



ZAPATISTA

ACTIVIST RESOURCES

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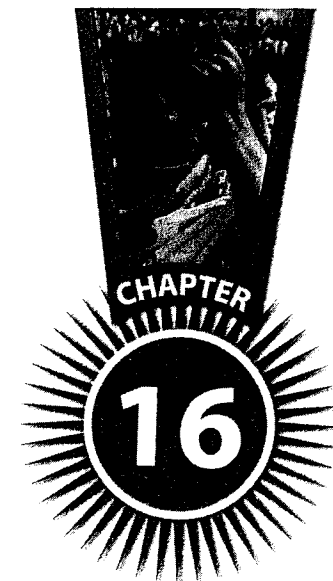
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* Communiques from 1994 to the present are available online, usually with English translation. Check out *Links and Resources* for sites or go to Chiapas.mediosindpendientes.org

David Solnit, ed., *Globalize Liberation:
How to Uproot the System and Build a Better World*,
(San Francisco: City Lights Books 2004)



Zapatismo beyond Chiapas

By Manuel Callahan

Manuel Callahan currently teaches in the Ethnic Studies program at Humboldt State University. He is also a member of Acción Zapatista, a network of activists in Texas and California that support the EZLN while pursuing zapatismo locally.

This essay is a meditation on the political uses of Zapatismo in contexts outside of Chiapas, Mexico, especially the challenges involved in the attempt to put it into action in sites of privilege. The goal is to focus on key elements that constitute a political practice that is ethical, creative, and disciplined, as well as relevant in local and global contexts. Zapatismo may be an "intuition," as Subcomandante Marcos has suggested, but it also offers us a theoretical framework for political analysis, especially regarding encounter, dialogue, and difference, while establishing these concepts as explicit political practices and objectives.

The key elements of Zapatismo as a political and cultural practice that will be examined here include a politics of refusal, space, and listening, articulated in the statements *Ya Basta!* (enough); *dignidad y esperanza*

photo top: Mariana Mora

ZAPATISMO
ZAPATISMO



(dignity and hope); *mandar obedeciendo* (to lead by following); *nunca jamás un mundo sin nosotros* (never again a world without us); and *todo para todos y nada para nosotros* (everything for everyone and nothing for ourselves). The Zapatista intervention invites us to be clear about what we actually mean by these concepts, and to collectively arrive at an agreement of what they should look like in practice. We want to avoid approaches that rely on an authoritative, hierarchical apparatus or a uniquely “enlightened” system that directs, commands, or leads. We seek instead to arrive at a political practice that activates, a process that respects the agency, the voice, the creativity, and the engagement of an entire community. It is, as Marcos recently remarked, “an effort at *encuentro*,” an encounter noted for a number of “tendencies” with the goal of “building common points of discussion.” Thus, it is crucial that these tendencies be understood as something more than slogans.

The Zapatista intervention is not only a confrontation with the party-state or with the institutions of global capital and the cadres of intellectuals in their service, but it has generated controversy from within the Left. The Zapatistas’ proposal of a “revolution to make a revolution possible” presents tendencies that stand in contrast with the strategies, organizations, and formations of the Left of past generations. Zapatismo does not seek to impose an ideology, an organization, or a party line, and in this sense, the Zapatistas have made it clear that the old language and methods no longer function. However, they are not proposing new dogmas to replace the worn-out language and ideologies of previous movements. They refuse to do battle within a framework that allows for endless political and academic debate, a process that fosters hierarchy, authoritarianism, and elitism. The Zapatistas do not claim to provide answers but, as they argue, “pose questions.” “It is already known that our specialty is not in solving problems, but in creating them. ‘Creating them?’ No, that is too presumptuous, rather in proposing. Yes, our specialty is proposing problems.”

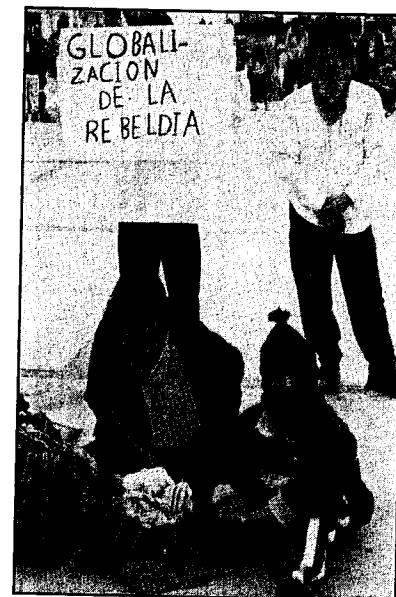
While we have come to know the Zapatistas through their public interventions and direct actions, we are still unfamiliar with their specific internal processes of organization, especially the link between the military and civil formations. On the other hand, Zapatismo is available to us as a political and cultural practice we can discuss, analyze, interpret, and enact within the context of a globally networked mobilization against neoliberalism. For analytical purposes it is important to distinguish between the Zapatistas and Zapatismo. The EZLN (the Zapatista Army for National Liberation) is the army that serves the base communities. Zapatistas are comprised of the EZLN and their supporters. Zapatismo is a political strategy, an ethos, a set of commitments claimed by those who



claim a political identity. Although the role of the EZLN as a catalyst has been critical, even Subcomandante Marcos has admitted, “the EZLN has reached a point where it has been overtaken by Zapatismo.”

A Politics of Refusal

The EZLN has on several occasions, and with remarkable consistency and sensitivity, presented their views to the world in the form of declarations and communiqués. “As they say in these mountains, the Zapatistas have a very powerful and indestructible weapon: the word.” Their word, offered to us in solidarity, brings with it an analysis of neoliberalism and an invitation to join in struggle.



Anniversary of Zapatista uprising, San Cristobal, Chiapas, January 1, 2003.

Hilary Klein

The *Ya Basta!*, or “Enough!,” of January 1, 1994, inaugurated the public phase of the EZLN’s struggle and introduced the world to Zapatismo. Although initially the Zapatistas declared war against the Mexican government and threatened to march on the capital in the hope of serving as a catalyst for a general uprising, they quickly broadened their agenda and shifted their focus to creating and developing the political space necessary for radical democratic practice. *Ya Basta!* does more than declare an opposition to oppressive forces; it also represents a direct action with specific goals and strategies and invokes a long history of struggle. The 500-year legacy of resistance and the more recent history of revolutionary struggle in Mexico coalesced into a prolonged “No!” on January 1. “And so, with singular joy we dedicated ourselves to resisting, to saying ‘no,’ to transforming our poverty into a weapon. The weapon of resistance.”

The Zapatistas’ direct action declared *Ya Basta!* to the neoliberal project: the increased globalization of capital that is to be achieved by opening markets to trade, privatizing natural resources and state-run services, eliminating workers’ rights, reducing the social wage and benefits, and homogenizing communities through consumerism, the commodification of everyday life, and the exaltation of private property and individualism.



The Zapatistas' first declaration was timed to coincide with the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and it outlined a list of grievances and demands that spoke to the structural violence the indigenous peoples of Chiapas have endured for generations. The immediate goals stated in the eleven demands they put forward—including work, land, housing, food, health care, education, independence, liberty, democracy, justice, and peace—articulated the needs and rights being denied to growing portions of Mexico's indigenous population, as well as all peoples made miserable by neoliberal policies throughout the world. NAFTA provided no alternatives, making it "a death sentence for the indigenous people." *Ya Basta!* is a statement of refusal, rebellion, and survival in the face of a future denied. The "No" can be shared, and as Gustavo Esteva has eloquently phrased it, transformed into "many yeses!"

The challenge posed by the word spoken defiantly in resistance is to participate in a new political space (encounter), develop new political relationships or strategies of doing politics (dialogue), and collectively articulate a new political project (autonomy). The Zapatistas' commitment to creating political space and their selfless initiation of dialogue requires a response and participation by all parties. One response was heard in the *Ya Basta!* shouted by the "many-headed street movement" in Seattle and echoed in subsequent rumblings during the series of protests that followed.

A Politics of Space

Prior to Seattle, the Zapatistas hosted an astonished international Left in a series of *encuentros*, or encounters, which took place in the mountains of Chiapas. It has been through these gatherings, convened and hosted by the EZLN, that the Zapatistas have had the most profound impact. "The audacity of the Zapatistas," the Midnight Notes Collective reminds us, "was to open a clearing in the forest heavily patrolled by the Mexican Army and to allow others to come to speak to each other about capitalism and revolution." These gatherings established a crucial bridge between different worlds, and that bridge is manifest in a new "international"—not an international based on rigid party doctrines or the dogmas of competing organizations, but an "International of Hope," a web constituted by numerous autonomies, without a center or hierarchy, within which various coalitions of discontents can express themselves, in order to dismantle the forces and regimes oppressing all of them.

The Zapatistas have not organized beyond their own communities in Chiapas; rather they have animated and inspired countless numbers of



Zapatista communities mobilize to San Cristobal, Chiapas to celebrate anniversary of the uprising, 2003.



Anniversary of Zapatista uprising, San Cristobal, Chiapas. January 1, 2003.



activists and intellectuals who experienced firsthand a rebel community enduring the siege of an arrogant power through dialogue, consensus, and direct action within their communities. The Zapatista model of *encuentro* does not rely on ideology, organizational affiliation, or even a fixed identity. And as the Zapatistas have made their very local struggle available to a national and international civil society, a global movement has arisen to articulate its own response to the processes of globalization, utilizing the strategies and tactics being shared so generously.

The new international is defined by *dignidad y esperanza*, "dignity and hope." "Dignity," the Zapatistas assert, "is that nation without nationality, that rainbow that is also a bridge, that murmur of the heart no matter what blood lives it, that rebel irreverence that mocks borders, customs, and wars." Specifically, the EZLN has, according to Enrique Dussel, presented a model of community "institutionalized through social means conducive to consensus, agreement, and decisionmaking." Dignity cannot be bestowed, rather, it is enacted as one actively participates in a community that acknowledges difference. "We define our goal by the way we choose the means of struggling for it." Dignity as a class concept, explains John Holloway, "is not in the first place a conflict between two groups of people: it is a conflict between creative social practice and its negation, or, in other words, between humanity and its negation, between the transcending of limits (creation) and the imposition of limits (definition)."

A Politics of Listening

Throughout the struggle, the Zapatistas have punctuated their statements, especially those circulated through the communiqués, with calls for democracy, liberty, and justice. These concepts, taken together, may be the most difficult, and the most crucial, to engage. In new political spaces all voices, all proposals must be responded to with respect. New political relationships must not be limited by institutions, organizations, or ideologies that seek to contain moments of resistance or rebellion. The new relationships must speak to the collectively defined obligations of a community in a dialogue based on respect. Political projects and proposals need to emerge organically, not be imposed by an individual or a cabal. The provocation suggested by this principle implies a reliance on our collective talents and abilities for self-governance that transcends systems of representative democracy. The Zapatistas have insisted that the marginalized, forgotten, and faceless are agents of history, and that they cannot be fully included simply by adding them in such a manner that does not alter the political relations that maintains their marginalization by elites. A "radical" or participatory democracy requires a system that seeks and respects the contribution of everyone, each sharing their own word.



Hilary Klein

"Perhaps," Subcomandante Marcos declares, "the new political morality is constructed in a new space that is not the taking or retention of power, but serves as the counterweight and opposition that contains it and obliges it to, for example, 'lead by obeying.'"

The Zapatistas demonstrated that it is possible to organize collective action based on a communitywide dialogue, consensus, and commitment. Given that in any local context there is not simply one single, homogenous community, how do we determine who leads and who obeys? *Mandar obedeciendo*, or "lead by obeying," suggests going beyond a system of hierarchy and rank where elites are conferred the duty and right to direct. The leadership of a community, the process from which it emerges and is articulated, requires clarification, such that *mandar obedeciendo* is not an excuse for a small coterie to direct, either out of cynicism or ambition. *Mandar obedeciendo* requires humility and a commitment to listening, neither of which can be taken for granted. It is an invitation to a profound transformation, collective and individual. Transformation is both necessary and integral to struggle as we provoke, incite, facilitate, inspire, listen, and work with one another with humility.

The emergence of the EZLN as a people's army is a narrative of transformation. The small group of urban revolutionaries who traveled to Chiapas expecting to become a revolutionary vanguard abandoned their conceptions of revolution once they were "contaminated by and





subordinated to the communities.” In another move of transformation the community itself became armed. The Zapatistas emerged from a context of a variety of ethnic groups, political organizations, and economic interests. Early in the struggle, during the critical moment of the original EZLN’s transformation from a vanguardist guerrilla to a community in arms, the Zapatistas reflected not one single indigenous identity, but the interests of Tzeltal, Tolojobal, Tzotzil, Chol, and Mam peoples, to name just a few.

The political imperatives of *mandar obedeciendo* also challenge many of the assumptions and previously unexamined strategies of organizing associated with “solidarity” efforts that often rely on a singular model, plan, or program fostering paternalism and elitism. Solidarity campaigns too often focus on a single issue, developing networks of short-lived and fragile coalitions that can be resistant to crucial modifications and slow to adapt to shifting contexts. More important, solidarity projects that represent, define, and speak for the struggle(s) of others presuppose the progress or development of those being aided and not the transformation of those providing the aid. Unfortunately, they are too ill-prepared to acknowledge the transformations already taking place in targeted communities.

In the effort to go beyond solidarity, *mandar obedeciendo* begins with the premise that communities made up of diverse constituencies are, to varying and complex degrees, already organized. Taking our cues from the EZLN, we can imagine, in place of solidarity work, a politics of refusal, listening, and community-building in which people become part of “the struggle” in their own way, at their own pace, and without being measured by any specific model of “conscientization” or a political program specified by “the organization.” We must operate from the premise that a given community possesses the resources for its own transformation and has the collective genius to marshal those resources for political action. *Encuentro* as a model of political work presupposes individual and collective transformation that results from dialogue, and it allows for the possibility of individual and collective transformation into a community with purpose. Thus, the Zapatistas provide an important example of the possibilities for an unarmed guerrilla operating in sites of privilege, a resistance that makes direct action and disciplined formations central elements of their political practice without abandoning dialogue.

