain amount of skepticism and doubt. I was skeptical as to whether we would be able to achieve our stated goals because we were only going for 6 weeks and because our itinerary was very ambitious. In the past I have had much more time, and therefore a longer learning curve to wrap my head around the political context of where I am and what I wish to accomplish there. Reflecting on it now, I am happy and pleasantly surprised by how much we were able to get done.

The past few years of traveling and living outside of the US has taught me some hard lessons about the limits of my ability to be politically effective in struggle in other languages, geographies and contexts. Being able to participate in struggles in other places in a way that feels useful has usually been dependent on four things: a historical and contemporary understanding of the political situation, language fluency, good friends or contacts whom I trust to guide me through the first period of exchange and my own ability to be vulnerable and open to others.

Most of the advice I would offer is pretty basic. Do your research before you go. Spend time reading and learning about the situation you will be entering into. Having the backstory politically, economically and historically will be helpful when you have discussions with people because you will spend less time interrupting them to obtain basic information. Also be honest with yourself about where you are at linguistically. Think about the level of passive listening and active expression you think you will need to make exchanges satisfying to you and balance that out with how long you will be traveling. The more time you have the more you can expect to improve but everyone learns at a different pace. Don't bank on playing catch up once you get there on a shorter trip since most people need a certain amount of time for an immersion experience to positively affect their language skills.

Language skills (or lets say comfort – because one can accomplish a lot with a certain amount of initiative and a minimal vocabulary) is directly related to creating friendships. For me solidarity is an emotional project, based on personal relationships – which was the premise of this trip. I am not very good at networking, I find I need to make an intimate connection with someone in order to maintain an on-going relationship and have longer term collaborations. The kinds of contacts you have are very important to creating meaningful connections. The overall effectiveness of our trip was a definite result of the legwork that was put in beforehand to arrange ideologically relevant

contacts. It's important to think about what struggles you want to support and what kinds of friends you wish to make.

I don't think that it is necessary to share the exact same world-view with someone in order to support them in struggle but it's important to be honest about what level of ideological synthesis you need to feel affinity with someone. The contacts we had with others who were in active resistance against the government – whether or not they identified as anti-authoritarian or anarchist – made the tentative connections we began with much more likely to flourish into productive and genuine relationships because we shared a basic level of analysis.

The places that we visited where we lacked that common ground with our contacts produced significantly less exchange. Bolivia was hard because it took us longer to connect with people we had affinity with, and when we did we didn't have the time to strengthen those connections. Hindsight is always 20/20, but I would suggest giving yourself a few more weeks than you think you will need, if you can afford it. Also remember that your trip will usually get less costly the more time passes as your local connections teach you more and more about living for less. I also can't stress the necessity for some kind of letter of introduction – friends of friends assures a level of potential affinity and trust on both ends. Approaching any new place without being vetted can cause a lot of frustration and will be less effective.

Of course there will always be things you can't control. The wave of government repression in Chile that preceded our arrival made beginning contacts in Santiago difficult. We arrived in the midst of a crisis. This negatively affected the capacity our friends had for showing us around, and cueing us in. It also made it politically dangerous for them to offer us hospitality. Staying with people creates an intimacy through daily exchange that doesn't always happen with organized discussions and events.

It took more time in Santiago to create relationships of trust but luckily we had that time to spare. Once we did connect, the work we did there was very much appreciated because our translations were essential for international solidarity actions in the English-speaking world.

Make it easier for people to help you plug in by knowing what your strengths are and what you can offer before you go and communicate that clearly as you travel. Also be sure to only commit to future collaborations and support that you think you can realistically follow through on – small amounts of material aid that come through is a lot more helpful than being promised the world and having someone flake out.

The material aid we collected before we went was certainly appreciated, as

was our translating and diffusion of information. The political exchange was rich and we had many interesting discussions. I found traveling as a group productive and worth the emotional effort. I also had a lot of fun taking the streets, but actually it was the small moments of concrete aid and daily living that touched me the most. Making bread in Wallmapu, playing with people's kids, doing physical labor – felling trees and burning brush. All of these daily acts helped create intimate moments of connection and personal vulnerability that really resonated. Mutual aid expressed in simple small ways helps nurture, heal and support others. I was able to help facilitate that kind of intimacy by offering people bodywork.

