

Argentina's Popular Rebellion

Que se vayan todos...Out with them all!

David Solnit

2002

The neighbors had broken into and occupied the bank building as I arrived in Parque Lezama. Middle aged and scruffy young activists carried out debris, scrubbed windows and floors and hung banners with the name of their assembly popular and another that said "We are nothing. We want to be everything."

This was my welcome to Buenos Aires this past July, where I worked with neighborhood assemblies and a "piquetero" group to make puppets and street theater, and visited family relatives.

Argentina's popular rebellion is the most all-encompassing insurrection in recent history. Like the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, it marks a break from past forms of struggle. Argentina is the first country to default on its "debt" due to a popular uprising—a serious challenge to global capital. And this society is more similar to most of North America than the indigenous communities of Chiapas. The two incredible and inspiring articles that follow give a taste and some explanation of the forms of struggle and the new society being created by the people of Argentina.

Before last year, my middle class Argentine relatives never expected their economy to collapse, to lose the majority of their life savings, to have bank accounts frozen, to suffer for a year with no job, or to work two full time jobs to keep the family housed and fed.

The Argentine economy was looted by the same banks, financial institutions, and corporations that drive the rest of the world's doomsday economy. Even without a collapse here in the US, corporate and government corruption is more visible than ever. Even before the Enron scandal, 72% in the US said corporations had too much power, according to a Business Week poll. While talking heads try interpreting the recent US elections, they avoid the obvious: the dramatic low turnout shows a crisis of representative democracy. The US has had to manipulate September 11, fabricate regular "alerts" to keep us terrorized, and engage in a constant war drive just to keep a lid on things. The system is in permanent crisis and the global movement of movements is stronger and more connected than ever before in history.

Argentina offers a powerful model and a challenge. For me, the challenge includes:

- Can we innovate new forms of resistance that break out of the old, often marginal forms of protest?
- Can we go beyond our limiting labels and subcultures and find new language that opens people up to common sense revolutionary ideas? (John Holloway has noted that "the language [of the left and I would add, of anarchism] is so worn out that they [the old words] become harmful for those who use them.")
- Can we develop the skills, ability to listen, and patience to make our groups and movements reflect the way we want our community and the world to be?
- Can we help catalyze a diverse popular movement that goes beyond issue politics to get to the roots of our problems and go beyond opposition to create positive alternatives?

David Solnit, San Francisco,
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