Todo para todos, nada para nosotros, “everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves,” underscores the commitment to define struggle not by taking state power, but imagining a new world, “a world where many



Jutta Meier-Wiedenbach



worlds fit." Forsaking the desire to replace one elite with another, *todo para todos, nada para nosotros* invites us not to submit to individual needs but to elaborate collective ones. More important, it asserts that communities are driven by collectively articulated obligations, not by the competing interests of individual needs. Zapatista political proposals and strategy posit a "collective subject," demanding the fundamental rights that emerge from collective identities and communal needs.

Caminamos preguntando, or "we walk asking," challenges us to travel in dialogue with one another, always with a view of a shared horizon. We are often schooled to repress the fundamental impulse to question. A commitment to inquiry allows us to transcend the facade of ideology and the oppression of rigid institutions in favor of discovery. It contests a process in which we have been "educated" to accept being left out or rendered invisible to everyone, including ourselves. The violence of cultural homogenization produced through social fictions and the ideological maneuvers of a "democratic" system attempt to force us to deny ourselves as we deny the uniqueness and diversity of others. Processes of exclusion target specific communities, especially those groups who have chosen to resist, such as the communities who have taken up arms in Chiapas. Other groups, such as youth, women, communities of color, constituencies who craft diverse, often seemingly less obvious strategies of resistance, have also been marginalized as well and are threatened by relentless processes of homogenization.

Such exclusions could also be exerted in revolutionary movements, a history the Zapatistas have struggled not to repeat. Violence was not a means to dominate, or even convince others of the virtues of a Zapatista vision or program. Ideas asserted through the force of arms are always suspect, and as Marcos admits, "the task of an armed movement should be to present the problem, and then step aside." Able to pursue and develop a "model of peace," their change in strategy corresponds to Gandhi's often misunderstood explanation of nonviolence as being an appropriate strategy of the strong, not the weak. They have not abandoned the "model of war" altogether, but have held it in abeyance, the two possibilities working in conjunction to expand their political project for Mexico and beyond. Zapatista strength derives not only from their mobilizations but from the way in which people have rallied to their banner, confident in their commitment not to take state power and impose themselves as a revolutionary vanguard. "For us it would be a failure. What would be a success for the politico-military organizations of the sixties or seventies which emerged with the national liberation movements would be a fiasco for us," claims Marcos.



Nunca jamás un mundo sin nosotros, "never again a world without us," seeks to reverse the history of marginalization in which communities have been systematically silenced. The *nunca jamás* is a declaration that recognizes that processes of marginalization and homogenization portend the extinction of a people, suggesting the necessity for action that must include cultural renewal. It proclaims the possibilities of a reimagined world, a world in which those in rebellion have responsibilities and obligations to one another. As a statement against elitism it reminds us that the struggle is not limited to the Zapatistas or those in the South, but must be reimagined to include multiple struggles in numerous sites.



Jeff Corant

Zapatismo offers a strategy of struggle on a variety of fronts, including cultural ones. Fundamental to the Zapatistas' struggle to make themselves visible has been the claim that they narrate their own history and speak their own truths. The "not forgetting" reminds us to recover our past while we document our struggle. In asserting critical elements of a vibrant Mayan culture, the Zapatistas have successfully resisted market forces that seek to homogenize all people. Their struggle has been successful primarily because it has been rooted locally, a deliberate effort to maintain their commons by reclaiming their history, culture, and community.

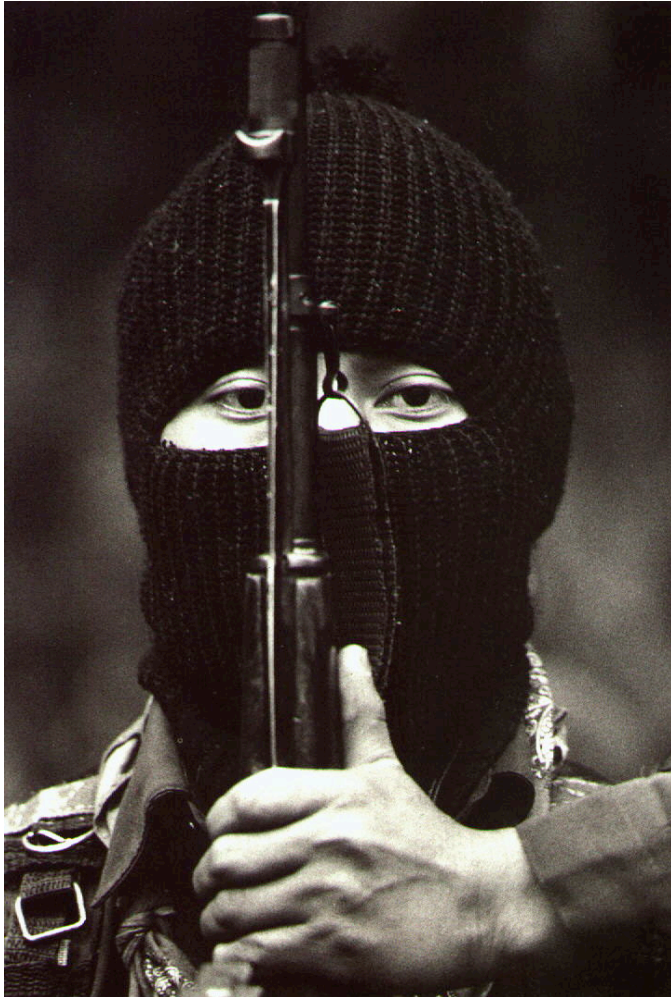
We must also reclaim our histories and cultures as we reclaim our commons. In sites of privilege such as those found in the "the west," a consumer culture fosters values, attitudes, and practices peculiar to a disposable, individualistic, and competitive society. If we begin with a definition of community that stresses sharing knowledge of what works locally between generations and fulfilling collectively determined obligations with one another, then we must ask ourselves how do we



collectively define obligations and acknowledge local wisdom in the face of cultural homegenization?

Notes in Conclusion

The Zapatistas' commitment to difference rather than identity, dialogue over command, and autonomy in opposition to state or market control has revealed a radical new practice, a commitment to theoretical reflection and direct action that does not subordinate local struggles (issues in particular contexts), prioritize actions (strategies of resistance), or alternative practices (strategies for living outside of state and market forces) to any specific political formation, program, or ideology. The Zapatistas have refused to do battle within a framework of old organizational structures. Thus, they have insisted that they will not fall back into the past that, as Marcos suggests, was defined by the battle over ideologies. During the March for Indigenous Dignity the Zapatistas made it clear they were not trying to turn back the clock to a bucolic past of native harmony. "No," proclaimed Marcos, "we Indian peoples have come in order to wind the clock and to thus ensure that the inclusive, tolerant, and plural tomorrow which is, incidentally, the only tomorrow possible, will arrive. In order to do that, in order for our march to make the clock of humanity march, we Indian peoples have resorted to the art of reading what has not yet been written. Because that is the dream which animates us as indigenous, as Mexicans and, above all, as human beings. With our struggle, we are reading the future which has already been sown yesterday, which is being cultivated today, and which can only be reaped if one fights, if, that is, one dreams."



THE FIRST
DECLARATION OF THE
LACANDON JUNGLE
TODAY WE SAY: ENOUGH
IS ENOUGH! (1993)

TO THE PEOPLE OF MEXICO:
MEXICAN BROTHERS AND
SISTERS:

We are a product of 500 years of struggle: first against slavery, then during the War of Independence against Spain led by insurgents, then to avoid being absorbed by North American imperialism, then to promulgate our constitution and

expel the French empire from our soil, and later the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz denied us the just application of the Reform laws and the people rebelled and leaders like Villa and Zapata emerged, poor men just like us. We have been denied the most elemental preparation so they can use us as cannon fodder and pillage the wealth of our country. They don't care that we have nothing, absolutely nothing, not even a roof over our heads, no land, no work, no health care, no food nor education. Nor are we able to freely and democratically elect our political representatives, nor is there independence from foreigners, nor is there peace nor justice for ourselves and our children.

But today, we say **ENOUGH IS ENOUGH**. We are the inheritors of the true builders of our nation. The dispossessed, we are millions and we thereby call upon our brothers and sisters to join this struggle as the only path, so that we will not die of hunger due to the insatiable ambition of a 70 year dictatorship led by a clique of traitors that represent the most conservative and sell-out groups. They are the same ones that opposed Hidalgo and Morelos, the same ones that betrayed Vicente Guerrero, the same ones that sold half our country to the foreign invader, the same ones that imported a European prince to rule our country, the same ones that formed the "scientific" Porfirista dictatorship, the same ones that opposed the Petroleum Expropriation, the same ones that massacred the railroad workers in

1958 and the students in 1968, the same ones the today take everything from us, absolutely everything.

To prevent the continuation of the above and as our last hope, after having tried to utilize all legal means based on our Constitution, we go to our Constitution, to apply Article 39 which says: "National Sovereignty essentially and originally resides in the people. All political power emanates from the people and its purpose is to help the people. The people have, at all times, the inalienable right to alter or modify their form of government." Therefore, according to our constitution, we declare the following to the Mexican federal army, the pillar of the Mexican dictatorship that we suffer from, monopolized by a one-party system and led by Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the maximum and illegitimate federal executive that today holds power.

According to this Declaration of War, we ask that other powers of the nation advocate to restore the legitimacy and the stability of the nation by overthrowing the dictator. We also ask that international organizations and the International Red Cross watch over and regulate our battles, so that our efforts are carried out while still protecting our civilian population. We declare now and always that we are subject to the Geneva Accord, forming the EZLN as our fighting arm of our liberation struggle. We have the Mexican people on our side, we have the beloved tri-colored flag highly respected by our insurgent

fighters. We use black and red in our uniform as our symbol of our working people on strike. Our flag carries the following letters, "EZLN," Zapatista Army of National Liberation, and we always carry our flag into combat.

Beforehand, we refuse any effort to disgrace our just cause by accusing us of being drug traffickers, drug guerrillas, thieves, or other names that might be used by our enemies. Our struggle follows the constitution which is held high by its call for justice and equality.

Therefore, according to this declaration of war, we give our military forces, the EZLN, the following orders:

First: Advance to the capital of the country, overcoming the Mexican federal army, protecting in our advance the civilian population and permitting the people in the liberated area the right to freely and democratically elect their own administrative authorities.

Second: Respect the lives of our prisoners and turn over all wounded to the International Red Cross.

Third: Initiate summary judgements against all soldiers of the Mexican federal army and the political police that have received training or have been paid by foreigners, accused of being traitors to our country, and against all those that have repressed and treated badly the civil population and robbed or stolen from or attempted crimes against the good of the people.

Fourth: Form new troops with all those Mexicans that show their interest in joining our struggle, including those that, being enemy soldiers, turn themselves in without having fought against us, and promise to take orders from the General Command of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation.

Fifth: We ask for the unconditional surrender of the enemy's headquarters before we begin any combat to avoid any loss of lives.

Sixth: Suspend the robbery of our natural resources in the areas controlled by the EZLN.



To the People of Mexico: We, the men and women, full and free, are conscious that the war that we have declared is our last resort, but also a just one. The dictators are applying an undeclared genocidal war against our people for many years. Therefore we ask for your participation, your decision to support this plan that struggles for work, land, housing, food, health care, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice and peace. We declare that we will not stop fighting until the basic demands of our people have been met by forming a government of our country that is free and democratic.

**JOIN THE INSURGENT FORCES
OF THE ZAPATISTA ARMY OF
NATIONAL LIBERATION.**

*General Command of the EZLN,
1993*

Chiapas: The Southeast in Two Winds A Storm and a Prophecy

[This essay by Insurgent Subcommander Marcos of the Zapatista National Liberation Army was written in August of 1992. Although it was not released publicly until January 27, 1994, we have placed it first because it puts the Zapatista uprising in context.]

The First Wind: The One From Above

CHAPTER ONE

This chapter tells how the supreme government was affected by the poverty of the Indigenous peoples of Chiapas and endowed the area with hotels, prisons, barracks, and a military airport. It also tells how the

beast feeds on the blood of the people, as well as other miserable and unfortunate happenings.

Suppose that you live in the North, Center, or West of this country. Suppose that you heed the old SECOTUR (Department of Tourism) slogan, "Get to know Mexico first." Suppose that you decide to visit the Southeast of your country and that in the Southeast you choose to visit the state of Chiapas. Suppose that you drive there (getting there by airplane is not only expensive but unlikely, a mere fantasy: There are only two "civilian" airports and one military one). Suppose that you take the Transiste'mica Highway. Suppose that you pay no attention to the Army barracks located at Mati'as Romero and that you continue on to Ventosa. Suppose that you don't notice the Department of Government's immigration checkpoint near there (the checkpoint makes you think that you are leaving one country and entering another). Suppose that you decide to take a left and head towards Chiapas. Several kilometers further on you will leave the state of Oaxaca and you will see a big sign that reads, "WELCOME TO CHIAPAS."

Have you found it? Good, suppose you have. You have entered by one of the three existing roads into Chiapas: The road into the northern part of the state, the road along the Pacific coast, and the road you entered by are the three ways to get to this Southeastern corner of the country by land. But the state's

natural wealth doesn't leave only by way of these three roads.