Massage provided an opportunity – as it always does – to slow down, take space, and talk with people about whatever was burdening them. I was able to have a lot of conversations about birth and death, how we deal with raising kids in the midst of brutal government repression, and the psychological effects of police incursion into our communities. I talked with people about the fall out that happens after evictions and arrests and how hard the process of grieving for friends and loved ones who are killed in struggle is.

If I had to offer only one final piece of advice – it would be to approach a solidarity trip as you would anything precious and ephemeral. Be present in the moment, be respectful of others' trauma but also be audacious. Don't be shy. If you want to know something – ask – you may not have another opportunity. If you are having a hard time dealing with the consequences of struggle in your own life, chances are the person you are talking to is as well. Be honest about your own head-space, vulnerabilities, and history.

I was in the middle of a really intense process of grieving during this trip and it was both hard and wonderful. I was a bit of a mess and therefore much less emotionally controlled than I usually am. It allowed me to put it all out there – all of my curiosity, questions, awkward doubts, arrogant speculation, incredulous anger, fear and hope. I learned that honesty and intensity reverberate, you get out what you put in. Solidarity is an emotional endeavor. Holding intimate space with others in struggle is just as important as taking the streets together. You will get so much back if you bear yourself and offer up your heart.

THE SOLIDARITY TRIP: AN EVALUATION

One aspect of our trip to Chile, Wallmapu, and Bolivia was the elaboration of a model for the intentional building of international solidarity.

The trip was organized on a principle of reciprocity, which should be considered an important element of solidarity. The traveller culture that intersects heavily with the US anarchist scene has certainly increased international contacts and awareness in some ways, but generally I feel that that mode of travel has failed in connecting the US anarchist struggle to an effective degree with anti-authoritarian struggles in other parts of the world; it is better suited, rather, to gaining valuable experiences at a strictly individual level to the traveller, and giving little in return, except also at an individual level, in terms of friendships made in the countries travelled through.

Before the trip, the group of us organized a number of fundraisers so we could financially support groups or projects whose work seemed important. Rather than choosing in an absolute sense to whom the money would go, we found the comrades with whom we had the most affinity, whom we trusted, and whose work we respected, and asked them to recommend where the money would be most useful. In this way we supported eight different projects, from social centers to counter-information projects to anti-repression and prisoner support groups, and some of the donations represented a huge contribution in local currency. Secondly, we supported local struggles through translations, articles, and interviews with alternative media, to spread information in English about these struggles. Particularly in cases of repression and calls for international solidarity, such as with the August 14 arrestees in Chile or the Mapuche hungerstrikers, translation and diffusion were particularly valued by the comrades there as a form of support. The comrades in Santiago also asked us to contact progressive media in the US to accomplish an as-wide-as-possible diffusion, something we had some questions about on political grounds, and in doing so we found a stark difference in the receptivity of different media; counterpunch.org gave good coverage to our articles on the Chilean repression, whereas Democracy Now! refused to cover it, even when contacted by former associates of theirs.

The least effective aspect of solidarity provided was the sharing of information and experiences from anarchist struggles in the US. Comrades in the Spanish-speaking world are typically unaware of radical struggles in the States beyond Mumia abu-Jamal and Ted Kaczynski (no joke!). While on the trip we were able to give talks on US anarchist struggles we were personally involved in; the use of anti-terror laws to repress anarchists in the US; a criticism of pacifism and recuperation in the US; and struggles against the border and

the criminalization of immigrants. These talks, however, were mostly small and organized at the last minute. In Chile, this was due to the recent wave of repression that was taking up everyone's time and that had also closed down one of the social centers where we'd already had a talk scheduled. In Bolivia, our lack of time in the country and shortage of close contacts (which is to say, people we already knew and trusted who would be willing to organize events for us before we came) made it difficult.

