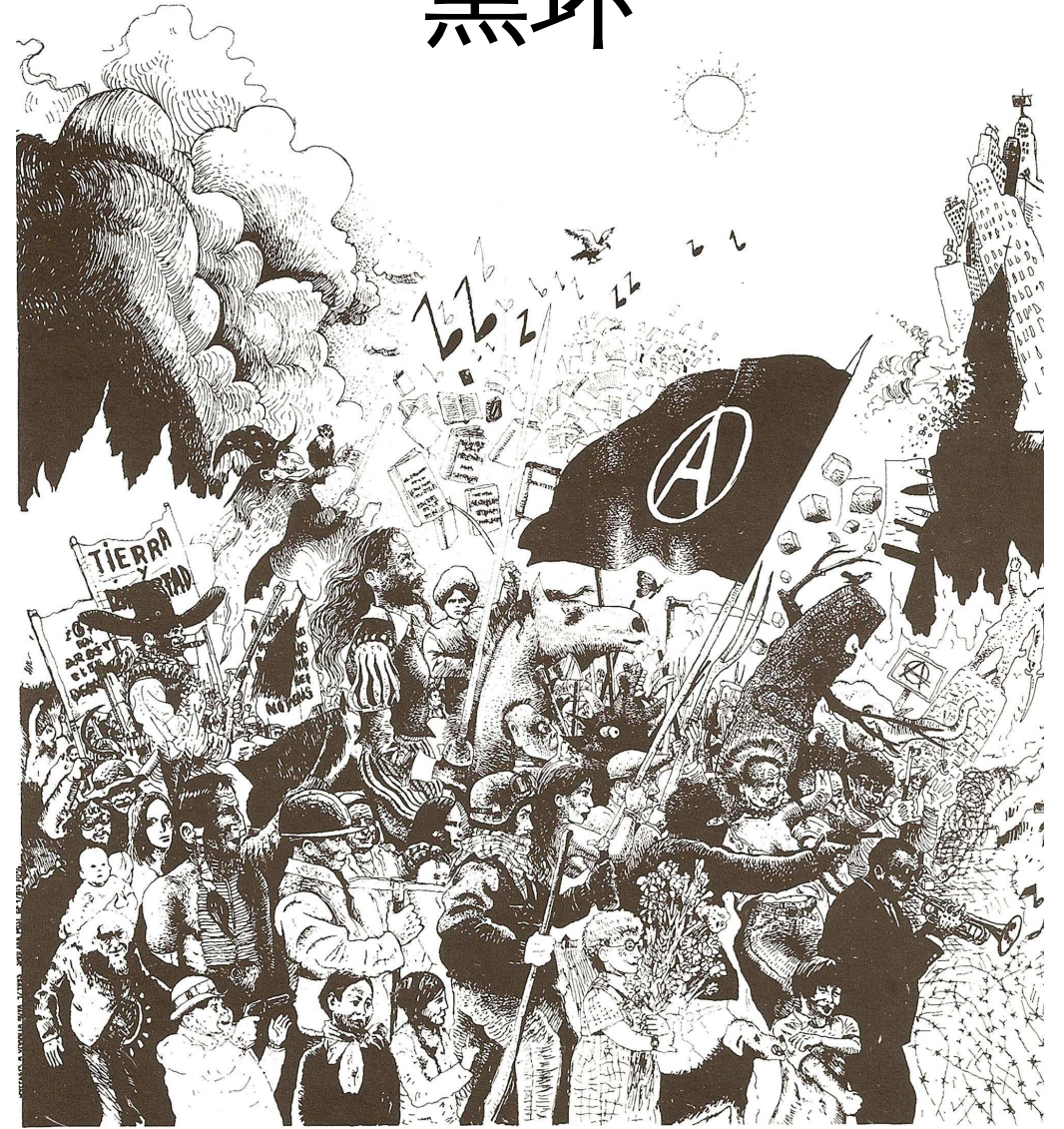


# BLACK RIM NIGRA RANDO

## 黑环



March 2009, Issue #1



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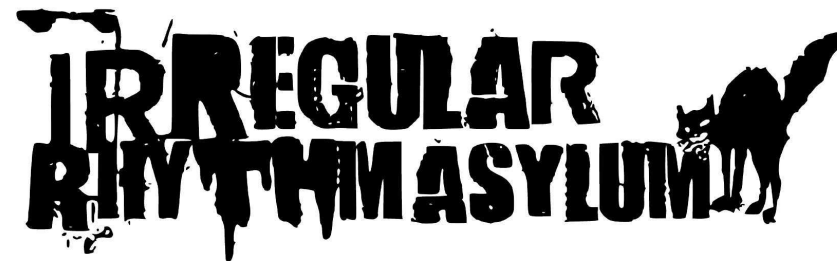
Contacts

**CIRA JAPAN** (Center for the International Research on Anarchism) is an archive located in the city of Fujinomiya in Shizuoka Prefecture that collects data on anarchism. The center was first founded in October of 1970, and after a dormant period, it was re-established in 1995. The center archives a wide array of materials, primarily those related to Japanese anarchist movements, but also some related to anarchism abroad. Please consider sending anarchist documents, posters, and/or other materials to CIRA JAPAN.

We will take very good care of these items, which may serve us all well in the development of future anarchist movements.

CIRA Japana  
251 Sugita, Fujinomiya-shi  
Shizuoka 418-0021, Japan





1-30-12-302 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku Tokyo, 160-0022 Japan  
[E-mail] [irregular@sanpal.co.jp](mailto:irregular@sanpal.co.jp) | [irregularrhythmasylum@gmail.com](mailto:irregularrhythmasylum@gmail.com)  
[Tel/Fax] 03-3352-6916 | 81-3-3352-6916 (from abroad)  
[Web] <http://a.sanpal.co.jp/irregular>  
[Blog] <http://irregularrhythmasylum.blogspot.com/>  
Open 13:00 - Close 20:00 (Except Wed.)

## Saluton!

*Black Rim* is dedicated to expanding freedom, halting social and economic exploitation, and fostering world communities based on the anarchist and communist sensibilities of mutual aid and cooperation. We attempt to accomplish these goals by: 1) reporting on capital's process back and forth across the Pacific Ocean (hint: it's not very pacific), expecting that by tracking and engaging the changing world system we can identify and utilize ruptures in capitalist and state hegemony; 2) cataloging instances and movements of the refusal of domination and abuse; and 3) propagating movements, projects, and ideas that are creating new, better worlds. Furthermore, we intend to sharpen our analytical skills while simultaneously being rigorous in the fulfillment of our imaginations and desires. Towards this goal, we plan to review anarchist praxis and analysis in a spirit of solidarity. We invite our friends and comrades to reciprocate.

Though we may seem ambitious to a fault, we are nevertheless pleased with the inroads we've made in this premiere issue of the publication. The two main features we offer here revolve around reports on topics from East Asia: the ongoing saga of migrant labor in China and the 2008 Summer of Unrest in Japan. One of our primary tasks here was to inform those outside of China about what is happening on the ground in the world's largest country. Even for the most literate of non-specialists (and especially for so-called "specialists"), the study of China is a confusing process. The reasons for this are two-fold. Firstly, the mainstream media outside (and inside) of the country has been rabidly publishing all sorts of nonsense about China (sometimes mixed in with some truths) for the past decade. It's difficult to wade through the bullshit. Secondly, the alternative and independent media has, outside of a small circle of academics, run into a number of roadblocks (language inaccessibility, etc.) that prevent relevant news from spreading. We think our features on China are a good start to a remedy. Similar, the selections on Japan hopefully contribute to a better understanding on how capital, activism, and resistance function in Japan.

## Distribution Information

*Black Rim* is a not-for-profit publication. However, we do encourage anarchist literature distribution projects, infoshops, radical community centers, and collectively-run not-for-profit bookstores to accept anything between US\$4-8 or the local equivalent in exchange for the magazine.

Sometimes the articles we publish here deal with concrete problems (capitalist exploitation of workers, neo-liberal dislocation of peasants, state-capital collusion, authoritarian repression, etc.), but they do so abstractly. Often these modes of abstraction are useful analytical tools which can help us make informed decisions. For example, the articles from other publications that we chose to reproduce here are representative of the intellectual interventions that help make our projects more relevant and on-target. However, we realize that many (hopefully most) of our readers desire connections to on-the-ground solutions and not just detached explanations of problems. So, if urgency strikes our readers, we'd like to direct them to some of the projects listed in the back of the magazine. There are plenty of contacts. Pick up a pen and write a letter. Visit your local radicalized space. See if anything is needed. We'd like to see solidarity and mutual aid become globalized.

Our friend Terry from Hong Kong suggested that we use this magazine to relay what he called "multitude correspondence". By this he meant that we have a dedicated group of embedded local anarchists and activists who provide news of struggles and projects that they are involved with. Especially in light of the problems that the nebulous Asian Anarchist Network faced last year, we'd love to see this mode of international communication prosper (i.e. there is a real need for it), but we feel that we feel it is necessary first to establish the magazine as a worthwhile publication before anybody would bother paying attention to us (there are many online forums that are more conducive to this type of decentralized information sharing). If the multitude correspondence was to develop here it would best develop naturally and spontaneously. For example, if we were to be sent letters from people, we would probably republish them in a "letters to *Black Rim*" section. From that process, the desired effect can be reached. That reminds us, if you want to contact the editors, write to [kangdengming@riseup.net](mailto:kangdengming@riseup.net).

For the efflorescence of love, freedom, and liberty,  
The Editors

Hard copies of the magazine can be mailed at cost (printing + shipping) to any of these projects if they contact [kangdengming@riseup.net](mailto:kangdengming@riseup.net) and include "Black Rim Distro" in the subject line of the e-mail.

Additionally, a free electronic version of this magazine is available for download at <http://b.arrica.de/blackrim>

## IMC Korea Coming Soon

In Seoul, South Korea, there have been several efforts to make an Independent Media Center, but so far these efforts have foundered on in-fighting among the mainstream leftist groups who try to control the project. Yet, there are many groups and individuals in South Korea that still recognize the need for an independent media source for Korea.

Thus, we are happy to spread the word that new efforts are being made for starting a Korean Indymedia. Media activists associated with Seoulidarity and the Korean Anarchist Network will have the first open meeting soon in order to make plans for establishing a website, connecting with other groups, and mobilizing support.

They would appreciate any help, advice or solidarity that anyone can offer.

Please e-mail [kimsynghyun7@jinbo.net](mailto:kimsynghyun7@jinbo.net), [dopehead@jinbo.net](mailto:dopehead@jinbo.net), or [jefejose@hotmail.com](mailto:jefejose@hotmail.com) for questions or comments.



## FREE OUR ENVIRONMENTAL FIGHTER FARMERS!

We are once again faced with an obstacle in our fight to stop corporations from destroying our environment, our cultural, and our economy. In addition to the Semen Gresik plan to build a cement factory in Pati, Central Java (which has already caused lots of problems for local people because the factory will be built on the North Kendeng mountain where are most rivers and lakes are located), the authorities have arrested nine farmers and activists for protesting.

The growing rejection of the cement factory has not only come from farmers in Sukolilo, but also from the Sedular Sikep community (also called Wong Samin), a local group know throughout Java for being wise and dedicated environmental fighters.

But their effort is now facing an obstacle related to the arrests of nine farmers and environment activists during their protest to close the cement factory.

The chronology of the event begins on a Thursday morning, the 22nd of January 2009, when people started to ask for a dialog with their village authority regarding the selling of their land to Semen Gresik. The next day they made posters with the statement that "Our Land Belongs To Us" to protest the lack of response from their village authority regarding the sale. Because the authority refused to meet them, they decide to blockade the road, closing it to the four survey cars from Semen Gresik that arrived that day. At night there was still no news from the authority so the people just sat and waited patiently without making any violence acts at all.

The situation grew tense when 250 Brimob and Samapta suddenly moved against the people that sat around the Semen Gresik's cars. They screamed and swore at those in the blockade, trying to intimidate them into moving away from those cars. They began to kick, hit, step on, and throw things at the women and men that insisted on staying. Some people began to panic. Then people started to fight back. Children, women, men and even elders threw rocks towards those officers while guns were being fired into the air. In the end, thirteen police officers were wounded and three Semen Gresik cars were destroyed. Many people were brutalized by the police. Video cameras belonging to our friends were also heavily damaged. Then, without any charges, the police arrested nine people. The arrestees are currently held under charges of violence, persuasion, and being unpleasant. The nine people arrested there were Kamsi (65 years old), Sunarto (52), Sudarto (48), Sukarman (26), Sutikno (26), Gunarto (25), Purwanto (22), Muallim (21) and Zainul (20).

The police delivered relentless and brutal treatments to the nine farmers. While the arrestees were in custody the police beat them on their heads, eyes, and other parts of their bodies.

At present, those nine farmers are still under arrest at the Semarang Police Station in central Java. They await further trial. Therefore, in the name of our land and people's fight against those tyrants, we are calling out all of our friends out there to be actively involved on this solidarity effort.

Release our nine brothers from prison as soon as possible!  
Stop the Semen Gresik project at Central Java right away!

Blacken All Words  
<http://blackenallwords.wordpress.com>  
An anarchist translation project, working on Chinese and English.

Beijing Anarchist Study Group  
[bjwzfzyxs@googlegroups.com](mailto:bjwzfzyxs@googlegroups.com)

Collective Reason  
<http://www.collectivereason.org>  
A collaborative translation project

Food Not Bombs Kuala Lumpur  
Section 8 Pealing Jaya, Selangor 50250, KL, Malaysia

Grassroots University  
<http://www.grass-root.org/college>  
Publishes a magazine on socialism and philosophy for social movements, out of Hong Kong. Site is in Chinese.