Chiapas loses blood through many veins: Through oil and gas ducts, electric lines, railways, through bank accounts, trucks, vans, boats and planes, through clandestine paths, gaps, and forest trails. This land continues to pay tribute to the imperialists: petroleum, electricity, cattle, money, coffee, banana, honey, corn, cacao, tobacco, sugar, soy, melon, sorghum, mamey, mango, tamarind, avocado, and Chiapaneco blood flows as a result of the thousand teeth sunk into the throat of the Mexican Southeast. These raw materials, thousands of millions of tons of them, flow to Mexican ports and railroads, air and truck transportation centers. From there they are sent to different parts of the world: The United States, Canada, Holland, Germany, Italy, Japan, but with the same fate—to feed imperialism. The fee that capitalism imposes on the Southeastern part of this country oozes, as it has since from the beginning, blood and mud. A handful of businesses, one of which is the Mexican State, take all the wealth out of Chiapas and in exchange leave behind their mortal and pestilent mark: in 1989 these businesses took 1,222,669,000,000 pesos from Chiapas and only left behind 616,340,000,000 pesos worth of credit and public works. More than 600,000,000,000 pesos went to the belly of the beast. In Chiapas, Pemex [the national oil company] has 86 teeth clenched in the townships of Estacion Juarez,

Reforma, Ostuacan, Pichucalco, and Ocosingo. Every day they suck out 92,000 barrels of petroleum and 517,000,000,000 cubic feet of gas. They take away the petroleum and gas, and in exchange leave behind the mark of capitalism: ecological destruction, agricultural plunder, hyperinflation, alcoholism, prostitution, and poverty. The beast is still not satisfied and has extended its tentacles to the Lacandona jungle: eight petroleum deposits are under exploration. The paths are made with machetes by the same campesinos who are left without land by the insatiable beast. The trees fall and dynamite explodes on land where campesinos are not allowed to cut down trees to cultivate. Every tree that is cut down costs them a fine that is 10 times the minimum wage, and a jail sentence. The poor cannot cut down trees, but the petroleum beast can, a beast that every day falls more and more into foreign hands. The campesinos cut them down to survive, the beast to plunder.

Chiapas also bleeds coffee. Thirty-five percent of the coffee produced in Mexico comes from this area. The industry employs 87,000 people. Fortyseven percent of the coffee is for national consumption and 53% is exported abroad, mainly to the United States and Europe. More than 100,000 tons of coffee are taken from this state to fatten the beast's bank accounts: in 1988 a kilo of pergamino coffee was sold abroad for 8,000 pesos. The Chiapaneco producers were paid 2,500 pesos or less.

The second most important plunder, after coffee, is beef. Three million head of cattle wait for middle-men and a small group of businessmen to take them away to fill refrigerators in Arriaga, Villahermosa, and Mexico City. The cattle are sold for 400 pesos per kilo by the poor farmers and resold by the middle-men and businessmen for up to ten times the price they paid for them.

The tribute that capitalism demands from Chiapas has no historical parallel. Fifty-five percent of national hydroelectric energy comes from this state, along with 20% of Mexico's total electricity. However, only a third of the homes in Chiapas have electricity. Where do the 12,907 kilowatts produced annually by hydroelectric plants in Chiapas go? In spite of the current trend toward ecological awareness, the plunder of wood continues in Chiapas's forests. Between 1981 and 1989, 2,444,777 cubic meters of precious woods, conifers, and tropical trees were taken from Chiapas. They were taken to Mexico City, Puebla, Veracruz, and Quintana Roo. In 1988 wood exports brought a revenue of 23,900,000,000 pesos, 6,000% more than in 1980.

The honey that is produced in 79,000 beehives in Chiapas goes entirely to US and European markets.

The 2,756 tons of honey produced annually in the Chiapaneco countryside is converted into dollars

which the people of Chiapas never see.

Of the corn produced in Chiapas, more than half goes to the domestic market. Chiapas is one of the largest corn producers in the country.

Sorghum grown in Chiapas goes to Tabasco. Ninety percent of the tamarind goes to Mexico City and other states. Two-thirds of the avocados and all of the mameys are sold outside of the state. Sixty-nine percent of the cacao goes to the national market, and 31% is exported to the US, Holland, Japan, and Italy. The majority of the bananas produced are exported.

What does the beast leave behind in exchange for all it takes away? Chiapas has a total area of 75,634.4 square kilometers, some 7.5 million hectares. It is the eighth largest state and is divided into 111 townships organized, for the purposes of looting, into nine economic regions. Forty percent of the nation's plant varieties, 36% of its mammal species, 34% of its reptiles and amphibians, 66% of its bird species, 20% of its fresh-water fish, and 80% of its butterfly species are found in Chiapas. Seven percent of the total national rainfall falls in Chiapas. But its greatest wealth is the 3.5 million people of Chiapas, two-thirds of whom live and die in rural communities. Half of them don't have potable water and two-thirds have no sewage service. Ninety percent of the rural population pay little or no taxes. Communication in Chiapas is a grotesque joke for a state that produces petroleum, electricity, coffee, wood, and cattle

for the hungry beast. Only two-thirds of the municipal seats have paved-road access. Twelve thousand communities have no other means of transport and communication than mountain trails. Since the days of Porfirio Di'az, the railroad lines have serviced capitalism rather than the people. The railroad line that follows the coast (there are only two lines: the other crosses the northern part of the state) dates back to the turn of the century, and its tonnage is limited by the old bridges that cross the canyons of the Southeast. The only port in Chiapas, Puerto Madero, is just one more way for the beast to extract the state's resources.

Education? The worst in the country. At the elementary school level, 72 out of every 100 children don't finish the first grade. More than half of the schools only offer up to a third grade education and half of the schools only have one teacher for all the courses offered. There are statistics, although they are kept secret of course, that show that many Indigenous children are forced to drop out of school due to their families' need to incorporate them into the system of exploitation. In any Indigenous community it is common to see children carrying corn and wood, cooking, or washing clothes during school hours. Of the 16,058 classrooms in 1989, only 96 were in Indigenous zones. Industry? Look, 40% of Chiapas's "industry" consists of Nixtamal mills, tortillas, and wood furniture mills. Large companies (petroleum and electricity), 0.2% of the total

industry, belong to the Mexican government (and soon to foreigners). Medium-sized industry, 0.4% of the total industry, is made up of sugar refineries and fish, seafood, flour, milk, and coffee processing plants. Of the state's industry, 94% of the area's industry is micro-industry.

The health conditions of the people of Chiapas are a clear example of the capitalist imprint: One-and-a-half million people have no medical services at their disposal. There are 0.2 clinics for every 1,000 inhabitants, one-fifth of the national average. There are 0.3 hospital beds for every 1,000 Chiapanecos, one third the amount in the rest of Mexico. There is one operating room per 100,000 inhabitants, one half of the amount in the rest of Mexico. There are 0.5 doctors and 0.4 nurses per 1,000 people, one-half of the national average.

Health and nutrition go hand in hand in poverty.

Fifty-four percent of the population of Chiapas suffer from malnutrition, and in the highlands and forest this percentage increases to 80%. A campesino's average diet consists of coffee, corn, tortillas, and beans. This is what capitalism leaves as payment for everything that it takes away...

This part of the Mexican territory, which willingly annexed itself to the young independent republic in 1824, appeared in national geography when the petroleum boom reminded the country that there was a Southeast (82% of Pemex's

petrochemical plants are in the Southeast; in 1990 two-thirds of public investment in the Southeast was in energy). Chiapas's experience of exploitation goes back for centuries. In times past, wood, fruits, animals, and men went to the metropolis through the veins of exploitation, just as they do today. Like the banana republics, but at the peak of neoliberalism and "libertarian revolutions," the Southeast continues to export raw materials, just as it did 500 years ago. It continues to import capitalism's principal product: death and misery.

One million Indigenous people live in these lands and share a disorienting nightmare with mestizos and ladinos: their only option, 500 years after the "Meeting of Two Worlds," is to die of poverty or repression. The programs to improve the conditions of poverty, a small bit of social democracy which the Mexican state throws about and which, under the regime of Salinas de Gortari carries the name Pronasol, are a joke that brings bloody tears to those who live under the rain and sun.

Welcome! You have arrived in the poorest state in the country: Chiapas.

Suppose that you drive on to Ocosocoatla and from there down to Tuxtla Gutierrez, the state capital. You don't stay long. Tuxtla Gutierrez is only a large warehouse which stores products from other parts of the state. Here you find some of the wealth which will be sent to

whatever destinations the capitalists decide. You don't stay long, you have just barely touched the lips of the wild beast's bloody jaws. You go on to Chiapas de Corzo without noticing the Nestle' factory that is there, and you begin to climb up into the mountains. What do you see? One thing is certain, you have entered another world, an Indigenous world. Another world, but the same as that in which millions of people in the rest of the country live.

Three hundred thousand Tzotziles, 120,000 Choles, 90,000 Zoques, and 70,000 Tojolabales inhabit this Indigenous world. The supreme government recognizes that "only" half of these 1,000,000 Indigenous people are illiterate.

Continue along the mountain road and you arrive in the region known as the Chiapaneco highlands.

Here, more than 500 years ago, Indigenous people were the majority, masters and owners of land and water. Now they are only the majority in population and in poverty. Drive on until you reach San Cristo'bal de las Casas, which 100 years ago was the state capital (disagreements among the bourgeoisie robbed it of the dubious honor of being the capital of the poorest state in Mexico). No, don't linger. If Tuxtla Gutierrez is a large warehouse, San Cristo'bal is a large market. From many different routes the Tzotziles, Tzeltales, Choles, Tojolabales, and Zoques bring the Indigenous tribute to capitalism.

Each brings something different: wood, coffee, cloth, handicrafts, fruits, vegetables, corn. Everyone brings something: sickness, ignorance, jeers, and death. This is the poorest region of the poorest state in the country. Welcome to San Cristo'bal de las Casas, a "Colonial City" according to the history books, although the majority of the population is Indigenous. Welcome to Pronasol's huge market. Here you can buy or sell anything except Indigenous dignity. Here everything is expensive except death. But don't stay too long, continue along the road, the proud result of the tourist infrastructure. In 1988 there were 6,270 hotel rooms, 139 restaurants, and 42 travel agencies in this state. This year, 1,058,098 tourists visited Chiapas and left 250,000,000,000 pesos in the hands of restaurant and hotel owners.

Have you calculated the numbers? Yes, you're right: there are seven hotel rooms for every 1,000 tourists while there are only 0.3 hospital beds per 1,000 Chiapaneco citizens. Leave the calculations behind and drive on, noticing the three police officials in berets jogging along the shoulder of the road. Drive by the Public Security station and continue on passing hotels, restaurants, large stores and heading towards the exit to Comita'n. Leaving San Cristo'bal behind you will see the famous San Cristo'bal caves surrounded by leafy forest. Do you see the sign? No, you are not mistaken, this natural park is administered by...the Army! Without leaving your uncertainty behind,

drive on...Do you see them? Modern buildings, nice homes, paved roads...Is it a university? Workers' housing? No, look at the sign next to the cannons closely and read: "General Army Barracks of the 31st Military Zone." With the olive-green image still in your eyes, drive on to the intersection and decide not to go to Comita'n so that you will avoid the pain of seeing that, a few meters ahead, on the hill that is called the Foreigner, North American military personnel are operating, and teaching their Mexican counterparts to operate radar.

Decide that it is better to go to Ocosingo since ecology and all that nonsense is very fashionable. Look at the trees, breath deeply...Do you feel better? Yes? Then be sure to keep looking to your left, because if you don't you will see, seven kilometers ahead, another magnificent construction with the noble symbol of SOLIDARIDAD on the facade. Don't look. I tell you, look the other way. You don't notice that this new building is...a jail (evil tongues say that this is a benefit of Pronasol; now campesinos won't have to go all the way to Cerro Hueco, the prison in the state capital). No brother, don't lose heart, the worst is always hidden: Excessive poverty discourages tourism.

Continue on, down to Huixta'n, up to Oxchuc, look at the beautiful waterfall where the Jatate river, whose waters cross the Lacandona Jungle, begins. Pass by Cuxulja and instead of following the detour to

Altamirano drive on till you reach Ocosingo: "The Door to the Lacandona Jungle..." Good, stay a while. Take a quick tour around the city... Principal points of interest? The two large constructions at the entrance to the city are brothels, next door is a jail, the building further beyond, a church, this other one is a beef-processing plant, that other one, Army barracks, over there is the court, the Municipal building, and way over there is Pemex. The rest are small piled-up houses which crumble when the huge Pemex trucks and ranch pick-up trucks pass by.

What does it look like? A Porfirista-type largelanded estate? But that ended 75 years ago! No, don't follow the road that goes to San Quinti'n, in front of the Montes Azules Reserve. Don't go to where the Jatate and Perlas rivers join, don't go down there, don't walk for three eight-hour days, don't go to San Marti'n and see that it is a very poor and small community, don't approach that shed that is falling to pieces. What is it? A sometimes church, school, meeting room. Now it is a school. It is 11 a.m.. No, don't go closer, don't look in, don't look at the four groups of children riddled with tapeworms and lice, halfnaked, don't look at the four young Indigenous teachers who work for miserable pay for which they have to walk three days, the same three days that you just walked, to collect. Don't notice that the only division between the classrooms is a small hall. Up to what grade do they teach here? Third. No, don't look at the posters

which are the only thing that the government has sent to these children. Don't look at them: They are posters about AIDS prevention.

Better for us to move on, let's return to the paved roads. Yes, I know that it is in bad condition. Let's leave Ocosingo, continue to admire the countryside... The owners? Yes, ranch owners. What is produced? Cattle, coffee, corn...

Did you see the National Indigenous Institute? Yes, the one as you leave the city. Did you see those pickup trucks? They are given on credit to Indigenous campesinos. They only take unleaded gas because it's better for the environment...

There is no unleaded gas in Ocosingo? Well, that's not a big thing... Yes, you are right, the government is worried about the campesinos. Of course evil tongues say that there are guerrillas in these mountains and that the government's financial aid is really to buy Indigenous people's loyalty, but these are rumors, surely they are just trying to undermine Pronasol...

What? The Citizen's Defense Committee? Oh yes! It consists of a group of "heroic" ranchers, traders, and corrupt union bosses who organize small guards to threaten the people. No, I already told you that the Porfirista large-landed estate was done away with 75 years ago... I would be better for us to move on... At the next intersection take a left. No, don't go towards Palenque. Let's go to Chilo'n... Pretty, no? Yes. Yajalon... it's very modern, it even has a gas station...