On the other end, we have tried to bring a number of resources back to the US. Through articles, translations, and info-events throughout the US subsequent to the trip, we are attempting to provide more and more accurate information about struggles in Chile, Wallmapu, and Bolivia, as well as strategic analysis and theoretical questions arising from those struggles, that may be useful, in comparison and contrast, for us to think about here. By connecting with struggles in other countries, we become harder to isolate, and more able to attack State and Capital at the global level on which they frequently operate. To continue deepening these connections and relationships, we can intentionally share the contacts we made with other comrades in order to make it easier for US anarchists to go on similar trips in the future.

Two factors were indispensable in organizing this trip. One was prior contacts that other US anarchists had already established, and shared with us, through living in South America, or alternately, that South American anarchists had established by living in our communities. The second factor was the ability to speak Spanish. Being able to communicate fluently was a prerequisite for all our connections and collaborations. The purpose of stating this obvious point is to underline a clear need that, despite its obviousness, has not translated into practice. In order to realize international solidarity that goes beyond the repetition of relatively superficial patterns, US anarchists need to learn other languages.

In sum, the trip was generally effective. Hopefully, other people will continue to use and improve this model of intentional solidarity trips in order to improve connections with people in struggle in other countries.

SOLIDARITY

Condo development attacked, bank sabotaged in Seattle

September, 2010

A Bank of America's atm slots were superglued, and a nearby vacant condo development was decorated with graffiti reading:

NO CONDOS, NO PRISONS, FOR CHILE (A)

An outside hose was also left running into a sliding door in order to flood the lower level.

DWELL Development tears down existing homes and replaces them with expensive "eco-friendly" condos that further the gentrification of Seattle's neighborhoods. We find it ludicrous that these condos are located mere blocks from one of the most recent sites of Nickelsville, Seattle's tent city. And, in a world of dying ecosystems, the construction of "extremely energy efficient and environmentally friendly" condos means absolutely nothing.

Bank of America is one of the three joint financial advisers (including Merrill Lynch and Barclays Int.) for GEO Group Corp. The GEO Group Corp. is a private prison firm that is paid millions by the U.S. government to detain undocumented immigrants and other prisoners. This corporation runs the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma.

We hold no illusion that these acts of sabotage will cause these corporations to financially collapse tomorrow. Instead, we attack in order to bring about a small rupture in the social fabric of our daily lives, allowing us to express our own personal rage, and knowing that to remain on the offensive is crucial to both our struggle and our spirits.

In solidarity with all prisoners,
In solidarity with our comrades facing heavy repression in Chile,
In solidarity with the victims of police violence in Seattle and everywhere,

- some anarchists

London: Solidarity with Chilean anarchists

September 2010

Today, Friday 24 September, around 2pm. a number of anarchists and sympathizers from various parts of the metropolis converged on the shopping centre in the middle of the busy intersection Elephant and Castle, chosen because of the thousands of people from Latin American countries living in the area. After dropping banners over the main entrance in solidarity with the Mapuche hunger strikers and the 14 anarchists arrested in Chile, they dispersed into and around the shopping centre and local market giving out hundreds of leaflets in English and Spanish.

Unnoticed by the State and private security who were too intent on defending the bosses' wares, the banners stayed in place for hours in full view of hundreds of bus passengers from almost every country on the planet on their way to and from their places of exploitation.

Today's outing, chosen to coincide with the international solidarity date for our Chilean comrades, rather than being a fait accompli is a call to action everywhere, without delay.

THE PASSION FOR FREEDOM KNOWS NO BORDERS
THE SAME FOR SOLIDARITY
random anarchists in london

Bloomington solidarity with Mapuche hunger-strikers

September, 2010

15 anarchists and companions gathered a few days ago, responding to the call for international solidarity with the Mapuche hunger strikers in Chile. A microphone demo was held on Kirkwood, Bloomington's main street, with music and statements broadcast, and many fliers distributed against the repression carried out by the Chilean state.

This demo was held to honor the 36 Mapuche hunger strikers (34 in adult facilities facing charges under Pinochet's anti-terrorism law, and the two youths who have taken up the strike in a juvenile facility), and all the comrades who have been kidnapped by the Chilean state. This was for everyone who can't be among friends, family, and comrades, because they are under judicial control.

Down with the prisons in Chile, and everywhere!

Freedom for the hunger strikers and for everyone standing strong under the blows of the cops, courts, and paramilitaries in Chile!

Wallmapu libre!