Harder Distro  
Jl. Ciampelas 219a, Bandung, Java, Indonesia

Hong Kong Women Worker's Association  
<http://www.hkwwa.org.hk>  
Site is in Chinese

Jalan: Journal of Asian Liberation  
<http://jalanjournal.org>  
Out of Seattle, an online publication. See our review

Kiryusha  
5-29-17 Daizawa, Setagaya-ku Tokyo, Japan 155-0032

Korean Anarchist Network  
<http://anarclan.net>  
Site is in Korean but has a forum in English. The homepage for the Korean Anarchist Network

La Nigreco  
<http://www.ne.jp/asahi/anarchy/saluton>  
Japanese-language pacifist anarchist publication

Lost Generation  
No. 11, Lorong Permai, Off Jin Syed Putra, Robson Heights,  
50450, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia 019-6838397

Online Anarchism  
<http://a.sanpal.co.jp/anarchism>  
Japanese site for anarchists

Radical Student Union at University of California, Irvine  
[irvineradicalstudents@riseup.net](mailto:irvineradicalstudents@riseup.net)  
An anti-authoritarian/anarchist student group

Sadee's Kitchen  
Davae City, Phillipines 09107843815  
[anakorsakoff@gmail.com](mailto:anakorsakoff@gmail.com)

Save Our Selves  
67 Noordin St., Penang Island, Malaysia

Seoulidarity  
<http://www.seoulidarity.net>  
Radical Language Xchange! A project out of Korea that helps make translations of radical news and other texts.

Taring Radical Art Collective  
Jl. Moh Kafi II, Gg Setiabudi No. 39, Rt. 11, Rw. 8  
Srengsengsawahm Jagakarsa, Jakarta Selatan 12640, Indonesia  
Tel: 021-7270666

Tetrascroll  
447 Wada Wada-cho, Minamibousoi-shi Chiba, Japan 299-2704

Womyns Agenda for Change  
PO Box 883, #1 Sisowat Quay, Phnom Peng, Cambodia  
Tel: (885) 12-222-171



## Contacts and Links

### NEWS SITES

Ainfos  
www.ainfos.ca  
Multi-lingual news site for, by, and about anarchists

Anarchy in Nippon  
www.ne.jp/asahi/anarchy/anarchy

Anarkismo  
www.anarkismo.net  
Anarchist news and information site

China Digital Times  
chinadigitaltimes.net  
A bilingual aggregator and forum for independent reporting on China, collected by Journalism grad students at UC Berkeley

Gentle Boom  
www.xanga.com/maa\_c  
Chinese-language news site out of Hong Kong. Gathers word of protests and riots in mainland China

Indymedia  
www.indymedia.org  
A viral, decentralized news network for those involved in social struggles and other projects

InMedia Hong Kong  
www.inmediahk.net  
Site is in Chinese and offers an assortment of local, national and regional news from independent sources

LibCom  
www.libcom.org  
A arge with an ext ry, laby , and reporting on worldwide labor struggles

Mingong  
www.umwaelzung.de  
German site, reports on worker's struggles in China

Virtual Autonomous Zone  
emblack.wordpress.com  
A blog on anarchism from a Taiwanese activist

### INFOSHOPS, BOOKSTORES, AND SOCIAL CENTERS

Bookay-Ukay  
bookay.multiply.com  
Alternative reading space in Manila, Philippines

CIRA Japana  
www.cira-japana.net  
Tel: 81-544-27-4314

Cocoroom  
1-15-11 Sannou, Nishinari-ku Osaka, Japan 557-0001

Desiree Social Center  
http://a-desiree-social-center-wuhan.noblogs.org

Irregular Rhythm Asylum  
1-30-12-302 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku Tokyo-to, Japan 160-0022  
Hotspot for anarchism and D.I.Y. culture in Tokyo

Mosakusha  
2-4-9 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku Tokyo-to, Japan 160-0022  
Leftist bookstore

Non-collective Radical Center  
c/o Rhado Garcia, 134B Emin Garcia St., Cubao, Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines 1109

Rice Cooker DIY Infoshop  
1st Floor Central Market Annexe, Jalan Hang Kasturi, 50050, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Shirouto no Ran (Amatuer Riot)  
3-9-11 Kouenji-kita, Suginami-ku, Tokyo, Japan 166-0022

Social Movement Resource Center  
http://www.smrc8a.org

Tang-Shan Bookstore  
B1, No.9, Lane 333, Sec. 3, Roosevelt Rd., Da'an District, Taipei City 106, Taiwan 886-2363-3072

Utopia  
http://www.wyzxsx.com  
Site is in Chinese. A leftist bookstore in Beijing. Sponsors events and talks in Haidian district

### ORGANIZATIONS AND RADICAL PROJECTS

Acclaim Collective  
101 Fuji-a 2-10-4 Sangenjaya, Setagya-ku, Tokyo, Japan 154-0024

Anarcho-syndicalist Journal  
http://www.bekkoame.ne.jp/~rruaitjtko  
Japanese language anarcho-syndicalist site



## Osaka Comrade Given Prison Term for Riot

Greetings with indomitable soul,  
On 19th Nov 2008, comrade Y-San received an unjust sentence of 2 years and 2 months despite our struggle for his rescue. He has already been in custody in Osaka prison, not knowing when and where he will be sent. He says he wants to get out and come back even if it is only one day earlier. We will continue to visit him with articles, keep a place for him to come back and prepare ourselves for revenge.

(ABC Osaka/Free Workers Union)



## News from South Korea

January 20<sup>th</sup>: Six people lost their lives while trying to negotiate an eviction in Seoul. In a maneuver resembling a military operation, the city dispatched over 1500 police officers to "enforce the peace" in Youngsan-Gu. The residents facing eviction had begun protesting the day prior (January 19<sup>th</sup>), knowing that their eviction was slated for February. Yet less than 24 hours after the the tenant's rights strike began, the government had dispatched a special police force and staged an anti-terror operation.

Shortly after the police assaulted the house, the building was in flames. Despite the deadly conditions, the police continued to forcibly occupy the building, a decision which resulted in the death of 5 protesters and 1 police officer in the fire.

A memorial for the dead was placed near the scene of the incident, and despite the fact that it was the Korean New Year holiday there was a steady flow of visitors. In the aftermath, a civilian fact finding committee has begun to carry out investigations while at the same time the city government is trying to keep the case closed. Incidents such as this – squashing domestic civil discourse under the guise of anti-terrorism – have become more and more common in Korea since the Conservatives have taken power.

## Faces of Migration

*English translation from "Unrest in China" issue of the German newsletter Wildcat (no. 80, winter 2007/8)*

Even before the beginning of the reforms in 1978 socialist China had experienced migration movements. In the early 1950s millions came from the countryside to the cities to work in the new state industries. At first they were needed there, but with unemployment and problems with supplies of food in the mid-50s the government introduced a strict household registration system (hukou). The hukou-system restricted the mobility of most Chinese and kept them in the countryside for the next decades. It controlled whether someone stayed at the place of registration, and the allocation of food and other resources was directly tied to it. For the construction of heavy industries – the central part of the soviet-style modernization program – peasants in socialist China were bled through low grain prices. Only a minority of people were allowed to live in the cities and benefit from the achievements of the socialist planning state.

But the migration did not end here. The famines of the "Great Leap Forward" (1958-62) set off large waves of it. And in the 1960s and 70s millions of people from rural areas were pulled into the cities to do the dirtiest and most dangerous jobs in state companies. These migrants were only temporarily employed and had to go back to the countryside when the job ended. During their stay in the cities they were still excluded from the social benefits of urban workers (the "Iron Rice-Bowl").

The first large migration movement after the beginning of the reforms was the "returnees". In the 1960s and 1970s millions of young people were sent to the countryside in the wake of the Cultural Revolution to "learn from the peasants". The Party wanted to push them out of the cities in order to get the social and political unrest of the Cultural Revolution under control and to lower urban unemployment. After 1978 many of these migrants successfully fought for the return to the cities. Many worked in state industries; others became self-employed and took part in undermining the banning of private businesses. They became street peddlers or worked in urban services.

In the early 1980s the stream of parts of the rural population into the cities began, the result of both pull- and push-factors. Land distribution to family-households and increasing agricultural productivity led to a "surplus population" of labor power in the countryside. Meanwhile, companies in villages and small cities (which to a certain extent had gained independence from the central state), the new "special economic zones" and later expanding state industries were all searching for cheap labor. When at the end of the 1980s and particularly in the early 1990s the state invested in many infrastructure projects and urban construction, and when at the same time foreign investments in industrial enterprises expanded, many millions of mostly young people left the countryside to find jobs and earn money in the cities. At the in modernity and the freedom to consume that came along with the reforms. However, until now the new workers did not become permanent city dwellers. The hukou-system, dividing

## "Faces of Migration" continued...

all Chinese into urban people and rural people, still operates. Whoever leaves the village to go to the city today has to apply for a temporary work- and residence-permit. That permit is usually limited to one year and linked to employment. For this reason, migrant workers are still called mingong, peasants-who-became-workers. They lack the same rights as the urban hukou-holders and are excluded from many urban services.

### Numbers and Faces

The exact number of all migrants is unclear. Even the government newspaper China Daily gives figures between 150 million – or 11.5 percent of the population, nearly double the figure of 1996 – and 200 million (28.11.2006). According to 2005 statistics the urban population was about 560 million – including the mingong and their families who lived in the cities for more than 6 months –, that is about 43 percent of the 1.3 billion people in all of China. 358 million had an urban hukou, 949 a rural hukou. That means that about 200 million people without an urban hukou stayed in the city.<sup>1</sup> We cannot be too sure about these numbers since many migrants do not register with the urban administration.

The State Commission for Population- and Family-Planning estimates that there is still a labor surplus of 150 to 170 million in the countryside (China Daily, 18.01.2007). So the migration to the cities will continue, and the army of migrant workers will grow even larger. The government has to create at least ten million jobs every year, which is only possible if economic growth continues at the same pace.<sup>2</sup>

Until the end of the 1990s, migration dramatically changed the composition of Chinese labor. The mingong predominantly work in factories, on construction sites, in

mines, in agriculture, in producer services (security guards, cleaners, couriers) and as small level self-employed (in shops, in markets, as scavengers). Of all mingong 37 percent work in manufacturing industries, the rest mostly in construction (14 percent), in restaurants (12 percent) and in other services (12 percent; Lee 2007: 39). They account for 57.5 percent of the industrial workforce, 37 percent in services, among them most of the 20 million domestic workers. In the textile industry they account for up to 70 to 80 percent of workers (Lee 2007: 6), in construction 80 percent (out of 30 million construction workers), and in the chemical industry and in mining 56 percent (China Daily, 28.11.2006). 47.5 percent of all migrant workers are women, but in the centers of world market production there are many more: in Shenzhen, for example, they constitute 65.6 percent.

The migration has many faces: short-term residence in small cities near the villages, employment on large infrastructure projects, shifting back and forth between world market factories and the family farm, constant migration from one construction site to the next, seasonal harvesting, and working in mines. But there is also a rural exodus due to the loss or expropriation of the family land and the subsequent move to the city. Some mingong work elsewhere for a few months, but return home for farm work during the harvest. Others stay in the city for longer periods, two or three years, without ever visiting their family. Apart from the labor migrants from the countryside, there are also many with a "small city"-hukou who move to provincial centers or the metropolitan areas around Beijing/Tianjin, the Yangtze delta and the Pearl River delta, if they can get better jobs there. Not all migrant workers originate from the villages.

### Conditions and Problems

The working and living conditions of the mingong are quite

## MinGong Struggles Timeline

2004

\*US-based client companies asked the Taiwanese shoe manufacturer Stella to reduce working hours, trying to avoid the criticism of anti-sweatshop organizations. The workers did not agree with the measure, given that it would have resulted in wage cuts. One of the managers commented later: "We did not know that for workers 100 Yuan is a significant sum of money". Thousands of workers employed in two Stella factories in Dongguan started strikes and riots. In the course of the unrest company property was destroyed and managers were injured. The police quelled the turmoil, and one hundred workers got arrested. Legal trials were launched against ten workers, accused of violence, destruction of property, physical assault and so on. In his pleadings, one of the lawyers explained the background of the incidents: The workers had been furious for a long time even before, dissatisfied with the unbearable conditions in the factories. Eleven hours of daily work, six days per week, the bad quality or lack of food, delayed payment of wages. The legal sentences were relatively

moderate, and by end of 2004 all workers were released from prison. This is probably also due to the pressure of international NGOs and shoe manufacturers.

\* Five hundred workers employed in a factory of Ricoh – a Japanese manufacturer of office machines – went on strike in Shenzhen after a Japanese manager offended female workers in an obscene way and called them mentally retarded. Only after the bastard apologized on the following day, was the strike called off.

\* In Shenzhen hundreds of workers of a home appliance manufacturer protested against the planned re-location of the factory to the low-wage area of Zhuhai, demanding compensation and the payment of social security contributions. When the strikers wanted to rally in front of the gate scuffles started with the company security guards, who tried to prevent workers leaving the factory.



The Seattle General Strike of 1919



Submissions for Next Issue:

We're kind of lucky to live in 2009 – there are a whole lot of somewhat important and seriously infamous dates to remember this year: the ninetieth anniversary of both the May Fourth Incident in Beijing and the Seattle General Strike; the seventy-fifth anniversary of the San Francisco General Strike; sixty years of authoritarian communism in China; twenty years since the Tiananmen Square massacre; and ten years since the WTO protests in Seattle. Next issue we invite you to share some of your opinions, analyses, and/or reminiscences of these or other significant events (especially as they relate to cross-oceanic political and economic trends). We're also interested in seeing what you'd like this year to be reminded by ten, twenty, or a hundred years hence. What epoch-shaping projects are you working on?

As always, we're looking for reports of protests, riots, and anarchist projects from the Pacific Rim region that we can share. If you'd like to be listed in the contact section of the paper, you can likewise just send us your basic information plus a little bit more about yourselves. We'd be happy to be put in touch.

Drop us a line at: kangdengming@riseup.net, or visit us on the web at <http://b.arrica.de/blackrim>

# ANTI G8 COMPILATION CD

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- |                   |                         |
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| HASRAT (Malaysia) | MOPKOB (Spain)          |
| BEERWOLF          | ミッシング箱庭                 |
| DAITOKAI (USA)    | AIZAWANDERS             |
| KORA CORA         | INNER TERRESTRIALS (UK) |
| VOÇÔ PROTESTA     | OUT OF TOUCH            |
| PROLETARIART      | 赤い疑惑                    |
| SACRIFICE         | THE HAPPENING           |
| ENCROACHED        | DOPEHEAD (Korea)        |



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diverse, depending on the sector, their skills and their experience. Often their first job is precarious, low-paid or dangerous. And often they get it through people from their village who help them with their first steps in the city. Whether a mingong ends up on a construction site, in a factory or as a security guard partly depends on the sector where other people from their own region already work. After their first experiences the mingong try to find better jobs with a labor contract and a fixed income. Often the only way to do so is through (expensive) training programs. The China Daily gives some examples (20.1.2006): A 30-year old migrant worker from Henan started to work as a security guard in Beijing for banks and public buildings before he found a job in managing facilities. A 29-year old man from Shanxi also started as a security guard, then became an air conditioning technician and an express courier before he finally found something in marketing. A 25-year old woman from Shanxi worked as a domestic helper for an elderly woman and currently prepares for exams as a legal advisor. These situations do certainly not work out for everybody.

