



Interview with the Sacco and Vanzetti Collective from Mexico

Our comrades in Mexico are subjected to the most brutal and ruthless repression, ranging from deportation to torture. This excessive discrimination and aggression have caused an adverse reaction within libertarian circles, raising interest in antiprison struggles. The Sacco and Vanzetti Collective are an example. From the insurgent lands of Flores Magon, we bring you this interview...

What, do you think, are the reasons for the Mexican government's brutal repression against anarchists?

The Mexican government is repressing, beating and killing anyone who protests and resists against the State's and capitalists' attempts to strip the land, criminalise the youth who look different, and privatise the public spaces. Governments are implementing a low intensity war, a dirty war, to break up, demobilise and spread fear amongst organisations and collectives. In this context, seen as the anarchists are part of the struggles and the resistance all over the country, they too have been experiencing the government's strategy against the resistance. The fact that the repression is having such a brutal impact on anarchist groups – well, we think it's because we're going through a lean phase of the movement nationally. We need to rethink our work dynamics to create a new self-managed and autonomous process that will allow us to resist the repression.

At the moment, how do you see the antirepression and antiprison struggle in Mexico?

There are collectives, groups and people from different backgrounds carrying a very important struggle against repression and for the prisoners. But one thing we've noticed is that everyone seems to be doing their own thing, isolated from the rest, and that certainly weakens the impact of our actions.

At present we think the most important initiative has been the formation of a national co-ordination group dealing with the repression against the Other Campaign – the idea was to fight from every place in solidarity with the victims of repression and the prisoners. But, both in this as in the possible network of ABC groups in Mexico we have to think differently. We shouldn't show solidarity with the prisoners out of political duty or guilt. We have to recognise and claim the struggle of those who suffer repression as part of our own struggle. If we don't we fall into the divisive traps set by the State, and we'll always lose. That doesn't mean we have to stop doing things like fundraising for bail, or criticising the unfairness of trials, but it's also necessary to start thinking and talking about how to show our solidarity and support to prisoners and victims of repression from our own perspective, that is, from a perspective of autonomy and self-management.

What's your opinion on prisons, in general and in Mexico?

We think prisons are just another tool with which the State tries to control and break up the social flow; prisons are places that try to destroy the sense of community and mutual support present in every person. Being in prison means to break a person's bonds with humanity, to individualise, alienate and fragment that person, so that they join the State's logic, the logic of the market. That's why governments' ideas of rehabilitation programmes sound false in the first place. Also, prisons represent a defence of private property, seen as most detainees are in for having attacked capitalist goods. The State's laws protect capitalism and imprison those who,

for survival, take what the capitalists rob through work exploitation.

In Mexican prisons work is pretty much like slavery. Torture, abuse and death are daily happenings. The State only needs prisons to detain those who try to survive in this unjust system where some have everything and most have nothing. Prisons are for poor people. Prisons are State's tools to isolate, kidnap and detain anyone who is different, who fights back, who resists and tries to build a different way of life.

Do you think a world without prisons is possible?

We think it is, especially if we take into account the experiences of some indigenous peoples who live without such institutions. For example, the Tojolabales (a Maya people from Chiapas who are active part of the Zapatista movement) don't look to punish crime or murder with jail but instead use the concept of restorative justice. An institution such as prison is absurd because what you want to do is to make people responsible for repairing the damage they've done, instead of punishing them with imprisonment.

We think a world without prisons is possible because prisons are only made to defend private property, capitalism and capitalists, and are a tool of the State. And because if we want to create self-managed and autonomous projects in our daily lives then prisons become something totally opposed to our thinking and against which we have to fight. Prisons are centres of torture, where people work in conditions that resemble slavery, where people suffer incredible humiliation and degradation. They are the most corrupt places, on every level. Prisoners have no rights, they take your time and your voice, and everything they can take from you, your life too, even though you're still alive. These centres of slavery, torture and degradation have no place in a different society, in a just society, in a more human and libertarian society. We're not saying that life will be perfect within anarchy or in a more equal society, and that there won't be any murders, rapes, etc...but we think that prisons are a mirror image of capitalism and, together with capitalism, they must disappear.

These are extracts translated from a much longer interview published online in August 2007.

The whole article (in Spanish only) is here: <http://www.alasbarricadas.org/noticias/?q=node/5648>

The Sacco and Vanzetti Collective website is here: <http://saccoyvanzetti.wordpress.com/>
The website is in Spanish only, and you can download their magazine "Verbo Libertario".