Mapuche Solidarity

September, 2010

Early in the afternoon on September 23rd a small group of us here in Vancouver, Coast Salish Territory, responded to the call-out for international solidarity with the 34 Mapuche weichafes (warriors) in prison in Chile, who have been on hunger strike since July 12th and also with the 14 anarchist revolutionaries who have been in prison since the August 14th raids on squats and social centers in Santiago.

We taped the Mapuche flag and dumped red paint on the front door of the Chilean consulate's offices which is located on the 16th floor on 1185 West Georgia Street in Vancouver.

The Mapuche and anarchist comrades give us much inspiration in their determined struggle against the government and corporations of Chile. We hope that this small act reach the hearts of the resistance fighters and contribute to their will to persevere.

This struggle is international! We are with you.

Marichiweu (ten times we will win).

Coast Salish Territories
(Vancouver, Canada)

Mapuche solidarity protest in Vancouver

September, 2010

A small group of demonstrators gathered yesterday in front of the Chilean Consulate in Vancouver to show their solidarity with Mapuche and anarchist political prisoners in Chile.

Over thirty Mapuche prisoners have been on hunger strike since July 12, and dozens more have joined the strike in solidarity since then. Some of the

prisoners have been transferred to hospital without the prison guards or the police informing their families of where they are being taken. Most recently, the anti-poet of Chile, Nicanor Parra, joined the hunger strike. He is 96 years old.

On August 14 of this year, 14 anarchists were arrested and imprisoned, accused under anti-terrorist legislation of being connected to a series of explosions in Chile. Supporters say the charges are a total fabrication.

“Today the strong connection in Chile is that the Anarchists and the Mapuche Indigenous radical movement are the only two political movements in Chile that are really defying the status quo of capitalism, of neo-liberalism in Chile,” said Claudio Escobar, a Chilean living in Canada who helped to organize Friday’s action. “They are the only two real non-reformist movements in Chile, and they see that connection.”

As those gathered handed out leaflets to folks passing by, the police kept a close watch on the demonstration, approaching demonstrators a number of times.

Mario Hueche, a Mapuche man who lives in Vancouver, also joined the picket. He described the life of Mapuche peoples on the land as “very difficult... they’ve been abandoned, just like the Indigenous people in Chiapas, and in the rest of Latin America.”

Hueche recently visited his uncle in a rural area in Chile, and he said that his uncle told him that the land is getting tired, and the crops they sow are not providing as much food as they used to. Hueche left Chile during the military dictatorship, and he explained that many Mapuche are in exile in the US, Canada, Switzerland and Spain.

“We’ve had four governments of concertación [left-progressive parties in congress], and not one of them said ‘enough with humiliation’... They have all refused to give us the respect that human beings deserve,” said Hueche. The right wing government of Sebastian Piñera assumed power in March of 2010, and conflicts between the government and Mapuche peoples, as well as the anarchist movement, have continued to worsen.

The organizers of yesterday’s demonstration have been in the streets many times over the past months to raise awareness about the criminalization of dissent in Chile.

“We’ll continue to stand here in front of the Chilean Consulate, and we encourage people to take their own initiatives as well, as was done yesterday by some group of courageous young people that apparently showed up and

did a direct action in front of the entrance of the Chilean Consulate,” said Escobar.

Excavator and police van torched in solidarity with Mexican and Chilean prisoners

September, 2010

In the early morning of September 23, we completely ruptured social peace when we approached a Cuautitlán state security police van and placed an incendiary device inside one of its front tires. The van belonged to state security agency commander Israel. This fool previously had another van of his reduced to ashes outside his home one morning. With the memory of that action still fresh, we decided to visit him again. The action went according to plan. The van burned, demonstrating our ferocious hatred for the police—guardians of the systematic order they want to impose on us at all costs.

While that was happening, another device was left inside an Earth-destroying machine a few streets away from the first attack. The machine was used for the work of digging up soil that would later be entombed by cement, just so civilization could force itself on nature yet again. This was prevented.

The fire rose toward the sky, and after a few minutes we clearly heard the sirens of the obedient firefighters arriving on the scene. We thus want to show that we will not remain passive in the face of everything, and that we will fight to the finish. As long as our comrades are imprisoned in the capital’s jails, we will not stop these attacks.