The mingong's most important aim is earning money. They work in factories, on construction sites, in households and mines, because they earn more than in agriculture or casual work at home. But even if wages at home are more or less the same - which can happen, in particular in the eastern provinces - there are still other reasons to migrate: young people want to escape from home, they want to see the world, to make a change, and to escape family control, too.

The mingong's working and living conditions in the city are precarious. Among the most important problems they face there are:

Low and unpaid wages  
Wages have increased in the last few years, but barely keep up

with inflation.<sup>3</sup> In the world market factories and on construction sites the wage hovers around 1,000 Yuan (about 100 Euros) per month for unskilled workers working ten to twelve hours a day and having one or two days off per month. In suppliers' factories and services wages are lower. Minimum wages were raised in the last few years, but many enterprises do not pay them. Officially the minimum wage is around 300 to 800 Yuan, depending on the region.<sup>4</sup> Often the migrant workers have to pay fees to employment agents or a deposit to the employing enterprise, which keeps the deposit to prevent workers from suddenly leaving the job whenever they find a better one.

A big problem is non-payment of wages. An investigation by China's National Statistic Bureau revealed that out of 30,000 workers questioned, 20 percent had received their wage late or had gotten only partial payment. On average the workers had to wait four months before getting paid (China Daily, 27.10.2006). Other research showed that three out of four mingong had problems getting their full wage. Often wages are not paid for months, and eventually many do not get the full sum (Lee 2007: 164). Wage non-payment is so widespread that in some sectors it is considered the norm. As long as enterprises supply them with a place to stay and food, the mingong do not stop working even if they are not paid. If they stop working, they do not eat. They can only survive because most of the time they have a place to stay through the enterprise and intermittently get partial wage payments. Furthermore, the mingong know that if everything goes wrong they can still return to their home village where the family cultivates a piece of land.

Bad working conditions

Whether in the factory or on the constructions sites, workers often work ten to twelve hours or longer every day. Many

## MinGong Struggles Timeline

2005

\* In Shenzhen 3,000 employees of Uniden Electronic (a manufacturer of wireless telephones) walked out spontaneously in solidarity with a dismissed workmate who had stood up for the right to form unions. Previously there had been several short strikes and discussions in the plant concerning the creation of a company union. Nearly all of the 10,000 workers joined the solidarity strike. They raised additional demands regarding working hours, wages, sanitary facilities and management behavior. But the focus was the demand for their own union. That was a novelty in China at the time. The administration reacted with repression: The strikers were locked in the factory and violence was used to prevent them from leaving. The strike lasted a week. After this week the workers were intimidated, the strike leaders had disappeared and many workers were sacked. Two month later the company announced the re-location of the factory from Shenzhen to its previous location in Laguna (in the Philippines), referring explicitly to the strike. Only two years

before, the plant in Laguna had been closed and the production moved to Shenzhen, due to the lower labor costs in China.

\* In Shenzhen 1,000 workers of a print-shop protested against long working-hours and wage cuts. The reason for the unrest was the managements' announcement to increase the daily working-time from eight to ten hours and wage reductions for food and accommodation. Up to that point food and accommodation had been free. The workers stopped the protest once the management withdrew the threat of working-time increase and promised the improvement of the food quality in the factory.

\* In Dalian a series of strikes kicked off in seventeen Japanese companies (coinciding with anti-japanese student protests in Beijing and other towns). The strikes concerned wages, accommodation and problems with the canteen. The workers went on strike at different times, each strike lasted several days. The police intervened and arrested ring-leaders.

### "Faces of Migration" continued...

workers want to do overtime, because otherwise the wages are too low to send a part back to the family. Especially during times when many orders come in, workers are also forced to do overtime until late at night. In some sectors workers work seven days a week, with no day off; in other sectors there is one day off per month. Workers can only endure that because they periodically escape to the countryside – without getting paid for those days –, or simply change jobs in order to get time to relax in between.

Someone who wants to earn as much as possible in a few years before returning to the countryside can risk handling his or her labor power much more casually compared with someone knowing that she or he has to spend the next decades in a factory. And the repressive factory regime with its degrading disciplinary measures for violations of the factory regulations – Lee calls it the "despotic" regime of production" (Lee 1998) – can only be endured for certain amount of time.

Long working hours, many sanctions, absent labor contracts and much more are violations of the Chinese Labor Law, but the local administrations in most cases do not act, not wanting to upset potential investors or endanger the bosses' profits.

Many accidents

The grueling work pace, no breaks, lack of sleep and outdated and defective machines, missing or lacking instructions and maintenance or simply disregarding safety measures to reach production goals are reasons for the high number of accidents with personal injuries. The 5,000 deaths in mines (2006) are well known. Most of them are due to poor safety standards. The total number of deaths due to work accidents was around 100,000 in 2005 (Der Spiegel, 13.9.2006). Besides the overt

injuries and casualties there also "hidden" forms, for instance those workers who constantly faint or even go crazy because they cannot stand the stress.

Missing social protection

Only 23 to 30 percent of all migrant workers in private companies have labor contracts (Lee 2007: 42; see above, too). The China Daily speaks of 40 percent out of 30,000 interviewees (China Daily, 27.10.2006). Accordingly, most do not have pension schemes or health insurance. In cases of illness or accidents the employers sometimes pay for the costs in minor cases, but do not want to take responsibility after major accidents and for chronic occupational diseases resulting from exposure to toxic chemicals. In those cases the migrant workers themselves have to bear the costs. Most of the time they cannot do so. All the family assets are spent – or the persons affected simply sicken and finally die. Migrant workers are also eligible for pensions if they have worked in the city for a while. When they return to the countryside they can ask to be paid their contributions but only if their employer has paid for social insurance according to the Labor Laws. A Guangdong survey revealed that 73,8 percent of 1,500 migrant workers had no social insurance at all (2001). That is connected to frequent job changes and the fact that local administrations allow companies to register only ten or twenty percent of their workforce for social insurances – and to not register all workers as required by the law (Lee 2007: 47).

Poor living conditions

Many migrant workers suffer from cramped living conditions without private space. Because of their rural hukou status, such workers are not entitled to get an apartment in the city. Private market apartments are too expensive, so they usually have to live in dormitories. During the establishment of the

## MinGong Struggles Timeline

\* In Shenzhen 3,000 employees of a sofa factory walked out in protest against wage cuts and management's racism. The factory belongs to the Italian manufacturer DeCoro. The wage payments had been lower than expected which lead ten workers to complain about it. They were sacked, and when they tried to re-enter the factory they were beaten by foreign managers. Some of the victims had to be admitted to hospital. The managers at DeCoro are obviously violence prone. At the beginning of 2007 hundreds of DeCoro workers went on strike after three of their work-mates had been beaten. The three workers had demanded higher compensations.

**2006**

\* In Xiamen 300 female workers employed by NEC Tokin Electronics went on strike after they had learned that some of the applied chemicals are poisonous. They had suffered many health problems attributed to the chemicals. They demanded better working conditions and extra-payments for medication. The company agreed to the demands.

\* In Dongguan workers employed by toy manufacturer Merton protested for two days against low wages and bad accommodation. The protest started in the company-owned dormitory and turned into a riot which was then joined by over 1,000 workers. Dozens got arrested. Their basic wage was on the level of the official minimum wage, but other legal standards (regarding overtime, pay slips, bank holidays, social security) were not met. The canteen food was bad, but the company still took a quarter of the workers' wages for food and accommodation.
\* 3,000 workers of the furniture manufacturing plant Siu Fung in Shenzhen – with capital from Hong Kong – went on strike against long working hours and degrading treatment by the company. They had to work for twelve hours, but they did not receive an overtime bonus. In order to be allowed to go to the toilet they had to ask for a voucher. Security guards were accused of having beaten workers. The workers marched to the government's guest house, but they were blocked by the police and scuffles started.

## The First Wave of the Anarchist Movement in Indonesia: The '90s

By Em Black

### *Anarchism's Inception*

The punk scene bloomed really quickly in Indonesia in the 90's during the end of Suharto regime. This was a time when as many as two-thousand punks might attend a show, packing a small venue with studded leather jackets, mohawks, and beer bottles. The scene helped its members forget that they were living in the country with the highest Muslim population in the world, a place where having sex before marriage, drinking beer, and eating pork were considered sins.

This was the birth place of the anarchist movement in Indonesia. The first anarchist ideas were introduced by an article in a punk zine. The ideas spread across the punk scene, and getting political seemed to be trendy: protests and marches were organized by punks; they carried black circle-A flags; almost every punk band was writing political songs about migrant workers, and against war, the IMF, and the world bank; punks started to organize communities, they went into villages and tried to create an alternative lifestyle with a DIY attitude. But how far were they willing to go? Nobody really knew, but a few people in the scene started to search deeper, trying to find the answers themselves.

There wasn't much choice in Indonesian society. The only things you got to read about anarchism were from the internet (which wasn't very easy to access), or zines sent by punk bands from different countries. Even for the most interested person, access to anarchist ideas just came from punk fanzines or bands like Crass. Reading or listening to songs could be exciting, but after a certain point it's not enough. Some punks were fed up with the reality that their actions weren't really effective, they wanted to be in the struggle, to solve problems and make changes.

### *The Rise of Anarcho-punk*

There was a political party that emerged from the Suharto regime called PRD, which came to punk as a close possibility to achieve the answer they were looking for. PRD was a Leninist party that had the most militant actions in Indonesia at the time – they stood up against the police FACE TO FACE. At the time, it was the most radical thing that could happen (imagine this right after the slaughter of communists in 1965).

PRD quickly became a platform for punks to get political, where they felt they were able to get involved in the real struggle instead of just waving flags and singing songs. Six people joined PRD, they learned everything about Marxism and communism. Some of them tried to organize the workers and punks. Soon, PRD was encouraging people to form an anarcho-punk organization in Bandung.

In 1998, the punks in Bandung took over the streets against the increasing price of oil. The plan was to occupy the national radio station. However, it seemed like the police were prepared. Th police blocked the streets and 2 punks were arrested. Even though the action didn't succeed, it was still a catalyst for punks to get political. Two-hundred punks were there to witness anarchy happening in Indonesia.

At first, the punks didn't have much choice when they joined PRD, it seemed radical and militant and had ideas, but the more they learned, the more they realized this wasn't what they are looking for. The "burgeoning" seemed to be against all the ideas why they had first gotten into the activities, the party was centralized. This didn't match their idea of a more liberated society. Although PRD was once a good platform for them to access the larger world, where they got to see, read, and learn more about organizing and politics. But this Leninist hierarchical way of organizing was intolerable after a few years. So, in early 2000, the former punks who had become more like activists had had enough of this control and decided it was time to call it off. And yet, maybe they are all ready to write their own page in the history of anarchist movement.

*The next part of this essay is coming soon.*

## Media Review: Jalan

When Black Rim was nothing more than a few scribbles in a notebook (about two months ago), we here on the editorial board were ecstatic to hear about the foundation of a new online publication, Jalan: Journal of Asian Liberation, which sounded very similar to the project we were about to start on. Jalan, which grew out of the Blak Orchid blog, also carried on some of the projects that some Asian-American activists had begun in Seattle at the University of Washington campus ("Smash the Model Minority Myth", etc.).

The journal smartly reproduced a paper written by Jane Mee Wong on Ray Jones, the Chinese-American anarchist who was part of the San Francisco-based Equality society. Anybody who's read Paul Avrich's Anarchist Voices probably came across the scattered stories of Ray Jones and wanted to learn more. Fortunately for us all, Jane Mee Wong did a great job of researching and writing about the life of this enigmatic figure. There is also a lengthy review of Arif Dirlik's Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution that is worth reading despite the fact that the object of the review is two decades old. But perhaps that long-term perspective on Dirlik's book is one of the valuable parts of the essay.

While there are times when Jalan's penchant for identity politics isn't to our taste, and we find their anti-imperialist analysis to be rather reductive, we thought the magazine's ideas are stimulating to say the least. All in all, we're glad to have company in the world of radical grassroots Asian publications and we wish the best to Jalan.

To access the magazine, go to: <http://jalanjournal.org/>



## 我们家 :Desiree Social Center A liberated space in Wuhan By 大米

Last December I had the chance to travel to Wuhan with some other members of the Beijing Anarchist Study Group. Wuhan, which is known as the birthplace of Chinese punk, spawned a small network of anarcho-leaning youths with a strong desire for autonomy and free expression. This is the same scene that produced the magazine *Chaos*, which is probably the first anarchist publication to come out of mainland China in fifty years. *Chaos* carried articles on the situationists, green anarchy, and ran translations of Kropotkin, all alongside reports from domestic and international punk scenes. Though now defunct, it's final issue was a complete translation of Crimethinc's *Fighting for our Lives*. It ambitiously tackled political issues, which is all the more impressive considering the repressive national context. The fact that the magazine wasn't suppressed (though it was printed illegally) is a sign of a thawing on ultra-left dissent in China, which has laid dormant for decades.

MD, who edited *Chaos*, is now in the process of cultivating a social center in the countryside just outside of Wuhan. Together with some friends, he found a large house with cheap rent right next to a hog farm. In Chinese they call it 我们家, which means "our house", or Desiree Social Center, in English. MD had extended an invitation to us in Beijing so that we could come see what was happening and how we could help. We gave some talks on topics like Chinese leftism, D.I.Y., anarchist theory, and the Zapatistas. These were all decent, but what was really needed was a frank discussion on logistics and desire. We eventually got around to why the social center was formed.

