

alternative economics

Piqueteros in some areas have rendered local officials powerless and created quasi-liberated zones. In the northwestern town of General Mosconi, 90% of its 15,000 people worked for YPF, the state-run oil company. There was 60% unemployment by 1993. They've been in permanent rebellion there ever since.

They have now formulated a "parallel economy" of more than 300 projects, including a bakery, organic gardens, water purifying plants, first-aid clinics, brick fabrication, and recycling programs where they trade recycled material for much needed items, like tools. Many of the projects are running successfully already.

The town is ruled de facto by the local unemployed committee, as the local municipal officials have been pushed aside. The power of mobilization neutralizes or is superior to that of local officials and is capable of challenging the state and federal regimes on the particular issues being raised. The emergence of these alternative economic programs in General Mosconi sustains popular support between struggles and offers a vision of the capabilities of the unemployed to take command of their lives, neighborhoods, and livelihoods. - excerpted from an article by James Petras

worker takeovers

For two weeks straight last fall, the Brukman clothing company paid employees about \$5 for a week's work, adding to the already poor labor relations at the factory. By Dec. 18 a faction of outraged workers had had enough. When they went to confront the owners in their first-floor offices, they and other office workers had vanished, protesting workers say. They believe the bosses disappeared to avoid a tussle over wages.

"We came back the next day, and kept up production, and since then, we have been doing that, maintaining the factory so that we maintain our jobs. Of everything we sell, we divide the profits equally among all the people who work here. We have enough material to work with, and from the money that comes from what we sell, we make sure we can keep working", said one worker.

In a a communiqué from the workers at Brukman released shortly after the takeover, they make their stance very clear. "...Faced with the [Argentine] crisis, we saw no alternative but to take the factory over and start running it under our own control. We are also starting a strike fund, to ensure that the struggle will not be broken by hunger. Such actions by the workers themselves give us the strength to defend our gains, which is to maintain employment to feed our families, despite the betrayal of our own union leadership. Further, we believe that this taking control by the workers should be the action of all workers in every company and industry that threatens sackings, closures or the suspension of comrades." -from an interview by Ana Nogueira