Look, there's a bank, the municipal building, the courthouse, over there the Army...

It looks like another hacienda? Let's go and you won't see those other large, modern buildings on the outskirts of town, along the road to Tila and Sabanilla with their big beautiful SOLIDARIDAD signs, you won't see that it is...a jail.

Good, we have arrived at the intersection. Now to Ocosingo...Palenque? Are you sure? Okay, let's go. Yes, the countryside is beautiful. Are those ranches? You're correct: they produce cattle, coffee, wood. Look, we're already at Palenque. A quick tour of the city? Okay. Those are hotels, over there restaurants, the municipal building, the courthouse, those are the Army barracks, and over there... What? No, I already know what you're going to tell me... Don't say it... Tired? Okay, we'll stop for a bit. You don't want to see the pyramids? No? Okay. Xi'Nich? Ah...an Indigenous march. Yes, it's going to Mexico City.

How far? 1,106 kilometers. Results? The government receives their petitions. Yes, that's all. Are you still tired? More? Let's wait... To Bonampak? The road is very bad. Okay, let's go.

Yes, the panoramic route...This is the Federal Military Reserve, that other one belongs to the Navy, the one over there belongs to the Department of Government... Is it always like this? No, sometimes they

top it off with a campesinos' protest march. Tired? Do you want to go back? Okay. Other places? Different places? In what country? Mexico? You will see the same. The colors will change, the languages, the countryside, the names, but the people, the exploitation, the poverty and death are the same.

Just look closely in any state in the Republic.

Well, good luck...And if you need a tourist guide please be sure to let me know. I'm at your service. Oh! One more thing. It will not always be this way. Another Mexico? No, the same...I am talking about something else, about other winds beginning to blow, as if another wind is picking up...

CHAPTER TWO

This chapter tells the story of the Governor, an apprentice to the viceroy, and his heroic fight against the progressive clergy and his adventures with the feudal cattle, coffee and business lords. It also tells other equally fantastic tales.

Once upon a time there was a viceroy made of chocolate with a peanut for a nose. The viceroy's apprentice, Governor Patrocinio Gonza'lez Garrido, in the manner of the old monarchs who were put in power by the Spanish crown during the Conquest, has re-organized the geography of Chiapas. The assignment of spaces to the urban and rural categories is a somewhat sophisticated exercise of power but

when directed by Mr. Gonza'lez Garrido's denseness, it has reached exquisite levels of stupidity. The viceroy decided that cities with services and benefits should be for those who already have everything.

And he decided, the viceroy that is, that the masses are fine out in the open, exposed to wind and rough weather, and that they only deserve space in the jails, which never cease to be uncomfortable. Because of this, the viceroy decided to construct jails in the outskirts of the cities so that the proximity of the undesirable and delinquent masses would not disturb the rich. Jails and Army barracks are the principal works promoted by this governor in Chiapas. His friendship with ranchers and powerful businessmen is a secret to no one.

Neither is his animosity for the three dioceses which regulate the state's Catholic life. The Diocese of San Cristo'bal, headed by Bishop Samuel Ruiz, is a constant menace to Gonza'lez Garrido's reorganizing project. Hoping to modernize the absurd system of exploitation and extraction which prevails in Chiapas, Patrocinio Gonza'lez comes up against the stubbornness of religious and secular figures who support and preach Catholicism's option for the poor.

With the hypocritical applause of Aguirre Franco, the Bishop of Tuxtla Gutierrez, and the mute approval of the Bishop of Tapachula, Gonza'lez Garrido sustains and gives new life to the "heroic" conspiracies of

ranchers and businessmen against the members of the Diocese of San Cristobal. "Don Samuel's teams," as they are called by some, are not made up of inexperienced believers: Before Patrocinio Gonza'lez Garrido had even dreamed of being state governor, the Diocese of San Cristo'bal de las Casas preached the right to freedom and justice. For one of the country's most backward bourgeoisie, the agricultural bourgeoisie, this could only mean one thing: rebellion. These rancher and business "patriots" and "believers" know how to prevent rebellion: the existence of privately financed, armed paramilitary groups trained by members of the Federal Army, Public Security police and state law is well known by the campesinos who suffer from their threats, torture and gunshots.

A few months ago, Father Joel Padron from the parish of Simojovel was arrested. Accused by the region's ranchers of initiating and taking part in land take-overs, Father Joel was arrested by state authorities and held in the Cerro Hueco Jail in the state capital. The mobilization of the members of the Diocese of San Cristobal (those of Tuxtla Gutierrez and Tapachula were conspicuous in their absence) and a federal compromise succeeded in obtaining the parish priest Padron's freedom.

While thousands of campesinos marched in Tuxtla Gutierrez to demand Padron's freedom, ranchers in Ocosingo sent their paramilitary forces to clear out property-owning

campesinos. Four hundred men, armed by the ranchers, destroyed and burned houses, beat Indigenous women and murdered a campesino, Juan, by shooting him in the face.

After the expulsion, the paramilitary forces composed mostly of workers from local ranches and small-property owners proud of partaking in raids with the young ranchers-drove along the region's roads in pickup trucks provided by their masters.

Ostentatiously displaying their arms, drunk and intoxicated, they shouted: "Ranchers are number one!" and warned everyone that it was only the beginning. Undaunted, municipal authorities in Ocosingo and soldiers stationed in the region looked passively on the gunmen's triumphant parade.

In Tuxtla Gutierrez, almost 10,000 campesinos marched in favor of Father Padron's release. In a corner of Ocosingo, Juan's widow buried her husband, victim of the proud ranchers. There was no march or protest petition for Juan's death.

This is Chiapas.

Recently, Viceroy Gonzalez Garrido was the protagonist of a new scandal, which was uncovered because the press reported the story. With the viceroy's approval, Ocosingo's feudal lords organized the Committee for Citizen Defense, a blatant attempt to institutionalize their neo- Porfirista paramilitary forces that keep order in the

countryside of Chiapas. Surely nothing would have happened had it not been for the discovery of a plot to assassinate the parish priest Pablo Ibarren and the nun Mari'a del Carmen, along with Samuel Ruiz, the Bishop of San Cristo'bal. The plot was reported by the honest Chiapaneco press, which even now exists, and reached national forums. There were retractions and denials; the viceroy declared that he maintains good relations with the Church and named a special committee to investigate the case. The investigation yielded no results, and the waters returned to their course.

During the same days, government agencies made some horrifying statistics known: in Chiapas 14,500 people die every year, the highest mortality rate in the country. The causes? Curable diseases such as respiratory infections, enteritis, parasites, amoebas, malaria, salmonella, scabies, dengue, pulmonary tuberculosis, trachoma, typhus, cholera and measles. Many say that the figure is actually over 15,000 because deaths in marginalized zones, the majority of the state, are not reported...

During Patrocinio Gonza'lez Garrido's four-year term more than 60,000 Chiapanecos have died, most of them poor. The war against the people, directed by the viceroy and commanded by the feudal lords, consists of methods more subtle than bombardments. There is no mention in the press of this murderous plot which costs lives

and land as in the days of the Conquest.

The Committee for Citizen Defense continues to carry out its proselytizing work, holding meetings to convince the rich and poor of the city of Ocosingo that they should organize and arm themselves so that the campesinos won't enter the city because they will destroy everything, without respecting the rich or the poor. The viceroy smiles with approval.

CHAPTER THREE

This chapter tells how the viceroy had a brilliant idea and put this idea into practice.

It also tells how the Empire decreed the death of socialism, and then put itself to the task of carrying out this decree to the great joy of the powerful, the distress of the weak and the indifference of the majority. It tells of Zapata and how he is said to be still be alive. It also tells of other disconcerting events.

The viceroy is worried. The campesinos refuse to applaud the institutional pillage written into the new Article 27 of the Constitution. The viceroy is enraged. The poor aren't happy with being exploited. They refuse to humbly accept the charity that Pronasol spreads around the Chiapaneco countryside. The viceroy is desperate.

He consults his advisors. His advisors tell him an old truth: Jails and military bases aren't enough to ensure continued domination. It is

also necessary to control people's thoughts. The viceroy is disturbed. He paces his palace. Then he stops and smiles.

XEOCH: Rap and lies for the campesinos.

In Ocosingo and Palenque, Cancun and Chilo'n, Altamirano and Yajalo'n, the Indigenous people are celebrating. A new gift from the supreme government has made life a little happier for the peons, small landowners, landless campesinos and impoverished inhabitants of the ejidos. They have been given a local radio station that reaches the most isolated corners of eastern Chiapas. The station's programming is fitting: Marimbas and rap music proclaim the good news. The Chiapaneco countryside is being modernized. XEOCH transmits from the township of Ocosingo and can be found at 600 Mhz AM from four in the morning till 10 at night. Its news shows abound with lies. They tell of the "disorientation" that "subversive" layworkers spread among the peasantry, the abundance of aid credits that are never received by the Indigenous communities, and the existence of public works that have never been built. The viceroy is also given time on the air so that he can remind the population with threats that not all is lies and rap music; there are also jails and military bases and a penal code which is the most repressive in the Republic. The penal code punishes any expression of discontent. The laws against demonstrations, rebellion, inciting to

riot, etc., demonstrate that the viceroy is careful to maintain everything in order.

There isn't any reason to fight. Socialism has died. Long live conformity and reform and the modern world and capitalism and all of the cruelties that are associated with them! The viceroy and the feudal lords dance and smile euphorically in their palaces. Their joy is disconcerting for the few free-thinkers who live in the area. Even they are incapable of understanding. They are without hope. It is true that one must fight, but the balance of forces isn't favorable, now isn't the time. We must wait longer, maybe years. We must be alert against the adventurers. We must make sure that nothing happens in the cities or in the countryside, that everything continues as always. Socialism has died. Long live capitalism! Radio, the print media, and television proclaim it. It is repeated by some ex-socialists who are now sensationally changed.

Not everyone hears the voices of hopelessness and conformity. Not everyone is carried away by hopelessness. There are millions of people who continue on without hearing the voices of the powerful and the indifferent. They can't hear; they are deafened by the crying and blood that death and poverty are shouting in their ears.

But, when there is a moment of rest, they hear another voice. They don't hear the voice that comes from above; they hear the voice that is carried to them by the wind from

below, a voice that is born in the Indigenous heart of the mountains. This voice speaks to them about justice and freedom, it speaks to them about socialism, about hope...the only hope that exists in the world. The oldest of the old in the Indigenous communities say that there once was a man named Zapata who rose up with his people and sang out, "Land and Freedom!" These old campesinos say that Zapata didn't die, that he must return. These old campesinos also say that the wind and the rain and the sun tell the campesinos when to cultivate the land, when to plant and when to harvest. They say that hope is also planted and harvested. They also say that the wind and the rain and the sun are now saying something different: that with so much poverty, the time has come to harvest rebellion instead of death. That is what the old campesinos say. The powerful don't hear; they can't hear, they are deafened by the brutality that the Empire shouts in their ears. "Zapata," insists the wind, the wind from below, our wind.

The Second Wind: The Wind From Below

CHAPTER FOUR

This chapter tells how dignity and defiance joined hands in the Southeast, and how Jacinto Pe'rez's phantoms run through the Chiapaneco highlands. It also tells of a patience that has run out and of other happenings which have been

ignored but have major consequences.

These people were born dignified and rebellious, brothers and sisters to the rest of Mexico's exploited people. They are not just the product of the Annexation Act of 1824, but of a long chain of ignominious acts and rebellions. From the time when cassock and armor conquered this land, dignity and defiance have lived and spread under these rains.

Collective work, democratic thinking, and subjection to the decisions of the majority are more than just traditions in Indigenous zones.

They have been the only means of survival, resistance, dignity, and defiance. These "evil ideas," as they are seen by landholders and businessmen, go against the capitalist precept of "a lot in the hands of a few." It has mistakenly been said that the Chiapas rebellion has no counterpart, that it is outside the national experience. This is a lie.

The exploited Chiapaneco's specialty is the same as that of exploited people from Durango, Veracruz, or the plateau of northern Mexico: to fight and to lose. If the voices of those who write history speak excessively, it is because the voice of the oppressed does not speak...yet.

There is no historic, national, or regional calendar that has documented each and every

rebellion against this system that is imposed and maintained with blood and fire throughout the national territory. In Chiapas, this rebel voice is only heard when it shakes the world of the landowners and businesspeople.

Indeed, the phantom of Indigenous barbarism strikes government-building walls and gains access with the help of revolution, trickery, and threats. If the rebellion in the Southeast loses, as the rebellions lost in the North, Center, and West, it is not the result of bad timing, it is because wind is the fruit of the land; it comes in time and ripens in the breasts of those who have nothing but dignity and rebelliousness. And this wind from below, that of rebellion and dignity, is not just an answer to the wind from above. It is not just an angry response or the destruction of an unjust and arbitrary system. Rather it carries with it a new proposal, a hope of converting rebellion and dignity into freedom and dignity.

How will this new voice make itself heard in these lands and across the country? How will this hidden wind blow, this wind which now blows only in the mountains and canyons without yet descending to the valleys where money rules and lies govern? This wind will come from the mountains. It is already being born under the trees and is conspiring for a new world, so new that it is barely an intuition in the collective heart that inspires it...

CHAPTER FIVE

This chapter tells how the dignity of the Indigenous people tried to make itself heard, but its voice only lasted a little while. It also tell how voices that spoke before are speaking again today and that the Indians are walking forward once again but this time with firm footsteps. They are walking together with other dispossessed peoples to take what belongs to them. The music of death that now plays only for those who have nothing will now play for everyone. It also tells of other frightful things which have happened and, they say, must happen.