MD explained that the Desiree Social Center was created in response to the general oppression of youth in Chinese society. Young Chinese people are forced into a schooling

system that burdens them with intense competition. The Chinese school system instructs students that in order to get a good job and have a fulfilling life, the only option is to forfeit one's childhood to test preparations and grueling study regimens. Yet, the portion of students who make it into one of the country's colleges is incredibly small. Not only the educational system, but also the traditional notions of patriarchy and filial piety constrict young people in China. In fact, MD sees these forms of familial oppression as the root problems in Chinese society.

The people in Wuhan got into punk rock because it was a way for them to move beyond the confines of family and society. In the beginning, the Wuhan scene had all the best elements of the punk ethos: freedom, equality, transgressive communication, and ruthless anti-commercialism. As it got older, the scene got staler, until it is now a parody of its former rebelliousness. Now all the bands just want to make it big. The social center, on the other hand, is an attempt to reconnect to the roots of their rebelliousness, to organize resistance, and to create a space with meaning.

The center still struggles with its daily operations, as WF, one of the people who lives there, pointed out. Nobody involved in the center has ever tried something like this before. They get no money from operating the space; they don't sell anything. The center is out in the countryside and the distance from the city gives some people reservations about going out there for events at night. This isn't to mention the freezing cold of a winter without heat and the scorching heat of Wuhan's summers. In some appreciable ways, they're making it happen in the face of a lot of adversity.

Still, they'd like to learn from the experiences that other people have had with social centers. They want to be put in contact with anyone who can show them solidarity and mutual aid. If you'd like to contact the project, they list information on their website, <http://a-desiree-social-center-wuhan.noblogs.org/>. They can also be emailed at [river.under.the.sun@gmail.com](mailto:river.under.the.sun@gmail.com)



Special Economic Zones and other industrial areas city and local administrations built dormitory complexes that were leased to the factory managements. But many companies started building their own dormitories on company grounds. On construction sites brick-houses are built for construction workers – only to be demolished again when the construction project is finished. 75 to 80 percent of mingong live in dormitories, in rooms 26 square meters big and housing twelve people on average (Lee 2007: 57). The actual conditions in the dormitories are diverse, ranging from shacks without showers and hot water to clean buildings with common rooms. The dormitories supply housing for employees but have other functions too: Besides reducing reproduction costs – useful for the mingong as well – company managements can exercise control over the workers and also easily extend the working day because workers are constantly available. Furthermore, they can try to prevent dissatisfied workers from seeking jobs elsewhere. Pun and Smith call this the "dormitory labor regime" (Pun/Smith 2007).

Isolation and discrimination

Absence from home and their precarious situation in the city cause many migrant workers to feel isolated. Often their partners are still in the village or work in a different city. Until recently the children of mingong were kept out of urban schools and high fees still prevent them from entering schools, so most mingong leave their children at home in the countryside. They grow up there with grandparents or other relatives, often seeing their parents only once a year, during the Chinese New Year. Meanwhile in some cities like Beijing private and cheap mingong-schools have been set up. In the city the mingong still face state discrimination, even though the situation has improved slightly in recent years.

Until a few years ago mingong were only allowed to work

certain manual jobs in the cities, one reason being that some better jobs were "reserved" for urban workers sacked by the state industries. Recently, these restrictions were officially abolished – but that does not mean that urban workers are not still privileged. Even now mingong in many cities face rejection by sections of the urban population. For a long time the media stirred up those sentiments by calling the migrant workers "blind drifters".<sup>5</sup> Even though the reports have changed now and many newspapers emphasize the importance of the mingong for the construction of the "socialist market economy", this is not the end of their stigmatization and discrimination.

Between city and village

Despite the many problems the migrant workers continue to come to the cities, because for many staying in the villages is no longer an alternative. The village is and remains their home, their emotional place of identification, but you cannot earn enough money and there are no future prospects. As a result migrant workers swing back and forth between feeling homesick and their desire to get away, between a known and apparently orderly life in the village and the adventurous "modern" city life. This tension leads many young migrants to "commute", alternating between periods of employment in the city and returns to the village when they have no work (or have simply had enough of the city), lasting only until the village gets too boring and they leave once more. This dagong, wage labor for a boss in the city, is actually not constituting a final move there but a double existence between rural and urban worlds.

Three things play a major role in mingong's thoughts and ideas (as in those of many peasants): 1. the poverty in the past (in the 1970s and early 1980s); 2. today's harsh conditions, even though their material situation has improved; and 3. the

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## MinGong Struggles Timeline

\* In Guangzhou more than 300 workers of a shoe manufacturer blocked the motorway in response to not having been paid for three months. On the previous day the management had done a runner and communicated via fax that the company was bankrupt. The police cleared the road blockade.

**2007**

\* In Shenzhen more than 200 workers protested against the closure of Huangxing Light Manufacturing. The factory had been closed from one day to the other, 800 workers lost their jobs. The workers blocked the factory and asked the local administration for help, in order to get compensation from the company. They also tried to block a main road. Some got arrested, but they were released shortly after their workmates started to besiege the police station. Allegedly the closure of the factory was triggered by the fact that Walt Disney – the factories' main client – had withdrawn their orders after the factory had been accused of over-exploitation.

\* Thousands of workers (most of them women) employed by

the plastic Christmas-tree manufacturer Baoji Artefacts in Shenzhen took industrial action against long working-hours and against being sacked without compensation. For five hours the workers managed to resist the attempt of several hundred policemen to disperse them. Only heavy rain managed to dissolve the crowd. One female striker was beaten by the police, one hundred people were temporarily arrested.

\* In July three hundred striking workers got attacked by goons. The workers were employed on a construction site of a hydropower plant in the province of Guangdong. The attack left many workers injured, one of them died in hospital later. The attacks continued even after the arrival of the police. The workers had put down their tools because their wages had not been paid for four months. In the end the police arrested the boss of the company's security service and the construction site manager.

## "Faces of Migration" continued...

dream of setting up a business or shop in the village to escape farm as well as factory work (Lee 2007: 221). Only a few reach that last goal.<sup>6</sup> Given their memory of periods of poverty and their current material problems, mingong owning their own piece of land, land that any person with a rural hukou is entitled to, is particularly important.

For many mingong this piece of land still ensures subsistence. The village is their place of social reproduction of labor power. Here marriages take place, children are born and raised, and mingong come to recover and to earn a subsistence income in times of unemployment. The land is a kind of informal social insurance, another reason why they do not want to give it up and move to the city permanently (Pun/Li: 42). Others come back to take care of their children or parents.

Income levels in the countryside vary, particularly when comparing the coastal regions, central China and the West. The mingong's money might be needed for a house, a better school or for food, and in most cases their wage makes up to two thirds of the household income (Lee 2007: 210). Peasants have to take additional jobs and seasonal work to earn some cash whenever possible, and still, for many rural families dagong is a pure necessity for meeting all living expenses.

The biggest costs are: 1. children's education, so that the next generation has better chances for social advancement, 2. caring for ill family members and 3. building a house. Education and health belong to those goods that were commodified; for many people, especially in the countryside, they were becoming extremely expensive. There are several reasons for building a house. The old houses are cramped, inhospitable and easily fall apart, so that people want new ones made of bricks and concrete. But the new house is also an

important symbol of the family's economic advancement and a precondition for the male offspring to find a wife. And it is the place where the mingong want to live when they get old.

What nearly all migrant workers have in common is that they have this opportunity to retreat to the village. They are only half proletarianized, and their identity as peasants and workers is intermingled (Pun: 20). They do not see themselves as part of the working class or the workers (gongren) because these terms describe the old, urban working class and have an exclusionary character. They conceive of themselves as peasants (nongmin), worker peasants (nongmingong) or incoming workers (wailaigong). Many peasants and migrant workers think of themselves as still "backward" and "superstitious", as an obstacle to the construction of a socialist nation, because they have still internalized this picture of peasant inferiority.

Still, in contrast to urban workers who got sacked by state industries (see the article in this edition) the mingong are not desperate or quarrel with their fate in a past world. They see progress and believe in a better future – despite the bitter daily experiences, exploitation in the factories, the hollowing out of the villages and the cadre's corruption and repression. These experiences anger them, and they want to fight discrimination.

Migrating and working in different regions, sectors and professions has created several subjects, like the construction workers, the domestic workers and the factory workers or dagongmei (see below). The migrant workers are still far from being a unified new working class, but that can change quickly through social struggles.

Social cohesion and struggles

The mingong organize their daily life and work through

## MinGong Struggles Timeline

\* In August the police prevented three hundred protesting mingong construction workers from marching to Tian'anmen Square in Beijing. The workers wanted to protest against wage fraud, since they had not been paid for a year. When they rallied for the demonstration the police arrived in buses. They forced the workers to get on the buses and drove them away.

\* In August thousands of workers employed in two factories belonging to Feihuang Electronic in Shenzhen went on strike for several days and staged demonstrations outside the premises. Many workers got arrested. The factory is owned by the German company CEAG AG, manufacturing storage batteries and battery re-chargers for mobile phones. Ninety percent of the employees are women from the inland provinces Sichuan, Hunan, Hubei. The factory management had asked them to produce ninety re-chargers more per hour. In case they would not meet the target they were supposed to assemble the missing pieces after their regular shift – otherwise their basic wage would be cut. The strikers put forward written demands addressing the management and the

local labor bureau: wage increase, bonus for night-shift work, social security according to the law, clean drinking water in the factory. The labor commission intervened and the management offered negotiations. The negotiations turned out to be difficult, because the strikers did not want to send delegates, fearing the repression these representatives would face.



## Hong Kong Public Space Wars Colonial Legacies and Legal Consequences

At first glance, it probably strikes one as odd that Hong Kong's anarchists rallied to defend the Star Ferry Terminal and Queen's Piers. What is there worth defending about two colonial landmarks, one of which is even dedicated to royalty? On closer inspection, however, we see that these two points of conflict were part of a working class community protecting itself against encroaching privatization. It's not that anyone had much nostalgia for the days of their European rulers, but the piers were defended because the buildings represented some of the last unenclosed public spaces in the city.

For more than a decade the piers served as a weekend meeting spot for hundreds of the city's domestic workers. Most of these people are women from the Philippines and Indonesia who only get one day off of work each week, typically Sunday. Additionally, these workers tend to live in the homes of their employers and therefore have no private space of their own. The Queen's Pier and Star Ferry terminal, as large public spaces, are thus transformed into a weekly international picnicking spot where people can go to relax, speak their native languages, and meet with friends. But in December of 2006 the city announced that it was going to bulldoze these areas, turning free commons into shopping malls.

The first wave of resistance to the city's plans came from the domestic workers themselves, who were soon joined by a group of artists that became involved in raising awareness of the issue. And as protests escalated into standoffs with the authorities, many other people joined in the struggle hoping to participate in the future of their city. Hong Kong-based

anarchist, Plus, says that he feels it was his right as a citizen to speak out on this issue. He was one of a few people who occupied the Star Ferry building in July 2007, the date of eviction from the premises. Unfortunately for Plus, he was singled out by police and arrested, the only one of the occupiers to be convicted for that act of protest. The only charge leveled against him was "obstruction", meaning that he somehow prevented a police officer from doing their duty.

Plus was stationed on the roof of the ferry terminal, far away from any of the cops; the fact that they went after him shows that the police are only too firmly in the service of the commercial interests in Hong Kong. Why should a police officer risk their life and Plus' to help build a mall faster? Julian Fung, another activist, was arrested at an earlier protest and sent to prison on the charge of assaulting an officer. Though recently released, the details of his case show that the city is targeting citizens who speak out. In the court trials of both Julian and Plus, the judge ignored all evidence of their innocence, evidence including the testimonies of every non-police eye-witness who saw Julian being brutalized by police officers. In fact, the judge even helped the prosecuting attorneys develop stronger cases against the two. Clearly there is no justice in Hong Kong's courts.

As expected, Hong Kong's media has done a horrible job of covering the protests. The newspapers and television stations have only latched on to the angle that the protesters wanted to "preserve history", as if the buildings themselves were more important than the people who use them! No one in the mainstream media has taken the time to investigate the abuses of force by the police in the struggle or what will happen to the domestic workers. In fact, before too long these same papers that provided their lukewarm support to the protest will be selling advertisements to the stores in the new shopping malls.



## "The Festival is Over" continued...

Anarchists and other uncontrollables in Osaka felt it was pointless going to Hokkaido, the struggle is in their city, most certainly away from the concentrated forces of the enemy in a rural area. This is where only those who readily control mass access to transport and personnel can win the engagement due to the environment.

They felt that also there was an undiscovered element of 'white supremacy' in the assumption that imported Anglo-Atlantic models will be the best ones for the Japanese situation, and that 'activist' methods can be a symbolic theater that is not based on collective action in the face of a repressive system, but is a reaction to a temporary media event of authority. Also maybe only more financially solvent North American and European activists have a possibility to enter and this was not automatically available to closer comrades in East Asia. This effects not only the amount of people who come but also maybe the readiness for conflict, due to the heavy sentences given out by the Japanese state, which are a different reality, it is not a joke. Japanese prisons are notoriously harsh but they are nothing compared to the realities of life in many prisons of the majority world. When you add together the possibility of not clearing immigration because of problems with visas, money – if you are an international – and then heavy jail time for very minor actions, you have to think very clearly about the situation you find yourself in. If we face this much repression for centralized 'legal' 'pacifist' public actions, we have to seriously think about the social terrain we find ourselves in and how best to act.

In Japan, the problem is one of visibility, of having a visible anti-capitalist/anarchist infrastructure, as the resources available to the anti-capitalist movement are small, there are few infoshops, collective housing projects, squats etc. The state uses media, secret police, surveillance, manipulation, judicial harassment and imprisonment in a thorough manner, anyone who is identified as a threat will find themselves constantly on minor charges, house searches, this amounts to personal harassment, stalking, it is intended to be injurious to the mentality and so on, to hold people into keeping respectful of the seemingly all-encompassing power of the government. So, the G8 in Japan was difficult to react against. Obviously G8 summits are organised in a way that anyway tries to remove the possibility of sparks of conflict or catalyst, such as holding them in remote rural locations. The 'countryside' in the industrialised world is always a 'theme park' or an 'unforgiving advantage' to those with superior technology, logistics and control of movement.

