



# Eye-witness to the Oaxaca commune

Tue, 13/03/2007 - 23:00

**Workers Power** Can you tell us how the APPO was set up and how it worked?

**Andreas Aullet** The APPO was made up of more than 250 organisations and they were split up into two main groups.

The first group consisted of the traditional organisations of the working class such as the teachers, the Federation of Public Sector Workers of Oaxaca State (the regional TUC), health workers, education and non-education workers of the Oaxaca Autonomous University, peasant groups, and popular and civil society organisations. These groups sent their own traditional leaders, such as Enrique Pacheco, head of the teachers.

The second group was of organisations created by the struggle itself, neighbourhood and barricade committees, student organisations, the Co-ordinating Organisation of the Women of Oaxaca, taxi drivers and delegates from towns and villages around Oaxaca. These new organisations elected delegates whenever the APPO met. While the APPO did not meet all the time, it could be called very quickly, within 24 hours, although not all bodies sent delegates all the time. Everyone could speak and agendas were produced for every meeting.

**Workers Power** What were the political debates in the APPO?

**Andreas Aullet** One of the key debates was about political leadership. Some wanted Ortiz to go but were not against his party, the PRI. Others wanted the PRI to go, too. There were arguments about whether the APPO should call upon the federal state to get rid of Ortiz or to drive him out of office. A negotiating committee was elected to negotiate a deal with the federal government - Pacheco was on the committee - but the APPO kicked out the deal.

Other debates were on social and economic questions, such as land distribution. The Stalinists wanted to set up a commission to study the land problems before doing anything. Others wanted the APPO to act as a government. The right wing populists wanted the APPO to become part of the federal state, while the left populists wanted the APPO to act as a government, but were very vague about what it should do.

The PTS argued that the APPO should become a government and we also called for a revolutionary constituent assembly, to which workers and peasants throughout the state should have sent delegates. Mass mobilisations, strikes and demonstrations would have been needed.

Such a constituent assembly could have carried out far-reaching measures on the land, dealt with exploitation, improved rights for indigenous groups and so on. We believe it was possible for the working class to take power in Oaxaca, but we needed a statewide general strike, which was blocked by the Stalinists, Pacheco and others. Also, because Oaxaca was the highpoint of the struggle in Mexico, we also argued for a general strike throughout the country in support of the commune.

But the national trade union leaders and [cheated bourgeois presidential candidate] Lopez Obrador's campaign isolated the APPO. The main bourgeois parties control the trade union leadership and did little to support Oaxaca, and, although Obrador's National Convention pulled a million people on the streets, no debate on the way forward took place.

Then there were the Zapatistas. Some individuals came to Oaxaca but the movement went away up north, with their idea of changing the world without taking power.

**Workers Power** What has happened since the repression?

**Andreas Aullet** President Felipe Calderon and his party, PAN, passed the budget, with support from the PRI and the PRD, Obrador's party. The budget cuts education and health services, with more money for the army. The price of oil was raised. The situation will worsen next year with more privatisations and price liberalisations as part of a deal with the US.

A wave of demonstrations were called by the PRI and the main Mexican workers' confederation (CTM, controlled by PRI and PRD) and the National Union of Workers (UNT), a smaller but more oppositional trade union federation but one still controlled by the PRI. The main slogan on the demos was 'Down with PAN, Up with Tortilla' (PAN is the name of Calderon's party and also the word for bread).

There have been several strikes, but the CTM leaders have sold them out. The more left UNT unions have taken action, but their leaders have also attacked activists. For example, there was a social security workers' strike over pensions and cuts to the benefit system. The UNT leaders suspended many militants from the union - then, of course, the bosses attacked them. Some were sacked and one of our comrades faces imprisonment.

In Oaxaca there is an attempt to reorganise the struggle - there was a demonstration in early February of 300,000 against the governor and for the release of the political prisoners.

**Workers Power** What is the future of the class struggle in Mexico.

**Andreas Aullet** There will be more repression around the country. The question of political prisoners will become more important in the rest of Mexico. There will be attacks on social security, health and education, and more privatisations and job losses. We expect to see an intensification of the class struggle.

A key task is the need to build a revolutionary leadership and a party to stop the betrayals and sell-outs - a revolutionary party that can fight for working class power.

---

**Source URL:** <https://fifthinternational.org/content/eye-witness-oaxaca-commune>