The Indigenous march to Xi'Nich, composed of campesinos from Palenque, Ocosingo, and Salto de Agua, demonstrates the system's absurdity. These Indigenous people had to walk 1,106 kilometers to make themselves heard. They had to go to the capital of the Republic in order for the central power to arrange a meeting with the viceroy. They arrived in Mexico City when capitalism was painting a frightful tragedy across the skies of Jalisco. They arrived at the capital of old New Spain, now Mexico, exactly 500 years after the foreign nightmare imposed itself in the night of this land. They arrived and all the honest and noble people, of which there are still some, listened to them and the voices that oppress them today in the Southeast, North, Center and West of the country also listened to them. They walked back, another 1,106 kilometers, their bags filled

with promises. Again, nothing came of it....

In the municipal seat of Simojovel campesinos belonging to the CIOAC organization were attacked by people paid by local ranchers. The campesinos in Simojovel have decided to stop being silent and to respond to the ranchers threats. Campesinos surround the municipal seat. Nothing and no one enters or leaves without their consent. The Federal Army withdraws to its barracks, the police retreat, and the state's feudal lords demand arms in an attempt to restore order and respect.

Negotiating commissions come and go. The conflict appears to have resolved itself. But the causes persist. With the same outward appearances everything returns to calm.

In the town of Betania, in the outskirts of San Cristo'bal de las Casas, Indigenous people are regularly detained and harassed by judicial agents for cutting firewood for their homes. The judicial agents say that they are only doing this to protect the environment. The Indigenous people decide to stop being silent and kidnap three judicial officials. They take the Panamerican highway and cut off communications to the east of San Cristo'bal. At the intersection between Ocosingo and Comita'n, campesinos are holding the judiciaries and they demand to speak to the viceroy before they will agree to unblock the road. Business comes to a halt, tourism collapses.

Negotiating commissions come and go.

The conflict appears to resolve itself but the causes persist. With the same outward appearances, everything returns to calm.

In Marque's de Comillas, in the township of Ocosingo, campesinos cut wood to survive. The judicial officials arrest them and confiscate the wood for their commander. The Indigenous people decide to stop being silent and they take the agents' vehicles and kidnap the agents. The Governor sends Public Security police who are kidnapped in the same way. The Indigenous people hold on to the trucks, the wood and the prisoners. They let the prisoners go. There is no response. They march to Palenque to demand solutions and the Army oppresses them and kidnaps their leaders. They hold on to the vehicles.

Negotiating commissions come and go. The government lets the leaders go, the campesinos return the vehicles. The conflict appears to resolve itself but the causes persist. With the same outward appearance everything returns to calm.

In the municipal seat of Ocosingo, 4,000 Indigenous campesinos from the organization ANCIEZ march from different points of the city. Three marches converge in front of the Municipal building. The municipal president doesn't know what it's all about and flees. On the floor of his office is a calendar indicating the date: April 10, 1992. Outside

Indigenous campesinos from Ocosingo, Oxchuc, Huixta'n, Chilo'n, Yajalon, Sabanilla, Salto de Agua, Palenque, Altamirano, Margaritas, San Cristo'bal, San Andre's and Cancuc dance in front of a giant image of Zapata painted by one of them, recite poetry, sing, and speak. Only they are listening.

The landowners, businessmen, and judicial officials are closed up in their homes and shops, the federal garrison appears deserted. The campesinos shout that Zapata lives and the struggle continues. One of them reads a letter addressed to Carlos Salinas de Gortari [President of Mexico, 1988—present] in which they accuse him of having brought all of the Agrarian Reform gains made under Zapata to an end, of selling the country with the North American Free Trade Agreement and of bringing Mexico back to the times of Porfirio Di'az. They declare forcefully that they will not recognize Salinas' reforms to Article 27 of the Political Constitution. At two o'clock in the afternoon the demonstration disperses, in apparent order, but the causes persist. With the same outward appearances everything returns to calm.

Abasolo is an ejido in the township of Ocosingo. For years, campesinos took land that legally belonged to them. Three of this community's leaders have been put in jail and tortured by the Governor. The Indigenous people decide to stop being silent and they take the San Cristo'bal-Ocosingo highway. Negotiating commissions come and

go. The leaders are freed. The conflict appears to resolve itself but the causes persist. With the same outward appearance everything returns to calm.

Antonio dreams of owning the land he works on, he dreams that his sweat is paid for with justice and truth, he dreams that there is a school to cure ignorance and medicine to scare away death, he dreams of having electricity in his home and that his table is full, he dreams that his country is free and that this is the result of its people governing themselves, and he dreams that he is at peace with himself and with the world. He dreams that he must fight to obtain this dream, he dreams that there must be death in order to gain life. Antonio dreams and then he awakens... Now he knows what to do and he sees his wife crouching by the fire, hears his son crying. He looks at the sun rising in the East, and, smiling, grabs his machete.

The wind picks up, he rises and walks to meet others. Something has told him that his dream is that of many and he goes to find them.

The viceroy dreams that his land is agitated by a terrible wind that rouses everything, he dreams that all he has stolen is taken from him, that his house is destroyed, and that his reign is brought down. He dreams and he doesn't sleep. The viceroy goes to the feudal lords and they tell him that they have been having the same dream. The viceroy cannot rest. So he goes to his doctor and

together they decide that it is some sort of Indian witchcraft and that they will only be freed from this dream with blood. The viceroy orders killings and kidnappings and he builds more jails and Army barracks. But the dream continues and keeps him tossing and turning and unable to sleep.

Everyone is dreaming in this country. Now it is time to wake up...

The storm is here. From the clash of these two winds the storm will be born, its time has arrived. Now the wind from above rules, but the wind from below is coming...

The prophecy is here. When the storm calms, when rain and fire again leave the country in peace, the world will no longer be the world but something better.

The Lacandona Jungle, August 1992



Chiapas.indymedia.org



*Argentina/ Chiapas Indymedia,
Chiapas.indymedia.org,
argentina.indymedia.org*

EZLN – Women's Revolutionary Law

In their just fight for the liberation of our people, the EZLN incorporates women in the revolutionary struggle regardless of their race, creed, color or political affiliation, requiring only that they meet the demands of the exploited people and that they commit to the laws and regulations of the revolution. As well as, taking account of the situation of the woman worker in Mexico, the revolution incorporates their just

demands of equality and justice in the following Women's Revolutionary Law.

First—Women, regardless of their race, creed, color or political affiliation, have the right to participate in the revolutionary struggle in any way that their desire and capacity determine.

Second—Women have the right to work and receive a just salary.

Third—Women have the right to decide the number of children they have and care for.

Fourth—Women have the right to participate in the matters of the community and have charge if they are free and democratically elected.

Fifth—Women and their children have the right to Primary Attention in their health and nutrition.

Sixth—Women have the right to education.

Seventh—Women have the right to choose their partner and are not obliged to enter into marriage.

Eighth—Women have the right to be free of violence from both relatives and strangers. Rape and attempted rape will be severely punished.

Ninth—Women will be able to occupy positions of leadership in the organization and hold military ranks in the revolutionary armed forces.

Tenth—Women will have all the rights and obligations which the

revolutionary laws and regulations give.

A Storm From the Mountain

"The streams, when they descend, have no way of returning to the mountains except beneath the ground."

May 28, 1994

To the national magazine Proceso:

To the national newspaper La Jornada:

To the national newspaper El Financiero:

To the local newspaper Tiempo:

Dear Sirs:

This communique is about the end, finally, of the consultations. In addition, we have sent several letters with different destinations. We are totally surrounded. We have been "heroically" resisting the avalanche of reactions to the event of May 15th. As of three days ago, helicopters joined the airplanes that watch us from overhead. The cooks complain that there won't be enough pots to cook all the food we will need if they all fall at the same time. The superintendant argues that there is enough firewood to have a barbecue and that we should invite some Argentinian journalist to it because the Argentinians know how to barbecue. I think about it, but it's useless: the best Argentinians are guerillas (Che), or poets (Juan

Gelman), or writers (Borges), or artists (Maradona), or chroniclers (Cortázar). There aren't any famous Argentinian barbecuers. Some indigenous person proposes that we wait for hamburgers from the CEU.

Yesterday we ate the XEOCH's control console and two microphones. They had a rancid taste, like something rotten. The medics are giving out lists of jokes instead of analgesics. They say that laughter is also a cure. The other day I surprised Tacho and Moi as they were crying. . . of laughter. "Why are you laughing?" I asked. They couldn't answer because their laughter had left them short of breath. A medic explained, "It is because they have headaches." Day 136 of the military blockade. Sigh.

To top it all off, Toñita asks me to tell a story. I tell her a story as it was told to me by old Antonio, the father of the Antonio that appears in "Chiapas: The Southeast in Two Winds, a Storm and a Prophecy":

"In the time before the world came into being, the gods came together and decided to create the world and to create men and women. They thought to make the first people very beautiful and very strong. So they made the first people of gold, and the gods were very content because these people were strong and shining. Then the gods realized that the golden people never moved; they never walked or worked because they were so heavy. So the gods came together again in order to figure out a way to resolve this

problem. They decided to make another group of people and they decided to make this group of people of wood. The wooden people worked and walked and the gods were again content. Then the gods realized that the golden people were forcing the wooden people to work for them and carry things for them. The gods realized that they had made a mistake, and in order to remedy the mistake, they decided to make some people of corn, a good people, a true people. Then the gods went to sleep and they left the corn people to find a solution to the problem. The corn people spoke the true tongue, and they went to the mountains in order to find a path for all the peoples. . . "

Old Antonio told me that the golden people were the rich, the whites, and the wooden people were the poor, the ones who forever work for the rich. They are both waiting for the arrival of the corn people. The rich fear their arrival and the poor hope for it. I asked old Antonio what color was the skin of the corn people, and he showed me several types of corn with different colors. He told me that they were of every sort of skin color, but that nobody knew exactly, because the corn people don't have faces.

Old Antonio has died. I met him ten years ago in a community deep in the jungle. He smoked like nobody else I knew, and when he was out of cigarettes he would ask me for some tobacco and would make more cigarettes. He viewed my pipe with curiosity, but the one time I tried to

loan it to him he showed me the cigarette in his hand, telling me without words that he preferred his own method of smoking.

Two years ago, in 1992, I was traveling through the communities attending meetings to decide whether or not we should go to war, and eventually I arrived at the village where old Antonio lived. While the community was discussing whether or not to go to war, old Antonio took me by the arm and led me to the river, about 100 meters from the center of the village. It was May and the river was green. Old Antonio sat on a tree trunk and didn't say anything. After a little while he spoke, "Do you see? Everything is clear and calm. It appears that nothing will happen. . . "

"Hmmm," I answered, knowing that he wasn't asking me to answer yes or no. Then he pointed out to me the top of the nearest mountain. The clouds laid gray upon the summit, and the lightning was illuminating the diffuse blue of the hills. It was a powerful storm, but it seemed so far away and inoffensive that old Antonio made a cigarette and looked uselessly around for a lighter that he knew he didn't have. I offered my lighter. "When everything is calm here below, there is a storm in the mountains, " he said after inhaling. "The mountain streams run strongly and flow toward the riverbed. During the rainy season this river becomes fierce, like a whip, like an earthquake. Its power doesn't come from the rain that falls on its banks, but from the mountain

streams that flow down to feed it. By destroying everything in its path, the river reconstructs the land. Its waters will become corn, beans and bread on our tables here in the jungle. Our struggle is the same. It was born in the mountains, but its effects won't be seen until it arrives here below." He responded to my question about whether he believed the time had come for war by saying, "Now is the time for the river to change color. . . "

Old Antonio quieted and supported himself on my shoulder. We returned to the village slowly. He said to me, "You are the mountain streams and we are the river. You must descend now."

The silence continued and we arrived to his shack as it was growing dark. The younger Antonio returned with the official result of the meeting, an announcement that read, more or less, "We, the men, women and children of this village met in the community's school in order to see if we believed in our heart that it time to go to war for our freedom. We divided ourselves into three groups, one of men, one of women, and one of children to discuss the matter. Later, we came together again and it was see that the majority believed that it was time to go to war because Mexico is being sold to foreigners and the people are always hungry. Twelve men, twenty-three women and eight children were in favor of beginning the war and have signed this announcement." I left the village in the early morning hours. Old Antonio

wasn't around; he had already gone to the river.

Two months ago I saw old Antonio again. He didn't say anything when he saw me and I sat by his side and began to shuck corn with him. "The river rose," he said to me after a bit. "Yes," I answered. I explained to the younger Antonio what was happening with the consultations and I gave him the documents that outlined our demands and the government's response. We spoke of what had happened in Ocosingo during the offensive and once again I left the village in the early morning hours. Old Antonio was waiting for me at a turn in the road. I stopped alongside him and lowered my backpack to look for some tobacco to offer him. "Not now," he said to me as he pushed away the bag of tobacco that I was offering him. He put his arm around me and led me to the foot of a tree. "Do you remember what I told you about the mountain streams and the river?" he asked me. "Yes," I responded whispering as he had when he had asked me the question. "There is something I didn't tell you," he added looking at his bare feet. I answered with silence. "The streams. . . " he was stopped by a cough that wracks his entire body. He took a breath and continued, "The streams, when they descend. . . "

Once again he was stopped by a cough and I went for a medic. Old Antonio turned down the help of the compañero with the red cross. The medic looked at me and I made a

sign that he should leave. Old Antonio waited until the medic left and then, in the penumbra of the dawn, he continued, "The streams, when they descend, have no way of returning to the mountains except beneath the ground." He embraced me rapidly and left. I stayed there watching as he walked away, and as he disappeared in the distance, I lit my pipe and picked up my backpack. As I mounted my horse I thought about what had just occurred. I don't know why, it was very dark, but it seemed that old Antonio was crying.

I just received a letter from the younger Antonio with his village's response to the government's proposals. He also wrote me that old Antonio became very ill and that he had died that night. He didn't want anyone to tell me that he was dying. The younger Antonio wrote me that when they insisted that I be told, old Antonio said, "No, I have already told him what I had to tell him. Leave him alone, he has much work to do." When I finished the story that old Antonio had told me, sixyear old Toñita solemnly told me that yes, she loves me, but that from now on she won't kiss me because "it itches." Rolando says that when Toñita has to go to the medic's area, she asks if el Sub (a shortening of "Subcomandante" – translator) is there. If she is told that I'm there she doesn't go. "Because the Sub only wants kisses and he itches," says the inevitable logic of a six-year old.