Despite it's problems, Osaka benefits from having a long-running class struggle based practically on resisting the conditions of day-labour. The revolt against capitalism is already a potential in the tens of thousands of exploited who find themselves rolled over in this economy. It consists in recognizing that the currency crisis is a result of the search for capitalist value in the American markets since the fall of the Soviet Union, and not a result of the particular failures of bank policy in any one country. That's where new allies, new struggles and new praxis emerge from. The anti-globalization

movement has been stone-cold dead for years. The G8 protests were so far distanced from actual on-the-ground praxis in Japan that it is difficult to think of them apart from something like an anime convention.

The revolt against the industrialised world will not come from the countryside now the majority of the world lives in cities, it comes from within the contradictions and excluded zones of the mega-metropolis' themselves, the most critical place to stop the economy, and seize control of the streets.

Kamagasaki has been rebelling since the 1960s, but only rarely have there been effective interventions there that have had the potential to get bigger (most notably the new left interventions of the 70s, but even that was really problematic). We have to find a way to overcome the limitations of riots, to destroy not only the police station but the economy, to push for a social war and the end of capitalism. To push a situation of disparate anger into a position of class strength and self-organisation.

Repeatedly going to places of conflict where the possibilities are defined by the agenda of the state we see as a dangerous mistake, the 'difficult' condition of modern warfare is 'urban' precisely because this is the arena where our everyday lives are made. Where the commodities are produced and sent forth, where the utilities are run, where the octopus of cables multiplies and spreads, where the schools, hospitals, bureaucratic and financial houses are run.

This is what is at stake.

For a future without capital & coercion.  
Some anarchists always in exile.



informal connections and cliques, with people from their home villages and later with newly found friends in the factory, on the construction site or in the dormitory. They use these networks to get financial help, emotional support and information on the labor market and to communicate with their families at home, sometimes also to organize cultural activities like music groups or private schools for their children. In the workplaces these connections play a role in daily conflicts, in fighting for breaks, in slow downs, in the resistance against factory despotism and the use of the so-called "weapons of the weak" (Pur: 195).

When mingong work on construction sites, often the whole crew is from the same village. The recruiters, foremen or sub contractors are often mingong, too. In the factories the composition is more fluid, the connections looser, quickly formed and quickly broken, in part due to frequent job hopping (Lee 2007: 196).

For organizing struggles these social structures based on the place of origin – whether based on the same family, village, province or as a mafia grouping – often are not sufficient enough to resist the bosses on the shop-floor or company level. The migrant workers, coming from different Chinese provinces, need to overcome the resentments and racisms among each other which are based on different origins, languages, skin colors, class backgrounds and culture.7

The mingong wage many struggles. In 2005 there were 10,000 strikes in the Guangdong province alone (New York Times, 19.12.2006). Lee has analyzed struggles in Shenzhen, Guangdong, that lead to protests, mediation- and legal proceedings. Most involved four issues: 1. back wages, illegal wage reductions, and incomes below the minimum wage; together these grievances constituted about two thirds of all cases that ended up with the labor bureau: 2. disciplinary measures (or excesses) and offenses against (workers') dignity; 3. redundancies (Lee 2007: 164).

The protests mainly arise on the company level, rarely on the local level. Sometimes workers start a struggle because they are encouraged by strikes in other companies. Information on struggles is spread through worker turnover, through personal contacts with employees in other companies (for instance, people from the same village), or because workers and activists meet each other while complaining at the union office or the labor bureau. The dormitories not only allow the control over workers, they are also the terrain where workers form cliques and networks, exchange information on the bosses' tactics, discuss changes in the labor laws, the next steps to take and most effective forms of protest. Other places are canteens and hospital wards for industrial accidents.

Administrative and legal skirmishes at labor bureaus and courts play an ambivalent role between pacifying and radicalizing the conflicts. Some workers at first refer to the laws because the legal standards are often significantly better than workers' actual conditions. The Chinese labor laws more or less meet Central European standards but are systematically ignored. So when workers learn about the legal situation, their own fate is not seen as "usual misery" or "bad luck" anymore but as an open legal offense. This might mobilize people to protest (Lee 2007: 174).

The protests are less about the formal "illegality" of the situation and more about the need for improving conditions. When workers later learn that local administrations, courts and arbitration committees only discriminate against, intimidate or make fools of them; when they experience the public officials' sleaze, the intervention of the bosses and the corruption, all that can lead to a further escalation with sit-ins and strikes.

Often it does not get as far. Many struggles end beforehand for several reasons. On one hand the mingong cannot afford prolonged battles. Without any financial reserves they need to find a new job. In case they get a new job, they do not have opportunities to continue the collective fight for their demands with the old employer due to the long working hours and the barracking in the dormitories. If they do not land a new job they return to the village – often hundreds or thousand kilometers away – where they rely on family support, and cannot participate in the struggle anymore.

Furthermore, lasting connections or organizational structures that could back up a longer conflict only rarely develop in the struggles. In the moment of protest there is a commonality and solidarity that finishes with the end of the struggle (or the closure of a company) because everybody goes their separate ways. What remains are the village connections that help with finding a new job or organizing the return home. Many activists who otherwise would have continued the struggle give up. Noticeably, struggles of the state workers in the rust belt against the restructuring and redundancies often last longer because these workers are not as mobile and have a permanent place of residence, even after being laid off.

### State Reactions

An important factor in a struggle's ending is the reaction of the state or employer. Often police, security guards or hired thugs attack workers if they do not reach an agreement, if the employer has the right connections to the local administration or if the forms of the struggle are unacceptable to the state. Thugs and police usually single out the alleged "ringleaders". If a local administration wants to get rid of activists, they can be shipped into labor camps for "re-education", a simple bureaucratic act without a lawsuit and detention and forced labor for up to three years. More serious "offenses" lead to court hearings and imprisonment in state prisons. The few attempts to organize independent mingong unions were smashed in this way and organizers imprisoned or sent to labor camps.

The mingong struggles and those of the urban state workers (gongren) and unemployed (xiagang) share some similarities, like the reference to the laws, the fragmentation of the workers and the localized activism, their organization in their living communities and dormitories, the repression in case the struggle escapes company boundaries and the arrest of the activists. Underground organizations are brutally suppressed, but the demands of (isolated) struggles are met – at least formally; whether all the promises for improvements are actually met is a different question.

Most strikingly, in both cases – of mingong and state workers –

## "Faces of Migration" continued...

we can witness the intervention of the local state and the central state, contradictory at a first glance but in fact complementary. Decentralization of the socialist planning state in the course of reforms, elevation of the local administrations to managing profit centers in the new socialist market economy and strengthening of the factories' managing directors and owners, both with close links to the local party cadres and administrative leaders, have lead to the formation of a class of cadres and capitalists not only orchestrating the accumulation process but also appropriating a large part of the new wealth that the mingong produce with their labor. This creates massive social dislocation and provokes the specter of mass revolts against the new exploitative regime – particularly in China where this has happened before in history. The Communist Party's and central government's political strategists elevate concepts – some say they are only illusions – of the rule of law, social legislation, democratic control on the local level and more. Some of these concepts have already been molded into new legislation, celebrated by state propaganda as part of their "Harmonious Society".

For angry proletarians and small peasants the laws and social concepts of the central state are an important reference point, while the local state is the most important target. The central state wants to keep this arrangement for a while since it can uphold its own legitimation without having to fully meet the masses' demands for an improvement in their conditions. The central state seeks to increase its control over migration movements and to defuse the tense situation of the mingong in the cities.

We can see attempts to better integrate migrant workers, for instance, by allowing the state union or NGOs to take care of them. They get attention and support in the official media, through labor rights groups, workers' activists (mostly from Hong Kong) and even state offices. The high local government fees for mingong were abolished by the central government in 2001. In January 2003 it also eliminated the exclusion of mingong from certain urban jobs, criticized the back wages and illegal wage reductions and demanded better access of mingong-children to urban schools without discriminatory fees. Also in 2003 the vagrancy law changed, and illegal arrests were outlawed. Before then police had often charged migrant workers with vagrancy and sent them to labor camps. In Shanghai and Shenzhen new chip-cards were issued containing personal data and residency status. The cards can be used at local offices for social support, family planning, education etc. In state language that is called "population management" (Shenzhen Daily, 9.2.2007; China Daily, 27.12.2006). The aim is to control migrants' movements and their rights to use local public services. Some restrictions were loosened for migrant workers in order to release further social tensions resulting from poverty, lacking or missing medical treatment and expensive access to educational facilities.

Some cities, for instance Beijing, discussed the abolishment of the hukou. According to the South China Morning Post the Public Security Bureau is working on a plan to phase out temporary residence permits in order to stop "discrimination" against the migrants (SCMP, 21.1.2007). In the province of Yunnan abolishment of the old hukou-system was already

announced. But that does not mean that the discrimination is over: The mingong still receive worse treatment, have to pay higher fees and experience the arrogance, unscrupulousness and corruption of the local administration.

What next?

First of all, that depends on the regime's further crisis management. In order to ensure its own legitimation and survival the regime has to "control" corruption and increase government efficiency. More formalized and institutionalized labor relations and strengthened courts and legal regulations could further lead social conflicts onto bureaucratic tracks. But will it work?

The mingong will continue to play a larger role in the cities. They are the most mobile and dynamic part of Chinese society. In some cities they constitute one forth or more of the local population. In Shanghai seventeen million people have a local hukou, plus four to five million migrants (China Daily, 13.1.2007). In Shenzhen three million "permanent" inhabitants jostle six million mingong (Shenzhen Daily, 9.2.2007).<sup>8</sup> It is unclear how long they can continue to commute back and forth between city and village or if they can settle down in the city permanently and win their social demands.

Chinese and foreign capitalists already complain about labor shortages and increasing wages. A scientist from the Academy of Social Sciences in Guangdong province writes that wages and working conditions of migrant workers have improved significantly there. The monthly wage for unskilled work has increased from 750 Yuan (2004) to 890 Yuan (2005), for skilled work from 1,600 Yuan to 2,000 Yuan. The standard of the company dormitories has also improved, for instance, with air-conditioned rooms and rooms for married couples. Employers who can not or do not want to pay for such improvements move to other, "less developed" areas. The minimum wage – in Guangdong between 780 Yuan in the capital Guangzhou down to 450 Yuan in rural regions – increased, too.<sup>9</sup>

In the future we might see an escalation as well as a containment of the struggles of the mingong. On one hand, illegal land seizures shut-off the safety valve of rural subsistence and destroy the hinterland, the mingong's retreat in times of exhaustion and unemployment. That could escalate the explosiveness of the struggles in the cities. In 2004 forty million peasants already had lost "their" land and the "enclosure"-movement had lead to expropriation of three percent of agricultural land, for "new development zones", "high-technology parks" and "university towns" (Lee 2007: 259). Meanwhile the number of conflicts around evictions from inner-city apartments continues to rise as long as the real estate "bubble" inflates and local cadres earn fortunes with business parks and shopping malls. This situation affects (former) urban state workers, stricken by unemployment and precarious jobs, by robbing them of the only social safeguard left after restructuring: the company flat (which they have bought by now or are still renting cheaply). But it affects many mingong as well who are pushed out of inner-city districts into the slums on the outskirts. Can that be the start of a new alliance?

Although lacking in much action, the anti-G8 events did create some discussion around the methods of organisation. The challenge of a small, politically diverse, international group, trying to react against the G8 created an environment where there was no alternative but to engage as a group, and discuss political tactics.

In Hokkaido anti-G8 camp, internationals were separated from the decision making process and told that any action that was not approved by the organisers would result in certain arrest, job loss and prison (for the central organisers), therefore the usual putting pressure on everyone to toe the line. Also the inappropriate plan to march 20 Km in the countryside where there would be little chance to have any effect on the actual proceedings of the G8 is irritating to say the least. The lack of opportunity for discussion around the tactics chosen by the central activist clique was dis-empowering and shows the weakness in the adoption of structure without adequately thinking about content. Without a collective confrontational position to capitalism on our own terms, our 'resistance' appears to amount to nothing but words, a gesture, a trend, then back to our routines.

Unfortunately, as well as this superficial structure, the NoG8 action was without a sense of spontaneity, raw feeling, passion, anger, or catalyst for action, as was seen in Osaka. Combined with massive amounts of self-repression, and the reality of a huge police presence, the result was an event lacking in direction or power.

This is not so much just a critique of some of our Japanese comrades as a critique of the Pavlovian activist mindset



whereby a generic response is rolled out regardless of the specifics of people and place. What success the G8 protests achieved was found in bringing together new interactions between Japanese anti-capitalists and internationals.

What happened – or didn't happen – in Japan is no surprise. An international call out was produced because that is what was expected: that is the model – unreflected, insupportable (in terms of infrastructure) and inappropriate. The fact that Japan is, as a political, social and subcultural entity, so extremely different from those places where these summits have been held and attacked before simply threw the poverty of the ritual into sharp relief.

So, for us the anti-G8 protests were characterised by massive self-surveillance and self-repression, and difficulty in breaking out of a sense of isolation and individualization. The 'activist' response to the G8 was dis-empowering in contrast to the necessary, spontaneous chaotic rioting in Osaka which was grounded in a reality of social conflict against the conditions of a repressive daily life.

The G8 action and the Osaka riots highlighted a stark divide between people pushed to a point of necessary action, and the 'activist scene', where there is a feeling of having too much to lose to take action. Comparably, this situation in Japan is suggestive of where the organised 'activist scene' in United Kingdom is at from an outsiders perspective: revolving around structured events, without either a depth of analysis, spontaneity or position of conflict, leading to an inactive 'scene' and decaying 'sub-culture', without clear targets and ways to fight them.

***“We are comrades!  
Brothers!  
Our enemy is not each  
other.  
It's the capitalists and  
militarists.”***

**–Kotoku Shusui, addressing the  
international anarchist community**

## THE FESTIVAL IS OVER Japan Resistance Report 2008 reprinted from 325 #6

Japan can be described as a decaying high-tech quasi-corporatist island state, hostile to many of its neighbouring countries. Several Japanese companies which benefited from slave labour in WW2, Mitsubishi etc, still operate. Japan is re-arming itself militarily and has never firmly broke with its fascist & imperialist past, the state attempts to enforce a high level of social control but even so, there does remain tumultuous outbreaks of anarchy that no-one can predict occurring, moments of incredible beauty, like Osaka in 13-21 June 2008, when an incident of police brutality sparked fierce rioting in Kamagasaki, a working class district.

