

“Wars are not something accidental, nor are they due to bad characters”

Interview with Dario Azzellini, author of *The Business of War* and the new documentary film, *Comuna Under Construction*

What is it about Venezuela that is so interesting?

Since 2003 I have practically lived in Venezuela. What motivates me is that I am interested in the social transformation process happening here. It's a different type of revolution, a new left that draws from all the experiences of the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s.

Tell us about your book *The Business of War*.

This book was first released in 2003 in German. Now it comes to Venezuela. It deals with the whole process of privatization of war, officially through private military companies and unofficially through paramilitarism.

War is a business?

War is one of the world's largest businesses. Previously it was beneficial to make war and to

win war. Today it is a business to maintain it. For example, the level of exploitation in Colombia, the theft of land from farmers, low wages of the workers, all that is possible because they maintain a war. Without a war, these problems would not exist. Similar things happen in Africa where the countries of the North nurture wars and maintain them for years and decades while at the same time resources are being extracted and sold at bargain rates.

What is included about Venezuela in the book?

I write about the paramilitary infiltration in Venezuela. The key is to understand how paramilitarism operates in Venezuela through the increase of violence that plagues the streets. These acts of violence are not the product of social deterioration; they are artificially fomented by paramilitaries to destabilize the government.

The typical tactic is to distribute weapons and drugs in neighborhoods and link people with them, propel them to kill the grassroots militants. It's something that peo-



German author Dario Azzellini has been following events in Venezuela for years

ple fail to connect or analyze, but for someone who knows how the issue of polarization of war functions, it is obviously linked to the phenomena of paramilitarism.

What do you think about the media war?

During the last fifteen years media war has become one of the most important fields of war. Today in Venezuela I believe we are seeing a very big media operation of lies - an absurd distortion about everything that happens here, at a national and international level.

What do you hope are the conclusions of those who read the book?

It is necessary to understand that wars are not something accidental, nor are they due to very bad characters. It is a question of geo-strategic economic interests. The classic image that we have no longer has anything to do with war. Almost nowhere are there two armies that confront each other. Rather there are private military companies, mercenaries. We must understand how the dirty war of the paramilitaries functions, especially in Venezuela.

Dario Azzellini's new documentary film, *Comuna Under Construction*, explores the difficulties and advances in the creation of a new social-economic model in Venezuela.

ABOUT THE FILM:

In more than 30,000 Community Councils in Venezuela, inhabitants decide on their concerns collectively via assemblies. Several Community Councils can form a Comuna and then a communal town. Councils are built from the grassroots level together with public institutions and eventually should decrease the existing State power through self-government.

The film *Comuna Under Construction* follows these developments in the hillside shantytowns of Caracas and the vast plains of Barinas in the countryside. Progress, as well as setbacks, show the difficult process of people actually taking the power of decision in their own hands and trying to build a nation.

T/ Juan Diego Marichal
P/ Luis Franco

Caracas

More than 4 billion bolivars transferred to Community Councils in 2009

The goal for 2010 is to strengthen inclusion and expand the participation of organized communities in the revolution

A total of 4.43 billion bolivars (\$1 billion USD) were transferred to Community Councils, social movements and diverse grassroots organizations in 2009 for the execution and development of 13,536 projects elaborated by organized communities across the nation.

Dayana Zambrano, spokesperson for the Todo por el Continente (Everything for our Continent) Community Council from the neighborhood of Catia, in Caracas, indicated that "last year was glorious for the People's Power, we achieved the approval of resources from various public institutions for the construction of stairs and sidewalks, a basketball court and two support structures that provided greater stability to

more than 50 homes in the neighborhood. Also, the electrical and water systems were improved in almost the entire community".

"The Government is really giving us the principal role that it promised, we are committed with helping our communities and we will continue the fight to make sure that projects we propose are approved and executed for and by the people", she assured.

Neighbors of the Las Torres community in Antimano, a low income area of Caracas, are working on the execution of projects that include improving roads and housing. Henry Rodriguez, spokesperson for the community bank "Las Torres", exclaimed, "the only government that has been interested in our communities is this one. Through the Ministry for Communes and Social Protection we are implementing a series of projects and we man-



age and administer the resources directly, which guarantees proper handling of our available funds and assures they will be destined to improve the conditions of our people".

Ninety-six Community Councils from the State of Portuguesa

received 12 million bolivars during the last trimester of 2009 in order to build housing, streets, sidewalks, improve electrical and water systems and fund social-productive projects to create jobs for the communities in the region's most needy municipalities.

Eduardo Jilguera, spokesperson for the indigenous Community Council "Barrio El Saman", received 30,000 bolivars for the production of traditional crafts. Expressing his gratitude for the inclusion of indigenous communities in State policies, he exclaimed, "We are happy that we have been taken into account, to participate and have the power to change our realities".

The goal for 2010 is to strengthen the inclusion of communities and grassroots movements and to expand the participation of community members in the revolutionary process taking place in the country. President Hugo Chavez has called on the Community Councils to advance these goals and to work together for their development and success.

T/ Maria Alejandra Brito
Caracas