The first rains have begun here. We thought that we would have to wait

for the arrival of the anti-riot water cannons in order to have water. Ana Maria says that the rain comes from the clouds that are fighting on top of the mountains. On the summits of the mountains the clouds fight their ferocious battles with what we call lightning. Armed with infinity, the clouds fight for the privilege of dying and becoming rain to feed the land. We Zapatistas are similar to the clouds, without faces, without names, without any payment. Like the clouds we fight for the privilege of becoming a seed for the land.

Vale,

From the mountains of Southeastern Mexico,

Subcomandante Marcos

May, 1994

Postscript – To those of you who are wondering if Marcos is homosexual: Marcos is a gay person in San Francisco, a black person in South Africa, an asian person in Europe, a chicano in San Isidro, an anarchist in Spain, a Palestinian in Israel, an indigenous person in the streets of San Cristobal, a gang-member in Neza, a rocker in the Ex-Soviet Union, a Jew in Germany, an ombudsman in Sedena (Secretaria de Defensa – translator), a feminist in a political party, a communist in the post-Cold War period, a prisoner in Cintalapa, a pacifist in Bosnia, a Mapuche in the Andes, a teacher in CNTE (Confederacion Nacional de Trabajadores de Educacion – translator), an artist without a gallery or a portfolio, a housewife in any

neighborhood in any city in any part of Mexico on a Saturday night, a guerilla in Mexico at the end of the twentieth century, a worker of the CTM on strike, a sexist in the feminist movement, a lone woman in a Metro station at 10pm, a retired person standing around in el Zocalo, a peasant without land, an underground editor, an unemployed worker, a nonconformist student, a dissident against neoliberalism, a writer without books or readers, and a Zapatista in southeastern Mexico.

In other words, Marcos is a human being in this world. Marcos is every untolerated, oppressed, exploited minority that is resisting and saying, “Enough already!” He is every minority who is now beginning to speak and every majority that must shut up and listen. He is every untolerated group searching for a way to speak, their way to speak. Everything that makes Power and the good consciences of those in power uncomfortable – this is Marcos.

Your welcome, dear sirs of the PGR (Procuradur!a General de la Republica -translator), I’m here to serve you. . . by filling you full of lead.

Postscript for the PRD – About the logic of the dead:

The compañeros read what you wrote about “having had more causalties than the EZLN” and immediately they started to count up the causalties. They added and multiplied the casualties starting

from more than ten years ago when we began to lay ambushes along the footpaths and roads “against bandits.”

The compañeros say that when it comes to counting the dead, nobody beats them. “We are well trained in this,” says Gabino. The discussions among the different “tendencies” in the EZLN have become more heated: The most radical compañeros want to start counting from when the Spanish began their violent advance toward the jungle and the mountains, but the more prudent compañeros want to start counting from when we formed the EZLN.

Some ask whether we should count those who have died during the 136 days that the military has had us surrounded. They ask if we should count Amalia, 25 years-old and with seven children. She began to become “a little ill” at six in the evening on day 125 of the military blockade. Then began the fever, the diarrhea, the vomiting, and the bleeding and at midnight we were asked for an ambulance. The ambulance said it couldn’t make it and at four in the morning we managed to get some gasoline and we went to get her in a three-ton truck. One hundred meters from the medical compound where Teniente Elena was she said, “I’m going to die.” And she did die, 98-meters from the medical compound and Teniente Elena, the life and blood flowing out from between her legs. When I asked if she was dead, Teniente Elena said yes, she died “at

once.” The morning of day 126 of the military blockade, Amalia’s second daughter looked upon the body of her mother on the stretcher and told her father that she was going to ask the neighbors for some stew, “because mother can’t make it anymore.” The compañeros ask if they should count Ibarra’s daughter, who died “as if she had become bored with coughing.

Everyone is counting up the dead. Some are using a calculator taken from the town hall in Ocosingo. They are still doing this when Juana comes to ask them to count old Antonio, “who died of sorrow.” Later Lorenzo comes and asks them to count his son Lorenzo, “who died during the night.” Self-criticism is always opportunistic.

Finally, you might accuse us of not taking into account the scale of the different political forces, you might accuse us of political clumsiness, of not having a satellite so that we could view the debate ourselves, of not having subscriptions to the principal newspapers and magazines so we could read the post-debate analysis. You might accuse us of not being friendly, of being discourteous, of not recognizing possible allies, of being sectarians. We wish you health and hope that you leave the animosity for the lazy fools.

*Greetings from this side of the
military blockade,
the impertinant Subcomandante.*

The Story of the Air and the Night

On International Women's Day, March 8, 2000, several thousand Zapatista women demanding rights for the indigenous and women, occupied the XERA radio station in San Cristóbal de las Casas for over forty minutes. In their honor, Marcos speaks of the critical contributions of women to the Zapatista struggle. His comments include a personal tribute to La Mar, from whom he has drifted apart. Durito's advice on lovesickness leads Marcos to share with her the memory of Old Antonio's "Story of the Air and the Night."

INSURGENTAS!
(THE SEA IN MARCH)
Letter 6e.

Mexico, March 2000*

To those who fell,
To those who follow,
To those who shall come

There goes my warm letter,
a dove forged in the fire,
its two wings folded down
and the address in the center.
A bird that only wants
your body, your hands, your eyes
and the space around your breath
Miguel Hernández²⁶⁸

The letters are late and they are not enough
to say what one wants.
Jaime Gil de Biedma²⁶⁹

Juggling its nocturnal hat, the March hare is indecisive. It still does not know whether to rain, or to be content with leaving the sky stained with black ink. February has stayed behind and with it, its own disruptions of wind, sun and rain. It is now the women's March, from the 8th to the 21st, that of Zapatista women, of the *insurgentas*.

I have spoken before of the insurgent women, the *insurgentas*, of our being beside them, of their small and large acts of heroism. Every March 8th, we male insurgents face these women and give them a military salute. A small fiesta usually follows, with the meager resources of our mountain camps. The women have been in the mountains of the Mexican southeast from the beginnings of the EZLN. As time passed, more were to join that small delirious group, which the world would later know as the "Zapatista Army of National Liberation."

There are small, daily things that form part of guerrilla life, and they are like small dues that the mountain imposes on those who dare to be part of it. I know each and every one of those difficulties, and I know well that, for women, they are double. Not because we impose them in that way, but rather because of things that come from other places and other times.

If one admires the fact that a person abandons their history and, as we say, "rises up," choosing the profession of insurgent soldier, they should stop and look at those who make that

* First published in *La Jornada*, March 11, 2000. Originally translated by irlandesa.

²⁶⁸ Spanish poet and dramatist Miguel Hernández fought on the Republican side of the Spanish Civil War until his capture by the fascists. He died in prison. This stanza comes from a poem titled "Letter." See, Hernández, *Selected Poems*, ed., Timothy Baland, trans., Timothy Baland, et. al., (Buffalo: White Pine Press, 1989): 67.

²⁶⁹ Politically engaged, gay Spanish poet and essayist, Jaime Gil de Biedma was born in Barcelona in 1929 and died there of AIDS in 1990. The two lines open his poem "*En Una Despedida*," which was "dedicated to 'Jimmy Baldwin'".

choice as women. Their admiration would be double. In addition to confronting a particularly harsh environment, the *insurgentas* must also confront a cultural code that, beyond the *mestizo*-indigenous division, designates spaces that are not for women (I mean attitudes, places, duties, work, responsibilities and the multiple etceteras added by a society built on exclusion). If an *insurgenta* thinks she has too much work with carrying, walking, training, fighting, studying and working along with the men, she is wrong. It could always be worse. And, in our case, it is worse to be in command.

Primarily indigenous, the EZLN carries with it not just the hope of something better for everyone; it also drags along the world's troubles and blindness that we want to leave aside. If, in the indigenous communities and in the cities, women must confront a world where being male is a privilege that excludes those who are different (women and homosexuals), in the mountain and as troop commanders, they must confront the resistance of the majority of the insurgents to take orders from a woman. If this resistance seemed to be substantially reduced during the 1994 combat, this does not mean that it has completely disappeared. The male will invariably think that he can do it better than his commander, if it is a she, a woman. Something similar takes place in the villages, but I will limit myself now to speaking of the regular troops, of the insurgents□□□and of the *insurgentas*.

In the past, there had been just one merit promotion in the EZLN, that is, a promotion in military rank. An *insurgenta*, Maribel, rose from First Captain to Major of the Infantry. Now a major, Maribel is still short and dark, she is still a woman; the only thing that has changed is that now she commands an entire regiment. To those problems that she faces in her new status as zone commander, must be added those that correspond to being a woman.

Like her, other *compañeras*, with or without command, at arms and service, rigorously fulfill paying their dues of commitment and sacrifice, the same as all combatants. But, if the part least exposed now to the glare of outside searchlights is that of the insurgent troops, the *insurgentas* add one more shadow to that of the ski-masks they wear: they are women.

And, I should say, they also add a superior level of heroism to ours, the men. We might not understand it (in spite of regulations and statutes, of the Revolutionary Law of Women, of talks and declarations), but we never stop appreciating it.

And alongside Maribel are other officers: in what we call "Health Services," there are the *insurgenta* Captains Oli-Ale (the woman with the most active years within the EZLN) and Mónica, and *insurgenta* Lieutenant Aurora. There are more, officers and troops.

Some, I have already mentioned, years ago, on an occasion like this one. I shall not name others because there has already been an occasion to do so. Before them, there was Alicia, from the first group that founded the EZLN in 1983, and the first woman with troop command (the first in the mountains facing the problem of being a woman and commanding men). Soon after, Lucía arrived, the insurgent author of the words to the Zapatista Hymn (and of many of the songs that are heard today at night in the mountains of the Mexican southeast).²⁷⁰ And even before, there were Murcia (the first woman in the Zapatista guerrilla to fall in combat in 1974), Dení Prieto S. (fallen in combat in 1974), Soledad (fallen in combat in 1974), Julieta Glockner (fallen in combat in 1975) and Ruth (fallen in combat in 1983, it was she who taught me how to shoot).

Through all of them, and with them, is Lucha, whom we call "the stainless steel *insurgenta*." More than 30 clandestine years cause Lucha's ski mask to shine among us in a special way. Today, in spite of the cancer that she hardly lets bother her, Lucha continues to be the first among our guerrilla women, the best memory.

²⁷⁰ The Zapatista Hymn is based on the traditional *corrido*, or ballad, "Carabina 30-30" made popular by Zapatistas during the Mexican Revolution of 1910.

This March 8th, saluting our current *insurgentas*, we are saluting all those who preceded them and us, and who, in more than one sense, transcend us.

I shall tell you something about the name “*insurgentas*.” The anecdote can be situated at any time and in any place in that unknown monotony of life in the mountains.

I found myself leading military training operations. Between exercise and tactical exercise, the guerrilla column was trotting to the rhythm of more or less obvious chants: I would shout, for example, “Who Goes There?” and the troops would respond in unison “The Homeland!” That’s how it was done and is done. One of the chants of combat march is when the commander asks, “What are we?” and everyone responds, “*Insurgentes!*”

On that day that I am now recounting to you, half the column was made up of women, and, when I shouted “What are we?” and then yes, I clearly could hear that, while the men were responding, “*Insurgentes!*” the women were overcoming the men’s voices and imposing their shout of “*Insurgentas!*” I remained silent. I gave the men the order to “fall out.” Then, facing just the women, I repeated, “What are we?” They responded, without any interference now, strongly and firmly, “*Insurgentas!*” I kept looking at them, disconcerted, and I noted a slight smile on their faces. I went back to the “What are we?” and they repeated, “*Insurgentas!*” I lit my pipe and smoked slowly, not looking at anything in particular.

I called them all to formation and told them, in so many words, “Today we learned that we are going to win. Any questions?” Silence. In a strong voice I ordered, “Attention! *Insurgentes!*” I turned around to look at the *compañeras*, and I added, “And *Insurgentas!* Fall out! Now!” The sound of the boots was, indeed, uniform. Thank goodness, I muttered to myself. They all went to the headquarters□□□men and women. I remained smoking, seeing how the afternoon, feminine as it is, was dressed as sea and lilacs, as *insurgentas*.

The Zapatista *insurgentas*□□□

Now, this time, I want to speak more about one of them. I can say about this woman that she is one more of us, but for me she is not just one more, she is unique. La Mar is not a literary character, she is a woman, she is a Zapatista. She was the architect of last year’s national and international *consulta* (and an important part of each and every one of the peace initiatives these last six years), and, as frequently happens with the Zapatistas, her anonymity is double because she is a woman. Now, given that it is March 8th, I wish to make it clear that, although most of the time it’s my duty to be the public figure, many initiatives are authored, in their design and realization, by other *compañeros* and *compañeras*. In the case of the *consulta*, it was a Zapatista woman: La Mar. Just after March 21st, she picked up her pack and joined the unit□□□

One must also remember that the mobilization of women (in Mexico and in the world) in that *consulta* was the backbone: in the contact office (national and international), in the brigades, among the coordinators, on the voting tables, in the actions: women (of all sizes, origins, status, colors, ages) were the majority. And so, in order to salute the women who are fighting and, above all, those who are fighting and who are not seen, in many ways, the *insurgentas* appear in these lines. In order to celebrate them I have asked an old indigenous wise man to join me: Old Antonio, and the most intrepid and gallant knight these worlds have ever seen: Durito (alias Nebuchadnezzar, alias Don Durito de la Lacandona, alias Black Shield, alias Sherlock Holmes, alias Heavy Metal Durito, alias whatever else occurs to him). Well then, best wishes to the rebel women, to those without a face, to the *insurgentas*□□□

Love sickness

There below is March again, its first three letters bring a sparkle to my eye, reiterating [reminding me of] La Mar. Fito Páez accompanies [joins] me as I give a her gift of a dress and love, and the little tape player makes me realize, “There’s nothing more I can say.”²⁷¹ I take advantage of a gust of wind and I reach Don Durito, who is painstakingly sawing and nailing who-knows-what on his sardine can. I know before that I’ve said it’s a pirate ship. In fact, Durito just turned around to look at me with eyes like sharpened daggers when I wrote “sardine can,” but I’ve done so only so the reader might remember that Durito is now Black Shield (Escudo Negro), the famous pirate who shall inherit a truly difficult task from the deceased Barbarrosa. The vessel on which Durito —excuse me, I mean Black Shield— arrived is called “Learn from the Mistakes of Others,” for reasons still unknown to me. Durito has proposed to me that I accompany him in a treasure hunt. I have already recounted all of this in a previous letter, so I shall not go on about it. The situation is that, in this March of the sea, I’ve come to where Durito is working in order to see what he is doing and to ask for guidance and advice.