The government is very repressive against the social movements in no small part because of the serious revolutionary disturbances of the 60's & 70's onwards, with some underground autonomous groups still existing in hiding today. Japan is not the stable, comfortable place that the media tries to portray, and there are many people living a very precarious life of poverty and exclusion.

Not only in violent response to repression was there a stark difference between the 6 day riot in Osaka and the anti-G8 events which took place almost simultaneously in Hokkaido, northern most island of the Japanese archipelago.

In Hokkaido a tiny number of anti-globalisation activists, socialists, pacifists, environmentalists, NGOs, and of course, anarchists, were systematically suppressed in Sapporo from the onset of the entire organised counter-events. They were violently prevented on the most minor terms from having a peaceful street demo with a sound-system truck, the driver absurdly wrestled out by a posse of cops in a characteristic move of attacking vulnerable demos where the cops feel they can be aggressive and have the sanction of the media to do so. The sound-demo in Tokyo was the usual suppressed event, despite the evident rage of some of the people against the police restrictions. Anti-globalisation academics flew in and flew out again, presentations and counter-conferences were organised, promoting this or that new book or hip social theory in venues where you usually had to pay to enter. The spectacle was maintained, commodities were sold, careers were trod.

The media build-up to the G8 was extremely questionable, with mainstream media meeting the German anti-G8 'Dissent' delegation in the months before the events at the air-port like movie-stars. Unfortunately the 'Dissent' delegation participated with the mainstream media, something we completely disagree with, viewing it as counter-productive and antagonistic to our hostility to the agenda of the corporations and government. The media was customarily both hysterically curious and dismissive, with the accompanying usual alerts to hold the image in the mind of terrorists like the Japanese Red Army, Aum or Al-Qaeda. The base population simply got on with their lives.



In Osaka when a day-worker was discovered beaten and tortured by the inner-city police during the G8 clamp-down period, the whole area lit up with unmediated anti-police, anti-system rage, it didn't matter so much that there was also a secondary G8 ministers meeting happening at the time in the city, we guess people were pretty angry. In addition the squatted parks around the city act as semi-autonomous areas of free space, with information and material distribution, so the news spread fast. There is a closeness to the people who have known each other in a collective fight for some time and they know the lay of the city to their advantage. Kamagasaki is a fighting working class neighbourhood, they do not need to be convinced by a street-party to dance.

The anti-G8 events were characterised by a strong focus on structure, on the logistics of organising an 'event'. The actions borrowed the structure of past anti-G8 action; in particular organisers in Japan used their experience of the G8 in Germany the previous year.

We don't doubt the sincerity of the people who spent so much time and effort in organising the resistance against the G8, but for us this structure was applied superficially. There was not much analysis of how and why people wanted to act against the summit, or what the aims of action were. There seemed to be a lack of preparation for an attack from the cops and lack of de-centralised actions outside the central sound-demo(s), which seemed to come from lack of initiatives and conflictual attitude of solidarity on the part of the Japanese groups and also internationals not sufficiently understanding the operating environment. The international anti-G8 infotour for the G8 was extensive, across many countries and continents, why was the mobilisation so weak? Did it rely too much on a dependency for 'outside' numbers and pose a logistical complexity beyond the capabilities of the organising initiative?

In contrast to the more spontaneously created, structureless rioting in Osaka, the G8 action involved hierarchical organising. While on the surface borrowing the structure of previous anti-G8 events, the idea of leadership was very present in the organisation. The only way out is to completely denounce their methods and their ambition, what exists of it. Space seems significant in this, the lack of autonomous spaces in Japan affected the mentality of organisation; without the actual physical space to situation oneself in, it's difficult to practice and build non-hierarchical collective organising for a mass of people.

The old working class, a minority in socialist China, was already decomposed. Although by now the majority of the population is proletarianized or, at least, semi-proletarianized, this did not lead to the formation of one but of many working classes. These separated classes have to face the alliance of cadres, bureaucrats and capitalists that was forged in the 1980s and 1990s. How will the struggles of each of these working classes develop? Will they get together? What level of explosive social power will they reach? It is too early to say.

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### Endnotes

- 1 Figures by Chen Xiwen, financial advisor to the Chinese central government, see *China Daily*, 25.10.2006. Chen writes that this is a transitional period, and the mingong will finally become regular city dwellers.



2 The governmental Department of Labor expects 50 million new city dwellers between 2006 and 2010, *China Daily*, 10.11.2006. On top of that, there are the millions who are losing their jobs in the wake of the reform of the state-owned enterprises.

3 In some areas, especially in manufacturing in the Special Economic Zones, the wages actually increased by around 20 percent in real terms between 2005 and 2007. Since then inflation increased: May 2008, it was between 8 and 9 percent.

4 It was increased again in 2008 and currently (August 2008) is up to 1,000 Yuan, depending on the region. For the list of minimum wages see *China Labor Watch*: <http://www.chinalaborwatch.org/2007wagestand.htm>

5 They called them mang liu, 盲流, literally: drifting blindly; when said it sounds similar to liu mang, 流氓: hoodlum.

6 That is also known in Europe: rural migrant workers who move to industrial areas think they would earn enough money within a few years so that they can, for instance, build a house at home or open a business. Only a few can realize these dreams.

7 This is less about the ethnic minorities which constitute about ten percent of the population in China. Most of them live in western China (Xinjiang, Xizang...), in the South (Yunnan) and in the North (Neimenggu). Among the mingong the division into different groups of dialects and languages of Han-Chinese are more important.

8 Other sources speak of Shenzhen as a city with 10 million factory workers (migrants) in a city of 12 million inhabitants.

9 See endnote 3 for up-to-date numbers.

## A Chinese 'Floating Worker'

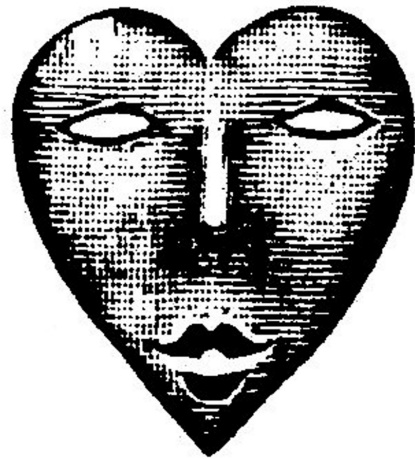
By Hsi Hsuan-wou

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Tseng Fan-kouo, who we met one afternoon in Lou Hsun park in Shanghai, began by telling us how he washed up in a bistro in his area of town and slept in the kitchens. A former peasant who had become a floating worker he wouldn't tell us how he had ended up in Shanghai. After a few questions he launched into a breathless monologue as though he was frightened he wouldn't have time to say it all. Then, with his parting phrase, he ran off without even saying goodbye.

H: Hsi Hsuan-wou: Has it been long since you left the country?  
Tseng Fan-kuou: More than a decade. But it feels like a century.

H: How did it happen? Did you decide to go?  
T: It's hard to say in retrospect. As always there were personal and more general reasons. In my village suddenly some families were able to have land and to retain some of their produce and this caused great divisions amongst the peasantry. Some of us, like myself, soon found ourselves excluded. In theory any family had a claim to an allocation as soon as they had enough hands to work it and in such a way as to produce what the state demanded. In actual fact the die was cast from the off. It was those families in the villages, who already had some power, who were given the confidence of the party and who were given land rights. After two or three years some families had enriched themselves and had some money to take on worker. So the choice I had was to sign up with one of these farms with the risk of vegetating for the rest of my days, never having the money to get married, etc. or to get the hell out.



*...corruption is how capitalism operates in China, it is the normal economic system. Corruption is one of the most common ways of extracting surplus value from workers. When factories go "bankrupt" workers don't get paid and money disappears into the pockets of capitalists and state officials. To keep one' job and not be immediately laid-off, a worker has to give "gifts" to their manager, and the manager in turn passes gifts up to the bosses. The money ends up in the hands of individual or state capitalists. To collect health insurance, workers also need to pay off managers. New style contracts are called "life and death contracts," as the managers have the power of life and death over the workers; and, joining the market economy when one is laid off is called "jumping into the sea." Protests against corruption are protests against surplus extraction, capitalist exploitation....*

*-Killing King Abacus*

I had already been to the main local town a few times and, as with all those of my age, I was much taken by the crowd, the noise, the music, the shop windows. When I think back now, after having seen some of the biggest cities in China, it was as nothing: the main road wasn't even tarmacked, a dozen or so shops... but for a young man who had seen nothing but his village it was paradise. Don't forget that these Chinese villages were just emerging from the middle ages. The only outside link was the radio, a traveling cinema once a month and that happy elite that went off for military service and came back full of stories... as long as they hadn't gone to Vietnam and come back crippled for life.

Thinking about it I reckon what changed all that was the arrival of money. Before there hadn't been any. People clocked up work points which brought in food. And a lot of points were needed if you wanted money to get settled and build a home. In short the introduction of money shook up the older ways of relating to folk. And in a country where 80% are peasants to shake up these structures is to shake up the whole of Chinese society.

H: When you left you had no guarantee of finding work?  
T: At those kinds of moments you don't think too hard. You're young -- willing to take a risk or two. Then there are always the rumours. Building sites in big cities where in a year you could earn what you could earn in a lifetime in the village. The stories which come back are those rarities who did come back a few years later with a fortune in their pockets, who buy a lorry, set up a factory and take on some hands. Stories of those who missed the boat, vegetated or died you hear none of. You want to believe in the miracle so you set off full of dreams.

H: And the results?  
T: The hangover do you mean? Depends. To start with I wasn't too far from the village and came back twice a year. I had

## NEXT TIME WE SHOULD SLEEP TOGETHER: Being Not-Japanese During the G8 Protests

In some ways the G8 protests in Japan this summer were very successful. For me at least, all that was expected of the protests was that I would have a chance to meet and network with comrades from other countries, especially those in east and southeast Asia. Shutting down the G8, since that feat always seems nigh impossible, was just a secondary concern of the protests. As a movement, our real test was whether we could organize ourselves autonomously, freely, and dynamically.

Japan might be the host country for the G8 that experiences the least amount of organized resistance, so it was inspiring to see travelers from many different parts of the world come together and work alongside brave local groups to fight the G8 and its policies of economic neo-liberalism. What we lacked in numbers, we surely made up for in spirit. The Japanese activists were welcoming and supportive of the "internationals" as we were called, and the protests went off without a hitch.

However generous the locals were to the travelers, I have to point out that the formal distinction between the two groups (Japanese and non-Japanese) did not serve any of us too well. There are a couple explanations for the division, which I will briefly discuss. The first is that the language barrier made communication between the two groups cumbersome. We lacked a common language and our small team of translators were working too hard already. Thus, separate meetings were scheduled for English and Japanese language groups.

The second rationalization was cultural. This argument stated that international activists worked differently than Japanese ones; owing to legal and cultural differences, there were different expectations for how to run things. Some believed that Japan is not as militant as Europe and so the local activists did not want to earn a reputation in Japan as being

violent extremists. Other explanations cite the host/guest dynamic prevalent in Japanese culture. Whatever the reasoning, the effect was that it seemed like a small, informed group of activists, mainly Japanese, were making decisions for everyone else.

By the time the G8 summit was starting and we had made it to the camps in Hokkaido, many of us were dislocated from the decision-making process and each other's plans. Our lack of communication precluded a heuristic collective learning process that is sorely needed in international organizing. From the lack of transparency, many of the internationals were left to ask, "Who is our host, anyway?" The factionalism within the Japanese contingents resulted in a slew of mixed and contradictory messages descending upon the internationals. Some were told that militancy was encouraged, some were warned that if they were arrested there would be no legal support for them; sometimes the message was that the protest's true strength was in creativity, at other times the message was that the action groups would renounce any responsibility for spontaneous actions.

Illustrative of the problems we faced because of the needless divisions is that there were three organizing camps near Lake Toya and I don't know who organized each one. The G8 is a big-tent affair and the groups who show up to the protests are diverse (Socialist parties, NGOs, Ainu Rights groups and Esperantists, and the anarchists were all present), and understandably we'd want to distance ourselves from some of them, but within our own anarchist contingent it seemed that we had a split that resulted in some people leaving for another camp. These things happen, I know, but the truly regrettable aspect of the situations was that there was not enough straightforward communication to the non-Japanese speakers and thus we felt torn between two sides of an issue we didn't have any way of resolving. Not only our sleeping situations, but also our plans were set askew. Hopefully oppressive institutions like the G8 will be obliterated by the time we confront them again, but until that time, we'll need to improve our methods of internal decision-making and organization. Next time we should sleep together!



## "In the Shadow of G8" continued...

### *Revolt*

Kamagasaki is a traditionally day laborer neighborhood that has experienced over thirty riots since the early 1960s. The last riot in Kamagasaki was sparked in 1990 by police brutality and the exposure of connections between the police and Yakuza gangs.

The causes this time were not much different. A man was arrested in a shopping arcade near Kamagasaki and taken to the Nishinari police station where he was punched repeatedly in the face by four detectives one after another. Then he was kicked and hung upside down by rope to be beaten some more.

He was released the next day and went to show his friends the wounds from the beatings and the rope. This brought over 200 workers to surround the police station and demand that the police chief come out and apologize. Later people also started demanding that the four detectives be fired. Met with steel shields and a barricaded police station, the crowd began to riot, throwing stones and bottles into the police station. Scraps with the riot police resulted in some of their shields and equipment being temporarily seized. The riot stopped around midnight with the riot police being backed into the police station. The next day they brought over 35 police buses and riot vehicles into the Naniwa police station with the intention of using these against the rioters.

During the riot, the police surveyed rioters from the top of the police station, from plainclothes positions and from a helicopter. Riot police with steel shields were deployed all around the neighborhood in strategic places to charge in when the action kicked off. The workers organizations which by the second day were maintaining the protest had chosen a good time to do so because the police department proved unwilling to unleash the direct, brutal charges seen in the 1990 riot due to the international spotlight focused on them. On Saturday a police infiltrator was found in the crowd, pushed up against a fence and smashed in the head with a metal bar.