The next day, the wage-slaves stared idiotically at the damaged machine together with their masters, powerless to do anything. Let it be quite clear that they too are our enemies. We will not defend the interests of the “working class” or the privileged class, because we are not classists. We are anti-anthropocentrists and individualists. We struggle against this society, spreading the anti-social war through our actions. We defend the Earth because we believe in respecting her completely. We defend neither rich nor poor. We fight against civilization, for Earth liberation and total liberation. Let this be clear!

We frame this action in support of the anarchist prisoners in the fascist Chilean state. Also, in solidarity with Mexican eco-prisoners Adrian Magdaleno and Abraham López.

—Insurrectionalist Earth Liberation Front/Mexico State

Solidarity attack in London

September, 2010

Around 2:45am, Santander Bank, owned by Spanish bosses, attacked in Jubilee Way, Wimbledon, London. Windows smashed, cash machines damaged with glue. FREEDOM TO THE 14 ANARCHISTS IN CHILE! and SOLIDARITY TO THE 35 MAPUCHE ON HUNGER STRIKE! sprayed on walls.

night owls

Sabotage in solidarity with anarchist comrades imprisoned in Chile and Switzerland

September, 2010

Tonight, there have been several acts of sabotage in solidarity with the anarchist prisoners imprisoned in August in Chile.

- A digger on fire in the south of Madrid.
- Windows of police training academy in the area of Atocha attacked with a hammer.
- A Peugeot dealership in the Embajadores area attacked with a hammer.

Each of the 3 actions was signed with the words "Solidarity with the prisoners in Chile". Because we are tired of this life that has become artificial, where we are told how we should live, because solidarity is something more than words alone.

Immediate freedom for the anarchists in Chile!

Immediate restitution of the Mapuche lands to their people!

Freedom for Silvia Guerini, Luca Bernasconi, Costantino Ragusa, Marco Camenisch!

TIERRA SALVAJE

Natwest bank smashed on Gloucester Road, Bristol in solidarity with those in prison in Chile and Switzerland

September, 2010

in the early hours of the 28th of september we attacked the natwest bank on

gloucester road, bristol with paint and bricks.

windows were smashed, paintbombs thrown and 'destroy all prisons' was sprayed up on the wall. this action was taken in solidarity with the 35 mapuche prisoners, the 3 incarcerated in switzerland and the 14 imprisoned anarchists in chile – the majority of which are on hunger strike.

natwest is owned by the royal bank of scotland, which is complicit in state repression in chile, the pillaging of the earth, and the financing of the prison machine.

We send solidarity, love and rage to all those continuing the struggle in whatever way possible. until all prisons are burnt to the ground

destroytheprisons

Solidarity Action in Australia

September, 2010

Two banners hung in solidarity with the 14 arrested comrades in Chile. One on the overpass of City Rd near the University of Sydney, and one on Enmore Rd, Newtown. Despite twelve thousand kilometres, the passion for freedom connects us. Solidarity from the world's largest prison island- Australia.

NO ONE HOSTAGE IN THE HANDS OF THE STATE

IT IS THE STATE, CAPITALISTS, AND COPS WHO ARE THE TERRORISTS

-Anarchists in Sydney

... The guards at the Temuco prison search us over, and lead us into a room off the main hallway. The four men come in a little later and begin telling us their stories. They choose their words solemnly, and take long pauses. Seventy days without eating has taken its toll. "Our bones hurt, we get dizzy, tired, we have to rest a lot, lay down a lot. It's uncomfortable going so long without eating. But we're going to go until the final consequences. We're putting our bodies and health on the line for the Mapuche people."

They start with what we already know: the reasons for the hungerstrike, the Chilean state's use of the antiterrorist law against Mapuche warriors, and the long history of their struggle. When they find out we're not human rights activists, but anarchists, they smile and warm up to us a little more. After all, the human rights organizations have shown concern for the Mapuche once they end up in prison, but have never taken a position on Mapuche independence. One of them tells us: "First Nations have given a deeper sense to the word 'anarchy.' We were the first anarchists. Our politics is an anti-politics."