Durito is giving the last blows to what I suppose is a mast with a makeshift sail, and when I clear my throat in order to announce my presence, he says:

“Good, there it is. And now, with you in the bow, there will be no surprises to hinder us.”

I give a melancholy smile and look at the vessel with indifference. Durito reproaches me: “It is not just any ship. It is a galley, a classic vessel destined for war around the 16th century. The galley can be propelled by sails or by the oars used by those ‘condemned to the galleys.’”

He pauses and continues: “And, speaking of sails, might one know why sadness covers your face?”

I make a gesture to say, “It’s not important.”

Durito interprets it and says: “Ah! Love sickness.”

He slowly puts the hammer and saw aside, disembarks and, taking out his little pipe, sits down next to me.

“I suppose, my future bow man, that what has you sad and distressed is nothing other than a feminine being, a female, a woman, in fact.

I sigh.

Durito continues: “Look, my dear bathtub sailor, if the one who keeps thee sleepless is a woman, a particular one, then thy sickness is serious but the remedy possible.”

I confessed: “It so happens that, yes, it is a woman, a particular one, she who is La Mar for many more reasons than the “Mariana” that names her. One unlucky day I drifted away from her and now I can’t find the way or means to take refuge again in her moistness, to forget bad storms, well, to have her forgive me.

Durito takes a long puff and passes judgment:

“Great and serious are your faults and losses, but I can give you some counsel if you promise to follow my directions to the letter.

I said “yes” with an enthusiasm that made Durito jump with fright. He readjusts his eye patch as best he can and says: “It is necessary to resort to a spell. In love, the world is, as always, a puzzle, but it so happens that, if a particular male piece comes across another particular female piece, the pieces fit and take shape, and the puzzle spreads and teases faces, arms and legs.

“And breasts,” I say, wringing the anguish I am feeling in mine.

“Good, what I am driving at is that the spell will only have an effect if she, La Mar in your case, is willing to submit to it, because, otherwise, all will be futile. I mean the spell will not work if the object of the spell is not aware that she is being charmed.”

²⁷¹ Fito Páez is a singer and filmmaker from Argentina.

“A strange spell, this one.”

Durito continues without paying me any mind: “Bring her a good memory, one of those that are good for seeing far ahead, one that shall make her lift her gaze and send it long and deep. Tell her to look ahead, not to the following day, not to next week, nor the coming year. Further ahead, beyond that. Do not ask her what she sees. Only look at her looking ahead. If you see that her gaze smiles with tenderness, then you will be forgiven, and there shall be wheat and sand and sea and wind, and you will be able to sail once again, and that, and nothing else, is what love is.”

Durito picks up his gear once again and continues fixing the galley. The destination of the trip is still unknown to me, but Durito remains silent, letting me know that I should go and carry out what he has told me.

I wander through the dawn a bit more. I seek to find La Mar in bed. I know that you are thinking that I am speaking of just a bed, but here a bed is any bed or table or ground or chair or air, every time our shadow is copied in the other, never one, always two, but so close together. If it's not like that, then it's not a *bed*, you need two to talk about a bed. I think that if La Mar is sleeping, it would be a mistake to wake her up with this absurd story of the spell. Then it occurs to me that I should address the issue indirectly, approaching her while whistling some tune, commenting on the weather□□□ or trying out a love poem.

But the problem, I intuit, is that a love poem holds a lock, an ultimate secret, that only a few, a very few, almost no one, is able to open, to discover, to free. One is left with the impression that what one feels for someone has already found its perfect, brilliant, complete formulation in someone else's words. And one crumples up the paper (or, in cybernetic times, decides to delete the file in question) with the commonplaces in which feeling is made word. I don't know much about love poetry, but I know enough so that, when my fingers turn to something like that, I feel that it seems more like a strawberry shake than a love sonnet. In short, poetry, and more specifically, love poetry, is for anyone, but not everyone has the key that opens its highest flight. That's why, when I can, I call on poets, both friends and enemies, and in La Mar's ear, I renew the plagiarisms that, barely stammered, seem to be mine. I suspect that she knows, in any case she does not let me know, and she closes her eyes and lets my fingers comb through her hair and her dreams.

I draw near and I think and I feel and I tell myself that such desires to return to the beginning, to start again, to return to the first stroke of the first letter, the “A” of the long alphabet of the company, to return to the first sketch that makes the two of us together and to begin to grow again, and, again, to sharpen the point of hope. There she is. She sleeps. I draw near and□□□

(□□□)

And all of this is to the point, or to the account, because, in this sea of March, everything seems to smell of desolation, of impasse, of incurable fall, of frustration. Because I am sure that it would seem strange to all of you that today I dare to prophesize the return of flags of all colors, populating, from below, fields, streets and windows. And I dare to do so because I look at this Zapatista woman, her tender insistence, her hard love, her dream. I look at her, and through her, and above all with her. I promise her and I promise myself, new air for those sister flags, banners, flyers, that disturb and keep the rich and poor awake, although for different reasons for some and others. I promise her and I promise myself, right in the middle of the most tedious night, another tomorrow, not the best, but definitely better. For this woman who, in the mornings and in front of me, pricks up her ears and puts on her pistol while telling me “here comes the helicopter” as if she were saying “they are knocking at the door.” For this Zapatista, for this woman, and for many like her, who, for the two and three before them, who shoulder this so that

the little good that remains does not fall, and in order to finally begin to build with that material that which today seems so far away: tomorrow.

Vale. Salud to all, and for her, in addition, a flower.

From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast

Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos

P.S. that fulfils the duplicity

I am attaching here the memory that I gave to La Mar. This is how this Letter 6e achieves its double wing and undertakes the flight necessary for every letter. Over and out.

Story for a Night of Anguish

I tell La Mar that, for some reason that I can't manage to understand, Old Antonio might have read some of the German philosopher Immanuel Kant. Instead of becoming impassioned with xenophobia, Old Antonio took from the world everything good that the world made available, without regard for the land where it was born. Referring to good people from other nations, Old Antonio used the term "internationals," and he used the word "foreigners" only for those indifferent to the heart; it didn't matter that they were of his color, language and race. "Sometimes even in the same blood there are foreigners," Old Antonio would say, in order to explain to me the absurd nonsense of passports.

But, I tell La Mar the history of nationalities is another history. What I remember now refers to the night and its paths.

It was one of those dawns with which March affirms its delirious vocation. A day with a sun like a seven-tailed whip was followed by an afternoon of gray storm clouds. By night, a cold wind was already gathering black clouds above a faded and timid moon.

Old Antonio had passed the morning and afternoon with the same calmness with which he was now lighting his cigarette. A bat fluttered about us for an instant, surely disturbed by the light with which Old Antonio gave life to his cigarette. And, like the bat, it appeared suddenly, in the middle of the night□□□

The Story of the Air of the Night

When the greatest gods, those who birthed the world, the very first ones, thought about how and why they were going to do what they were going to do, they made an assembly where each one took out his word in order to know it and so that the others would know of it. And so each one of the very first gods would take out a word and throw it into the center of the assembly and there it bounced and it reached other gods who grabbed it and threw it again, and so like a ball the word would go from one side to the other until everyone finally understood it and then they made their agreement, the greatest gods who were those that birthed all things we call worlds. One of the agreements they found when they took out their words was that each path has its traveler and each traveler his path. And then they went about making things complete, or, rather, each one with a partner.

That is how the air and the birds were born. Or, rather, that there was not air first and then birds to travel it; neither were birds made first, and then air so that they could fly in it. They did the same with water and the fish who swim in it, the land and animals who walk it, the path and the feet that travel it.

But speaking of birds, there was one that protested much against the air. This bird would say that it would fly better and more quickly if the air did not oppose it. This bird grumbled much because, even though its flight was agile and swift, it always wanted to be more and better, and, it

said, if it could not be so, it was because the air turned into an obstacle. The gods became annoyed at how much he would fuss, this bird who flew in the air and complained of the air.

And so, as punishment, the first gods took away its feathers and the light from its eyes. Naked, they sent him out into the cold of the night and blindly he would have to fly. Then his flight, once graceful and light, became disordered and clumsy.

But once found and after many blows and mishaps this bird managed to see with its ears. By speaking to things, this bird, or the bat, guides its path and knows the world that answers him in a language only he knows how to listen to. Without feathers to dress him, blind and with a nervous and hurried flight, the bat rules the mountain night and no animal travels the dark air better than he.

From this bird, the *tzotz*, the bat, true men and women learned to grant great and powerful value to the spoken word, to the sound of thought. They also learned that night contains many worlds and one must know how to listen to them in order for them to come forth and flourish. With words the worlds of the night are born with words. Through sounds, they are made light, and they are so many they do not fit on the land and many end up adapting themselves to the sky. That is why they say that stars are born on the ground.

The greatest gods also bore men and women, not so that one would be the path of the other, but so that they would be, at the same time, the other's path and traveler. They were made different in order to be together. The greatest gods made men and women so that they would love each other. That is why the night air is the best for flying, for thinking, for speaking and for loving.

Old Antonio ends his story in that March. In this March, here, La Mar sails a dream where the word and bodies disrobe, they travel worlds without colliding, and love can take flight without anguish. Up there a star discovers an empty space on the ground and quickly lowers itself, leaving a momentary scratch in the window of this dawn. On the little tape player, Mario Benedetti, a Uruguayan of the entire world, says, "You all can go, I am staying."²⁷²

Another P.S.—Did La Mar accept the spell? It is, as I know not who said, a mystery.

Vale once again. *Salud*, and March is, as usual, coming in very *loco*.

The Sup, waiting as always, that is, smoking.

* * *

²⁷² This is the closing line to Benedetti's poem "A la izquierda del roble." Mario Benedetti, *Noción de patria. Próximo Próximo* (Madrid: Visor Libros, S.L. 1998)

From the Underground Culture to the Culture of Resistance^{*}

The Sup's Words for the "From the Underground Culture to the Culture of Resistance" Roundtable Alicia Multiforum.

October 26, 1999.

I would like to thank those who were in charge of the Alicia Multiforum for the invitation they extended to us to participate in this Roundtable.

I do not have much experience in round tables, square tables are more our specialty, as the table most certainly must be where those who are accompanying this act are seated: Zack de la Rocha, Yaotl, Hermann Bellinghausen, Nacho Pineda, a *compa* from the Punk Anarchy collective and Javier Elorriaga.¹

And more, it is quite likely that the participants at this round table that is not round are seated on a small platform. And more, perhaps there is not even a table, and there are only a few chairs. Perhaps the only one who has a table is me, because they have to put the TV on something in order to show you this video.

Good, the fact is, at this round table, those who are participating cannot see each other's faces, something that would most certainly be happening if they were at a round table that were, in fact, round. And so here we are, sitting around a round table that is not round, and facing you, which is better, because from here I'm able to see a *chavala* whose face is the best argument for leaving the issue of round and square tables in peace, and better that I don't tell you what that look is suggesting either (sigh).²

Where was I? Oh, yes! That here we are, facing you, at that round table that I don't know who called "From Underground Culture to the Culture of Resistance." No, I don't have anything against whoever called this round table that isn't round that. The problem is that word that is repeated: "CULTURE." So many things fit there that, even though we are restricting them to the limits imposed by the words "Underground" and "Resistance," they would not do for a round table, no matter how square it might be, but rather for a great intercontinental *encuentro* that would last for light years, without even including the time taken up in arranging the microphone, greeting *raza*, or in staying asleep because someone has decided that culture can also be boring and has set about demonstrating it.

Having said that, I am not going to talk to you about underground culture, nor about the culture of resistance, nor about the bridge that most certainly joins them. In addition to leaving the issue for those who are accompanying us at that table that we are calling round even knowing that it is square, I will avoid making myself appear ridiculous and I will be able to conceal my encyclopedic ignorance on this subject. As the greatest and well-loved Don Durito of La Lacandona would say, "There is no problem sufficiently great that it cannot be pondered upon." I would add to those wise words that cause the action and the commitment, "nor is there a round table that is not square."

I know that you are all anxious to know what in the hell I'm going to talk about then. More than one of you might be asking if the guitar I have by my side means that I'm

^{*} First appeared in *La Jornada* October 27, 1999. Originally translated by irlandesa.

¹ *Compa* is the diminutive of *compadre*, which translates roughly as friend or comrade.

² *Chavala* is a slang term usually used in the D.F. that can mean kid, girl or lass.

going to play a song, one of those that are so honorably played in the Mexico of below, which we all are.

But no, I'm not going to play any songs. The guitar is for the surprise appearance we're going to make tomorrow, October 27, 1999, with "Rage Against the Machine," "Aztlán Underground" and "Tijuana NO" at the Sports Palace. Well, that's if they don't censor us first, or if the law doesn't show up, in which case the concert will be held in the prison closest to your hearts.

And, I'm going to be sincere with you, this entire initial litany has been to use up time, because the organizers made it quite clear to me that I was to speak for some twenty minutes, and I believe that twenty minutes are too long to say that I'm not going to speak to you about underground culture, nor about the culture of resistance, nor about the relationship between the one and the other.