The riot has lasted since the 13th and every night there is a resumption of hostility between the day laborers and the cops. Workers so far refuse anything less than the fulfillment of their demands in light of the police brutality incident. Despite the call from more 'moderate' NGOs to 'stop the violence' there has been no let-up in hostility towards the police, although the real level of violent confrontation is not as strong as the weekend of the 13th-15th. The riot has been characterized by the participation of young people as well as the older day laborers in confrontation with the police. As the guarantors of everyday exploitation under capitalism who have to assertively maintain the constant dispossession of the urban working class, the police have many enemies. This they are finding out every night.

Over the past couple of days there have been points where more than 500 people have gathered and rioted around the neighborhood. Police have responded mainly by defending the Nishinari police station, their home base, while getting

back up from the local Naniwa police station, which has a riot countermeasure practicing lot, and holds tens of anti-riot vehicles. Despite this mighty arsenal, the police were perhaps surprised when they deployed their tear gas cannon on the first day only to be met with cries of joy and laughter. The use of force no longer has any spell of intimidation, it is simply expected.

Still, the combined brutality of the police and their riot vehicles has netted over 40 arrests (including many young people), many injuries and even blinded one worker with a direct shot of tear gas water to his right eye.

The struggle here is inevitably limited by the particular situations of day laborers, who are dispatched to their job sites and have no direct access to the means of production that standard wage workers would. This prevents them from for instance calling political strikes against police brutality, and hitting powerful interests in the city where they really hurt. As workers deprived of these means to struggle, the day laborers will always have the riot as a method not only of collective defense but for also forcing concessions from the city in the form of expanding welfare access, creating jobs, backing off of eviction campaigns etc. While these are more or less important gains strictly in terms of survival, it is important to explore the possibilities of spreading the antagonism of the Kamagasaki workers to the larger population of exploited people in order to imagine doing away with this power structure once and for all.

It is unclear exactly where the situation is headed, but we can know for sure that the real repression in Kamagasaki will arrive after the summits have ended and the focus is off of the Japanese government. Then we will see the raids, the arrests and the scapegoating of particular individuals for the righteous outburst of class violence that these riots are. Instead of quietly accepting their fates as people to be trampled upon, the participants have directly attacked the wardens of wage labor who guarantee the violence of everyday slum life.

Overall, the ongoing repression against those involved in organizing against the G8 summit as well as Kamagasaki should not convince anyone that the ruling class here is once again afraid of the working class. In repressing certain left groups organizing against the economic summits, the Japanese government is more interested in preventing a movement from emerging that starts to question capital at the macro level, than actually attacking an existing one. On the other hand in Kamagasaki, the state tries to deny the possibility of antagonism in a major metropole and the visibility of this revolt, for fear of it spreading. This is why most news reports have blacked out the ongoing riots in Kamagasaki. The concreteness and universality of the Kamagasaki revolt truly threatens to expand beyond the borders of police violence. Visitors to Kamagasaki from near and far have over the past five days participated and found their own struggle in riots fought by total strangers. The ruling class fears and knows that it cannot control this horizontal sympathy and the real practice of revolt that accompanies it.

money, I gave it to my family.

H: What work were you doing?

T: Manual stuff, I worked on a dam then roads and bridges. It was hard but you earned a fair wage. Then I wanted to spread my wings a little. Head for the coast. I got on a ship in Canton in 1985. The town was chaotic ring-roads, interchanges, fly-overs. That was how they hoped to deal with the traffic problems. In fact they totally screwed up what had been a pretty town — particularly the centre. The area around Pearl River which had been a pleasant place to walk was turned into a motorway nightmare. Traffic was disrupted for months to allow for the construction of these monsters and it didn't help a jolt. At times all those new routes are saturated, there is constant noise and pollution levels are amongst the highest in the world. Finally, today they have come up with a solution: the underground. The outcome: more years of building and congestion without mentioning all those roads built in the last ten years which will have to be destroyed to make way for the new project. The Cantonese were incensed by this mess, this waste of money. I heard the same thing happened in Hong Kong. For years there were roads all over the place before they decided to build an underground.

H: It's as though there is only one version of capitalist development with the same mistakes repeated over and over again never learning from the past. The Chinese ruling class despite its idiosyncrasies remains fascinated by the west. It says to itself, 'If the west do it it is fine, good. It's modern. Let's do likewise'. It refuses to see the problems it has caused in the west. In fact it is the flunky of western capitalism. But let's get back to where you were...

T: Yes. I let myself follow it all, I got to Canton when the building industry was booming. And the least you could say is there was loads of work. You moved from one site to another and met up with other folk from back home. Someone would know a site manager who would pull a string and get you a job. We worked long hours... The money, higher than in the inland towns, wasn't great but it was worth the effort.

H: How do you mean?

T: People have different motives. I have mine even if they are quite common. Let's say that to start with I carried on looking at the town through a peasant's eyes. My links were still to country. I made my way, took care of my money and was willing to work extra hours. I was able to put some to one side. One day in the not too distant future I would head for home with money in my pocket. I'd get a tractor, a 4x4, build, get married, settle down, I don't know. Everything was still vague but I would do better than my dad, wouldn't be taken for a ride, would have my own business... get by. And then there's the effect that city has on you. When you have never seen it before it grabs you by the scruff of the neck — all the people, the cars, loads of products. It's like being able to shake hands with all the people you've ever seen on the TV but who were meaningless until you met them in the flesh. After years spent watching the mirage you feel you are stepping behind the screen for the first time.

H: How long did all this last?

T: Two years at the most. Round about 1986/87 things started to get a little tougher. I don't know how it all started. Some put it down to folk like me. Too many coming in to saturate the job

market. The employers used it as an excuse to be more arrogant, cut wages, extend hours. Discipline on the sites was toughened up. Folk were no longer allowed into town after work, no doubt, because we looked a mess. It might upset the tourists. It has to be said that preferring to save a little we didn't spend much money on clothes. To be sure we were still peasants — a little wild. Townies started to give us a dirty look. Some lads who couldn't find work started to play around. On the sites there were more and more fights. The police were called in for any little thing and they weren't putting the gloves on. Then there was the first riot. That was the day I started seeing things in a different light. Since we were so far from home and the girls we knew there and since we only went back about once a year the site manager started bringing prostitutes in. At the time we were shackled up in army tents on the construction sites. The girl would come into our tent and we would climb on top of her in turn. I didn't like it much but did like my mates. They were always poor girls from the country — like us. Little girls who had been promised work and who ended up doing this in order to build the bank balance of some greedy bastard — a party big-wig by day and pimp by night or vice-versa... and then one day who comes into the tent? A girl who was a little older than the rest, already worn out. The lads started to laugh 'what's this old bag doing here?' Well the girl hit back which was when I recognised her. The site manager was about to give her a few slaps when I intervened. There was a fight. The site manager ended up on the floor. I was in the shit. But I couldn't have held myself back. She was a girl from back home. The next farm, I'd seen her around. I might have married her if I'd had the money. She was in the same boat as me. There she was ten years later. She thanked me for helping her, then left... I never saw her again. The boss wanted to dock a month's salary. He managed to sort things out with the pimp and still got his commission. Well from then on things were never the same. Having seen the girl I had seen myself: a beast of burden that is used and then thrown away when no longer needed. I became wary, introspective. I hardened up a bit which is perhaps why I am still here today.

H: How did you get back home?

T: That was what I wanted to do, I'd had my fill of that lifestyle. Never mind fortune. Better go home. I missed my family, the hills the woods, the very land. People in town don't understand how we love the land. And if you are going to die you might as well do it at home. But fate had other plans. After a stay back home it was the town I began to miss. I had changed even if I hadn't realised it at the time.

H: Still Canton?

T: Yes. Well nearly. Tchou-hai, the Special Economic Zone next to Macao. Along with Shenzhen the Special Economic Zone which borders Hong Kong Kong. It was without doubt one of the biggest of the Chinese development areas. There were cranes everywhere, rivers of concrete and migrants coming from all over China. There was talk of 50m people who had left the country and were floating from town to town looking for work. Today I imagine the figure is three or four times that. Again I managed to find the team of pals from back home, those I'd been with when the girl incident happened. Since I'd dealt with the site manager in good style I was very welcome. I was taken on board and made second in command. I earned

more, always hoping to get rich... And then, a little later, I met a girl, a migrant like me who had worked for a few years in the electronics factory and who, unable to hack it any longer, got herself a skivvy job in the management. At the time we were always on the move. Hardly was one job done than we re on to the next. It was hard especially in winter.

H: When it was too cold didn't you get any special clothing?  
T: Who are you kidding? The rule was that it had to go lower than minus ten. You only get that up North. But we did OK. We kept our shoulder to it and it was went on for years until 1989/90. From that date onwards conditions changed once again. First off we were asked to do more hours. We were knackered, there were accidents all the time. You wondered if they weren't doing it on purpose to finish with it all.

H: Were the employers Chinese enterprises?  
T: Well, officially yes. But we only met with the middle-man. Above them were big financial interests foreign sometimes but above all Hong Kong and Macao. And I think that was the start of it all...

H: The start of what?  
T: Wait a moment. What I want to say is that the pressures on workers are becoming harder and harder. First the hours, then withholding of salaries for anything at all: housing, training, discipline. The bosses were more and more neryy. It was as though they too were under a lot of pressure. And this pressure was coming as a result of pressure to make money, profit for silent partners, that is to say those right at the top, the Chinese capitalists of Hong Kong and Macao. We approached the old unions who were still operating in the state factories but with no joy. We later learnt that there were secret arrangements between the foreign investors and the authorities not to allow unions in those companies with mixed capital backing in order to keep salaries as low as possible. In actual fact we were a Chinese company but were indirectly linked to the budget of mixed companies... so no union.

That was when we decided to organise ourselves clandestinely in order to put some pressure on the boss even though it was still impossible to act openly until we had enough support for some collective action. However, some resistance slogans started to spread and in this way we succeeded without a word being spoken to slow things down a little. There was also a lot of pilfering. We were stealing material to sell on the black-market to smaller folk. It helped out at the end of the month.

In a nutshell we started to organize ourselves. It wasn't a union but simply the solidarity that was generated that allowed us to feel our strength. The boss was aware that things were not as they had been and that he was having problems getting his way all the time. There was nothing he could put his finger on but he must have sensed the silent resistance we were opposing him with. Changing team leaders, changing teams, trying to play one group off against another, nothing worked. So he decided to turn to straightforward usury. One evening, pay day, we noted that salaries had been cut by 20%. When we pointed this out to the wages clerk he said that the money hadn't been send to the bank and that we would receive it with a weeks delay. In fact we waited a fortnight. Next we were expected to do an extra

hour a day which would be paid when the project was finished. Then, after a series of thefts, the guard at the site was reinforced with a group of night-time watchmen who began to search us morning and night. Hooligans put there especially to intimidate us. The level of tension on the site rose. It only needed a spark to set the whole thing up in flames. Eventually it came. A simple dispute with one of the watchmen, a youngster was knocked about, his mates came to help, the watchmen took fright, one of them gout out a gun and one of our chaps was injured. Immediately a strike was called with demands for discussions with the management. The company ended up sending a delegate who we sen back with our grievances: stopping hassles, withdrawing the watchmen, honouring back-pay, pay for extra hours and so on. To start with the boss seemed to give way but in fact he was buying time in order to get support from the authorities. A representative from the manpower agency even came to tell us that our demands were legitimate but that our work stoppage was illegal and demanded we went back to work before negotiations could take place.

When we refused the stakes were upped. The police, who were sent to intimidate us, were jostled and quickly lost their self-control. Sensing they were losing control of the situation and that it was threatening to snowball the authorities immediately called in more police who wheeled in the heavy guns. Although there were only about a hundred of us they surrounded us with some two or three hundred officers with armoured cars who opened fire on us at first sight. Then they rifle-butted the building site clean. Six were killed and several dozen injured. All those who didn't manage to escape were arrested and put in prison for several months... that is the cost of taking strike action in China.

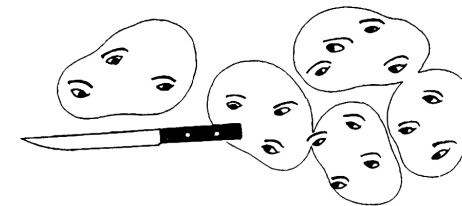


from its meager beginnings up to 2006. The book is replete with colorful imagery and photographs; the vast majority of the content is devoted to Chinese translations of Marcos' poetry (no doubt a daunting task).

For all the similarities between China and Mexico, one cannot help but wonder why the Zapatistas have received such minimal attention from Chinese media and civil society. No doubt, this has much to do with the relentless controls to which such groups have traditionally been subjected and the failure to permit even the semblance of an independent press and publishing network in China. Still, as Chinese conglomerates begin to replace the United States as the dominant economic presence in the American South, and as peasants become increasingly disillusioned with the failings of bureaucratic capitalism at home, China may do well to look toward Latin America and the fight against neo-liberalism that has been raging there at an incessant pace since the Zapatista uprising of 1994.

#### Endnotes

1. Chavista style social democracy, often dubbed the "Bolivarian revolution", represents a third vision. However, the social democrats maintain a rather ambiguous position toward APEC.
2. John Ross, *Zapatistas! Chronicles of Resistance, 2000-2006*. (Nation Books, 2006) 191-96.
3. Evelyn Hu-Dehart, "Latin America in Asia-Pacific Perspective". In Dirlik, *What is in a Rim? Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea*. Second Edition. (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998) 252.
4. *Ibid.*, 262.
5. *Ibid.*, 253.
6. Orin Starn, *Maoism in the Andes: The Communist Party of Peru-Shining Path and the Refusal of History*. in Dirlik, Healy, & Knight, *Critical Perspectives on Mao Zedong's Thought*. (NJ: Humanities Press International, 1997) 273.
7. *Ibid.*, 277.
8. Hu-Dehart, 276.
9. *La Jornada*. February 7, 1994. Quoted and translated in *Autonomeia* (1994), 157.



## IN THE SHADOW OF G8: Repression and Revolt in Japan

### Reprinted from 325 #6

Over the past week and a half, (15 June 2008) an unprecedented political crackdown has been enacted in advance of a series of economic summits around the country. Despite this, the brave workers of Kamagasaki stood up against the stiff security environment in riots against the brutal beating of a day laborer over the past five days. The twin situations of repression and revolt deserve to be examined in more detail.

