

BENITO

A friend of ours who works in this municipality had told us that at a guerrilla assembly a vote was taken to decide if our association should be considered a military objective, and they had called a meeting to speak to us. A friend and I went to the meeting place, which was a school. I thought that from there we would go somewhere else, but no. The commander came there, with her face covered by a balaclava. She explained that we were their enemies because by promoting participation, we were deceiving the people, giving them the illusion that they could win their rights that way. By promoting participation we were the pretty, illusory part of the State which they were destroying. We were damaging the guerrilla movement, so we were their enemies.

There were three topics to discuss: one, if the leaders we were working with were in danger; two, if the officers with the other friend who was in the municipality were in danger; and three, how things were going with our institution.

The first thing was to prevent the leaders from being at risk. I thought the conversation between the two women was interesting and very pretty, because our friend was in danger. She said: "I have a son and I don't want to die." The guerrilla woman answered, "I am a woman too and I give my life for my ideas." And my friend insisted: "I won't give my life for my ideas. I prefer to live to care for my son."

The conversation continued and the guerrilla woman declared: "We are political enemies." To which I responded: "Let's confront each other, let's always talk publicly. You all should participate too, give your viewpoints. We speak out on the radio, you can do that too, because you have access to the station. Let's keep the political confrontation on a political level, and let's see how things go and how long we can stand it."

We had a program on the town's local radio station, but they frequently used it too; they would play their cassettes. And, in fact, after that, from time to time, they would attack us publicly on the air. That's how we took the confrontation to a political level.

The meeting took place in the cafeteria of the school, while the children were in class. But they were going to come out to eat during their break, and the guerrillas were becoming increasingly agitated, as if they were afraid... I didn't know what to do.

I said, "What's the matter? Are you afraid the children will see you here dressed as a guerrilla?" She said, "No, it's that they know me personally, but they've never seen me with my face covered up. I can't let them see me with my face covered." So I said to her, "I'll turn around and leave. We can stop the interview while the children eat and then we can come back." And that's how it happened. She was able to uncover her face, be with the children in the cafeteria, and when they left she called me back and we continued the conversation.

In the end we established a cordial relationship and we embraced and told each other we hoped to meet in different circumstances some day.

"Your leaders won't have a problem," they explained, and to our friend they said, "We're not going to kill you; so that you may keep on living and caring for your son."

And we kept on working.