#### Repression

In the run-up to the series of G8 summits, over 40 people were arrested in preemptive sweeps of broad left and anarchist groups.

On May 29th, 38 people were arrested at Hosei University in Tokyo at a political assembly against the G8. These large-scale arrests were carried out by over 100 public security agents after the students staged a march across campus protesting the summits. Some of the arrestees are still jailed, and among them are apparently some leadership of the Chuukaku-ha Leninist organization, one of the largest organizations of its kind in Japan. On June 4th, Tabi Rounin, an active anarchist from the Kansai region, was arrested on accusation of having his address registered at a location other than where he was living. When arrested, his computer, cell phone, political flyers and more was taken from him; these items were used when detectives interrogated him, asking him about his relationship to internationals possibly arriving for the G8, as well as his activity around Osaka. He would be the first obviously political arrest masked as routine police work.

On June 12th, an activist from the Kamagasaki Patrol (an Osaka squatter and anti-capitalist group), was arrested for allegedly defrauding lifestyle assistance payments. This person has been constantly followed by plainclothes police and even helicopters during demonstrations. Clearly, his arrest was planned with the idea of keeping him away from the major anti-summit mobilizations and he will be held without bail for the maximum of 23 days until the summit is over. The office of an anarchist organization called the Free Worker was raided in order to look for 'evidence' in this comrade's case.

The same day the Rakunan union in Kyoto was raided, with police officers searching their offices and arresting two of their members on suspicion of fraudulent unemployment insurance receipt. One of these two arrested are accused of funneling money received from unemployment insurance to the Asian Wide Campaign, which was organizing against the economic summits. In the meantime, Osaka city mobilized thousands of police with the pretext of preventing terrorism against the summit, setting up inspection points and monitoring all around the city. But the strengthened state high on its own power inevitably deployed it in violence, and turned the day laborers of southern Osaka against it in riot.



**"From China, a Look at Zapatismo" continued...**

worked exhausting hours as cane-cutters under the blistering sun of the sugar plantations. While in Peru, coolie labor was used to bolster the export trade in sugar and guano. In fact, it was in Peru that Chinese communities began to settle the underdeveloped Amazonian region, where they established small "colonies" that were instrumental in economic and cultural exchange between the highlands and the jungle.<sup>4</sup> "From 1847 to 1874, as many as 250,000 Chinese coolies under eight-year contracts were sent to Peru and Cuba, with 80 percent or more destined for the plantations."<sup>5</sup>

In Peru, 500 kilometers inland from Lima, lie the rugged mountains of Ayacucho. A rich mining region, Ayacucho once helped supply the Chinese demand for silver, which from 1500 to 1800 played a major role in sustaining the Spanish empire. However, in the early 1980s the Ayacucho mountains were turned into the site of a brutal guerrilla war, launched by the Maoist-inspired Communist Party of Peru, *Sendaro Luminoso*, or Shining Path. Organized in 1970 by a philosophy professor, Abimael Guzman, the Shining Path quickly became exponents of some of the more violent features of Maoist class struggle. In the face of government repression and torture, they proved "just as willing to turn to the tactics of terror; the stony absolutism and deliberate use of mass violence that was the core of Guzman's revolutionary plan."<sup>6</sup> Though Maoism had always enjoyed prominence in Latin America, particularly after the success of the Cuban revolution, the Peruvian guerrillas seemed much more inclined to flaunt the Maoist roots of their rebellion. "The style of the Shining Path mimicked the Cultural Revolution in a relentless politicization of personal behavior and public life. Guzman's followers even borrowed conventions, like the wall-poster, dunce cap, street theatre, and singing of paeans to Mao (which they memorized in Mandarin)."<sup>7</sup> Things came to an abrupt halt when in September 1992—just as the Zapatistas were voting to move ahead with its own armed struggle—Guzman and half of the Central Committee were captured and imprisoned by the Peruvian President (of Japanese descent) Alberto Fujimori. The Shining Path are still engaged in guerrilla warfare and have managed to traipse their way into the twenty-first century sporting meager numbers and a bankrupt reputation.

So how were the Zapatistas able to obtain such popular support, precisely when guerrilla movements such as the Shining Path, El Salvador's FMLN, and Nicaragua's Sandinistas began to seem increasingly anachronistic following the break-up of the Soviet Union? One explanation can be found in the Zapatista response to the implementation of NAFTA and the very nature of their uprising.

In preparation for the signing of NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) in 1994, Mexican President Salinas de Gortari brokered a deal to amend Article 27 of the Mexican constitution to allow for the sale of communally held *ejido* lands. Article 27 was one of the more redeemable clauses to be written into the constitution of 1917, and had been fought for with tooth and claw during the Mexican revolution. The anticipated privatization process that was to accompany its amendment was aimed at inducing foreign companies to

invest in Mexico's "backwater" and poorer regions. But all this had an Asian dimension as well. Beginning in the late 1970s, Asian capital, particularly from Japan, had been flowing into Mexico to support export oriented manufacturing plants. For decades Asian companies had been producing competitive electronics and automobiles bound for American markets by exploiting cheap Mexican labor.

*"Salinas' secret plan was to diversify Mexico's economic relations with the world while lessening her dependence on U.S. capital and markets. To do so, Mexico need[ed] to attract more capital from Asia and even Europe. For this to succeed, Mexico [needed to] be seen as an equal partner with Canada and the United States in the North American regional economy."*<sup>8</sup>

Faced with a *fait accompli*, in January 1, 1994, the EZLN sounded its declaration of war against the Mexican government. Although there was much talk of marching to the capital, it was quite apparent from the outset that the Zapatistas were concerned only with making a statement and calling on the rest of Mexico (and the world) to support them in their struggle. The objective being, perhaps, to exert enough international pressure on Salinas to affect a reworking of Article 27 and NAFTA, which now threatened to flood the Mexican economy with cheap U.S. corn. In light of the almost immediate popularity of the Zapatistas and the general concern over the threat of civil war now looming in the horizon, the strategy of refusing to take state power must be seen as pivotal in the EZLN's ability to mobilize civil society. This approach was later verified by Marcos when he commented, "We didn't go to war on January 1 to kill or be killed. We went to war to make ourselves heard."<sup>9</sup>

But after fifteen years of struggle, how well have the Zapatistas been heard in Asia? Although support for the Zapatista movement in South Korea and Japan has made respectable inroads, China remains largely unaware and uninterested in the Zapatistas. This should strike one as odd considering China and Mexico's growing economic ties and the remarkable historical similarities between the two countries. Both Chinese and Mexican society are overwhelmingly agrarian based; both are enormous suppliers of cheap labor to foreign producers; both had been economically and politically devastated by Western imperialism; and, in part, due because of the prior reason, both had experienced revolutions at the beginning of the twentieth century. Thus, it would seem quite natural for Chinese farmers (and other social groups) to pay close attention to the Zapatistas. Yet despite China's persistence in her role as exporter, first of coolie labor, then of ideology, and more recently of investment capital, historically the only Latin American imports to traverse the Pacific have been raw materials such as silver.

In 2006, there appeared the first (and only) full-length book to be published in Mainland China on Zapatismo. Entitled *Mengmian Qishi (Masked Knight)*, the book contains a brief analysis of the Zapatista movement and the role of its main protagonist, Subcomandante Marcos. The editors, Dai Jinhua and Liu Jianzhi, though quite intent on the further glorification of the "Marcos cult", have nevertheless presented a fair and well informed picture of the movement



**"Postal Box Posties" by Jong Palrez**

## News of Riots and Protests in China

Two years ago Yale Law School sponsored a debate on Openingargument.org on whether or not, due to any combination of factors, China would experience a civil war in the foreseeable future. What the posers of the question failed to understand is that China is already in a state of civil war fought along class and racial lines! If the preceding articles failed to highlight the mounting tensions in China, hopefully the following list of riots and other high-stakes protests from the past two months will further emphasize that point.

Most incidents of unrest in Chinese never make the news, but the editors of Black Rim have been trying our damndest to uncover and publicize any reports that we do find. Ideally this would help our readers around the world to realize that there are methods of resistance available, and that there are indeed people who are fed up with living in social prison. If you witness or otherwise come across any incidents of unrest in China (or anywhere), please forward (un-incriminating) details of that news to the editors.

Dec 2008

2,000 workers and farmers held wage protests for twelve days outside of Shanghai

Dec 19 2008

The Jianrong Suitcase Factory in Dongguan, Guangdong closes without warning, and give its workers only 60% of promised October-December wages. Riots ensue

Bomb threats are called in at a Shanghai Ikea and shopping district

Dec 25 2008

A bomb explodes at a foreign-owned ex-pat bar in Kunming

Jan 15 2009

Striking workers and security guards clash in a textile factory in Dongguan

Jan 16 2009

100 police officers stage a rally in Shenzhen after being sacked from their jobs

Jan 25 2009

The office of the Public Security Bureau (police) in Shanghai is bombed amid fireworks and other celebrations of the Chinese New Year

Feb 3 2009

In the southern province of Guangdong, three jobless men detonated a bomb in a business travellers' hotel in the commercial city of Foshan to claim wages from the management

Feb 6 2009

Police in China's capital arrested at least eight people trying to air grievances in front a government building Friday, days ahead of a key review of the country's human rights record by the United Nations

Feb 17 2009

Protests erupt among Tibetans in Southwest China

Feb 20 2009

In Sichuan, a Tibetan monk lights himself on fire. He is shot to death by police before he is fully immolated

Feb 21 2009

A village chief was beaten after five villagers stated that they did not receive earthquake relief subsidies

Feb 23 2009

Three ethnic Uighur men in Beijing light themselves on fire in Wangfujing, the city's main commercial avenue



## From China, a Look at Zapatismo

by J. Negro

In late November of last year, Chinese President Hu Jintao flew to Lima, Peru to address the 16th APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) Economic Leaders Meeting on issues of regional economic integration. In the days prior to the meeting, the two countries signed a free trade agreement which is expected to catapult China into the position of Peru's leading trading partner. Similar agreements had been signed with Chile in 2005, Costa Rica, and Cuba, where China has already become the top importer of Cuban goods and her second largest trading partner. In addition, Venezuela, Mexico, and Brazil have added their names to the list of major exporters, mostly in raw materials, to the Chinese coast. China trade with Latin America has been expanding at an astonishing pace since the 1990s. In the first three quarters of 2008 trade between the two regions hit a record high of \$111.5 billion.

About a month after the APEC summit in Peru, on January 1, 2009, EZLN supporters, campesin@s, and internationals of all stripes came together in the community of Oventic to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Zapatista uprising. The gathering was attended by over 2,000 people. It transpired amidst the colorful backdrop of the Zapatista sponsored Global Festival of Dignified Rage, which had begun in Chiapas the week prior. As models of development, APEC and the Zapatista movement represent two fundamentally different visions for the future of Latin America and the Pacific region.<sup>1</sup>

The Zapatista cause seems to have reached the height of its popularity in 2001 with a march on Mexico City that drew over a hundred thousand spectators. The march, known as the March of the People the Color of the Earth, spanned thirty-seven days and 6,000 kilometers. Beginning in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, twenty-three masked members of the EZLN *comandancia* made their way through Oaxaca, Puebla, Veracruz, Queretaro, Morelos, and six other states before ascending onto the Federal District. The route chosen was the same taken by Emiliano Zapata when his armies stormed Mexico City in 1914. The Color of the Earth March was intended as a petition to the Mexican Congress, who was meeting to make a final decision on the implementation of the 1996 San Andres Accords. Signed by the Zapatistas but never ratified, the San Andres Accords were the outcome of a year of negotiations which promised a limited degree of autonomy for Mexico's 57 indigenous groups. The accords had been left by the way-side for five long and embattled years. With it agreed upon to let the Zapatistas address the Congress, Comandanta Esther took the floor on March, 28, 2001. Cloaked in a white *serape* and black ski-mask, Esther delivered her now famous speech on the three-fold oppression of indigenous women. The poignancy of her words were met with cheers of '*Viva Mexico!*' and a standing ovation. However, the crucial points of the San Andres Accords were never approved and the Congress opted for a watered-down version instead.



Since the events of 2001, the Zapatistas have pursued autonomy on their own terms, in blatant defiance of the government. "Why do we need to be pardoned? What are we to be pardoned for?" was Subcomandante Marcos' response to President Salinas in the first weeks following the uprising of 1994. Nine years later, after repeated betrayals, the Zapatistas were essentially following the same line of reasoning. In August 2003, Zapatista communities were reorganized into five Autonomous Rebel Municipal Zones, administering a total of 2,222 villages. Each zone is administered through a 'good government board', which is situated within a *Caracol*. The *Caracoles* are essentially municipalities that function as cultural and political centers for surrounding villages. They are usually fitted with a school, library, hospital, church, and general store, amongst other things. *Caracol* means 'snail shell' in Spanish, referring to the traditional Meso-American practice of blowing a conch shell to call community meetings. The 'good government boards' are staffed by delegates who, ideally, are subject to immediate recall and rotate on a monthly basis. Embodied in the principle *mandar obedeciendo*, or 'lead by obeying', Zapatista communities have developed highly innovative forms of direct democracy and decentralized administration. Such a model of revolution from below has been upheld as a prime example of large-scale anarchist organization in practice. It is in this way that they have maintained their autonomy from the Mexican government.<sup>2</sup>

But the Zapatistas hadn't always danced so fervently with anarchism. The EZLN (Zapatista National Liberation Army) was originally founded as an orthodox Marxist guerrilla group aspiring to take state power through agrarian-based revolution. Such aspirations ultimately traced their lineage to the Cuban and Chinese revolutions; where Maoism had demonstrated to the world the revolutionary potential of the peasantry over the proletariat. And so in 1984, the EZLN began to recruit and train indigenous Mayans in the remote wilderness of the Lacandon jungle for an eventual insurrection. Although, later, the Zapatistas would become adept at invoking the imagery of Emiliano Zapata and the populist and anarchist heritage of the Mexican revolution, we are nevertheless reminded of the paths not taken when we catch a glimpse Marcos' stitched and tattered, beige Mao cap.

Maoism notwithstanding, an Asian presence in Latin America has had a long and largely unacknowledged history. As early as 1635, a community of Chinese barbers had established itself in