You know? We are *guerreros*.³ Some very otherly *guerreros*, but, at the end of the day, some *guerreros*. And we *guerreros* know a few things. And among the few things that we know, we know about weapons.

So, better that I talk to you about weapons. Specifically, I'm going to talk to you about the weapon of resistance.

We, besides being *guerreros*, are Mexican indigenous. We live in the mountains of the Mexican Southeast, which is turning out to be the last corner of this country. We live like the majority of the indigenous in Mexico live, that is, very badly.

Our homes have dirt floors, our walls are of sticks or mud, and our roofs are of laminate, cardboard or grass. One single room serves for kitchen, dining room, bedroom, living room and henhouse. Our foods are, basically, maize, beans, chili, and the vegetables that grow in the garden. For medicine we have some little popular pharmacy, poorly stocked. Doctors? In our dreams. The school, if it is not being occupied by the government's soldiers, is a hall, where up to four different groups of students coexist at the same time, and who are not very numerous, because our children start working when they're very small, between 4 and 5 years old, the women carrying wood, grinding maize, washing clothes and taking care of their younger brothers and sisters; when they're between ten and twelve, the boys, to the mountain, taking care of the livestock, carrying wood, working the fields, the coffee plantations or the pasture. Our lands are poor in two senses: they are poor because they are ours, who are poor as a matter of course. And they are poor because they yield little in the way of harvest. We have only mud and rocks, the *finqueros* have the good lands.⁴ The livestock and coffee that we sell to make money, we sell to the *coyotes*, who are a kind of intermediary, who pay us up to ten times less than the price of our products in the market. And, so, our work, in addition to being hard, is badly paid.⁵

However, even though we live like most of the indigenous population in the country, that is, in poverty, we do not live the same as most of the indigenous population. Our poverty is the same as the poverty of the others, but it is different, it is "other" poverty.

³ *Guerreros* are literally warriors or fighters and can also refer to soldiers or members of guerilla armies.

⁴ *Finqueros* are people who are part of a powerful land-owning elite.

⁵ *Coyotes* is used here to identify middlemen, however it also usually implies an illegal element as in smuggling.

We are poor because that is what we chose. From the beginning of our uprising, they have offered us everything to get us to sell ourselves, to surrender.

If we had done so, if we had surrendered, if we had sold ourselves, we would now have good houses, good schools, hospitals, machinery for working the land, better prices for our products, good food.

But we chose not to sell ourselves, we chose not to surrender. Because it so happens that we are indigenous and we are also *guerreros*. And *guerreros* are *guerreros* because they are fighting for something. And we, the Zapatistas, are fighting for good homes, good food, good health, a good price for our work, good lands, good education, respect for the culture, the right to information, liberty, independence, justice, democracy and peace. Yes, we are fighting for all of that, but for everyone, not just for ourselves. That is why we Zapatistas are *guerreros*, because we want “for everyone, everything, nothing for ourselves.”

If we had surrendered, if we had sold ourselves, we would no longer have been poor, but others would have continued to be so.

Good, but you are asking yourselves: Where is the weapon that this handsome, attractive, nice *guerrero* was going to talk to us about? I’ll tell you now.

It happened that, when they saw that we were not surrendering, that we were not selling ourselves, the government began attacking us in order to force us to surrender and to sell ourselves. They offered us many things, money, projects, aid, and, if we rejected them, they became angry and they threatened us. That is how we came to understand that, by refusing to accept government aid, by resisting, then, we made the powerful angry. And there is nothing a Zapatista *guerrero* likes more than making the powerful angry. And so, with singular joy we dedicated ourselves to resisting, to saying “no,” to transforming our poverty into a weapon. The weapon of resistance.

Almost six years of war have now spoken with that weapon, with it we have resisted more than 60,000 soldiers, war tanks, bomber aircraft, artillery helicopters, cannons, machine guns, bullets and grenades. With it, we have resisted the lie.

If you would like me to sum it up, I would tell you that we made ourselves soldiers like that so that one day soldiers would no longer be necessary, as we also remain poor, so that one day there will no longer be poverty. This is what we use the weapon of resistance for.

Obviously, it is not the only weapon we have, as is clear from the metal that clothes us. We have other arms. For example, we have the arm of the word. We also have the weapon of our culture, of our being what we are. We have the weapon of music, the weapon of dance. We have the weapon of the mountain, that old friend and *compañera* who fights along with us, with her roads, hiding places and hillsides, with her trees, with her rains, with her suns, with her dawns, with her moons...

We also have the weapons that we carry by nature, but it is not the time to be going around punning, much less now, when you’ve all become very serious. And, in order to chase away your seriousness, I’m going to tell you a joke, no, don’t believe it or be frightened, I’m not going to tell you a joke, better that we leave that to Zedillo, who, as president, is nothing but a bad joke. No, better that I go on to the next issue that I’m going to talk to you about.

Music and Resistance. Notably Rock, but not just rock. Notably music groups, but not just music groups. I mean, not just what we see and listen to, but also what makes our

seeing and listening possible. Because *raza* gets down when it listens to Rage Against the Machine, to Aztlan Underground, to Tijuana No. Or to “Durito Against the Sup” (which is a group that’s going to be formed if Durito keeps on giving me whooping cough).⁶

Where was I? Ah yes! That *raza* gets down when it listens to a good music group, and then one feels one’s bones and muscles being controlled by nothing other than the heart and one starts moving, shaking, jumping, a little step here and another little step there, getting together, a “*prexta pa la orquesta*” (I already know that everyone is thinking: son of a bitch, the Sup is talking like a *pachuco* from the Tin Tan or Piporro films, but, whatever, *raza*) well, they dance then, and they don’t think about those who are making it possible for that group to be listened to, and that we have a place and a reason to dance.⁷ For example, the other day I was listening to some cuts from a group that plays heavy heavy (since it so happens that I am “educating my ear,” because before the war I was just into *huapangos* and *polkas*, *ajua*) and just Zapatistas and it happens that I took a look at the introduction to the cassette or to the compact disc, and I read that there are tons of people involved, in addition to those who play it, and I believe the musicians do recognize the work of all these people, but those of us who are listening or dancing just don’t.⁸ For example, here we are in the self-named “Alicia MultiForum” and here is Zack, Yaotl, Pineda, the *compa* from Punk Anarchy, Elorriaga, and this video that you are being forced to watch and listen to, because what you wanted was to listen to Zack and Yaotl, and not talking exactly, but partying with a song. Good, I said here we are in this place, and whoever organized this round table that is square, whoever or whatever is responsible for the sound being heard well or badly, whoever takes care of this building, whoever keeps it going, whoever opened this space so that you and we could meet, whoever then. There it is. We don’t have any idea. No way, their place is in the background. But, then, I’m proposing to you, for all those people who are back there, that we give them a round of applause that can be heard even in the back, and don’t leave them out, because, if not, neither round table, nor square, nor concert, nor *maiz palomas naranjas dridas que jais de la guirinais*.⁹ Applaud, then.

(Applause continues)

(If the applause takes a while, push “stop” on the video, because, if not, I’m going to continue and no one can fight me).

All done now? Good, then the subject was, what is Music and Resistance. But, as I already explained before, as far as music goes I’m just do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-si, and I still get it wrong, but we are a bit smart about resistance. The fact is that zapatismo and rock bring and carry something, because, if not, what are Zack and Yaotl and I doing here (because I’m also a rocker, but an “old-fashioned” one), sitting at a round table which, as everyone has seen, is square.

Good. If we say that zapatismo “rebounded” in rock groups and in that way produced its “other” and “different” effect, I believe we would be being unfair. We are talking about groups with a long tradition of social commitment and professional independence.

⁶ *Raza* literally translates as race or people. In this context it also suggests people of Mexican descent.

⁷ *prexta pa la orquesta*, *pachuco* Tin Tan Piporro films

⁸ *Huapangos* are a folkloric musical form from the Huasteca region while *polkas* are musical forms that feature the accordion. *Ajua* is an exclamation similar to whoa or yahoo.

⁹ *maiz palomas naranjas dridas que jais de la guirinais*

What happened? Who knows. Perhaps many round tables are necessary, even though they be square, in order to look at the issue of rock and zapatismo.

Perhaps what happened is there was a meeting. There were words that met, but, above all, there were, and are, feelings that met. If there are songs from these groups that could easily appear to be comunicués, and if there are comunicués that could be lines to songs, it is not by virtue of who is writing them, no, it is because they are saying the same thing, they are reflecting the same thing, that underground “other,” which, by being “different,” organizes itself in order to resist, in order to exist.

Because it is not just the Zapatistas who are *guerreros* of resistance. There are many groups (and there are several gathered together here) who have also made a weapon of resistance, and they are using it. And there are some of everything, there are indigenous, there are workers, there are women, there are homosexuals, there are lesbians, there are students, there are young people. Above all there are young people, men and women, who name their own identities: “punk,” “ska,” “goth,” “metal,” “trasher,” “rapper,” “hip-hopper” and “etceteras.” If we look at what they all have in common, we will see that they have nothing in common, that they are all “different.” They are “others.” And that is exactly what we have in common, that we are “other,” and “different.” Not only that, we also have in common that we are fighting in order to continue being “other” and “different,” and that is why we resist. And we are “other” and “different” to the powerful, or we are not like they want us to be, but rather just as we are.

And what we are, far from wanting to impose its being on the “other” or “different,” seeks its own space, and, at the same time, a space of meeting. The “punks” don’t go around on a campaign demanding that all young people be “punks,” nor do the “ska,” or the “goths,” or the “metal,” or the “trashers,” or the rappers, or, certainly, the indigenous. Nonetheless. The Power does indeed want us to be how they want us to be, want us to dress according to the style the Power dictates, want us to talk the way he says, want us to eat what he sells, want us to consider beautiful and lovely what he considers beautiful and lovely, even want us to love and hate the way he establishes that love and hate should be. And not just that, the Power also wants us to do all this on our knees and in silence, without going around jumping, without shouts, without indigenous uprisings, well-mannered. That is why the Power has armies and police, to force those who are “other” and “different” to be the same and identical.

But the “other” and “different” are not looking for everyone to be like they are. As if each one is saying that everyone has his own way or his own thing (I don’t know how that’s said now) and, in order for this to be possible, it is not enough to just be, you also must always respect the other. The “everyone doing his own thing” is double: it is affirmation of difference, and it is respect for the other difference. When we say we are fighting for respect for our “different” and “other” selves, that includes fighting for respect for those who are also “other” and “different,” who are not like ourselves. And it is here where this entire resistance movement, called “underground” or “subterranean,” because it takes place among those of below and underneath institutional movements, meets zapatismo.

And this meeting is a meeting between *guerreros* and *guerreras*, among those who make resistance a weapon, and who fight with it in order to be what they are, in order to exist.

Or, when Zapatistas say “we want a world where many worlds fit,” they are not discovering anything new, they are simply saying what the “other” and “different” who walk the worlds of below have already said.

We Zapatistas say “I am as I am and you are as you are, we are building a world where I can be, without having to cease being me, where you can be, without having to stop being you, and where neither I nor you force another to be like me or like you.” Or, as when the Zapatistas say “a world where many worlds fit,” they are saying, more or less, “everyone does his own thing.”

And, before you start putting on airs, I’ll go on to another theme on the same subject.

Because it so happens then that, because we are different, we are the same. We are the same persecuted, the same despised, the same beaten, the same imprisoned, the same disappeared, the same assassinated. And it is not ours who are persecuting, despising, beating, imprisoning, assassinating us. It is not even the “others” from below. It is the Power and their names. And our crimes are not stealing, beating, assassinating, insulting. Nor is our crime being “other” and “different.” No, our crime is in being so, and in being proud of being so. Our crime—which in the Power’s penal code merits the death penalty—is the struggle we are making to continue being “other” and “different.” If we were “other” and “different” shamefully, in hiding, guiltily, betrayed by ourselves, trying to be, or to appear to be, what the Power wants us to be or to appear to be, then they would give us an indulgent and pitying little pat, and they would tell us that “they are things of youth, you will get over it with age.” For the Power, the medicine against rebellion is time, “since it will go away with age.”

Lie, what the Power is not saying is what is behind “that age” that it assumes will cure and do away with youthful rebellion. Hours, months, years of blows, of insults, of jails, of deaths, of rapes, of persecutions, of neglect, a machinery working to “cure us” if we stop being what we are and if we turn ourselves into servile beings, or which will eliminate us if we insist on being what we are, without regard to calendar, birthdays or the date on the birth certificate.

And so, then, we are all transgressors of the law. Because there is a law in this system that kills and silences those who are “other” and “different.” And, by living, by shouting, by talking, that is, by being rebels, we are transgressing that law, and we are, automatically, criminals.

And these criminals that we are, we live in a rebel reality, where resistance is a bridge for us to meet, recognizing our difference and our equality. And rock is also like a bridge over which those realities walk in order to meet.

In what way is rock a mirror and crystal for this very “other” and “different” reality? The truth is, I do not know and I do not understand. I look at and listen to groups like Rage Against the Machine and Tijuana NO (to mention just those who are participating in tomorrow’s concert, but knowing that there are many others, and that all of them are good—as musicians and as human beings), and I ask myself why do they do what they do, say what they say, and play what they play. I believe it would be better for them to tell us what goes on with them. Perhaps it so happens that they are also asking themselves why we Zapatistas are doing what we are doing, saying what we are saying and playing what we are playing (although, when it comes to rock, we are fairly useless. “Useless.”: How about that? A good name for a group or for a song. “Useless,” like that, with no

qualifiers, so that everyone fits, men, women, and those who are neither men nor women, but who are).

And, the reason for this video is to answer why we Zapatistas are doing what we are doing, saying what we are saying and playing what we are playing, but, since I've gone over the twenty minutes I had, it will remain open. At best, what I said earlier might help in finding the answer.

Sale, then, *raza*, *banda*, *compas*, *chompiras*, *valedores*, *neros*, *gueyes*, or, as that international philosopher who is now dressing as a pirate, Durito, says, "everyone doing his own thing."¹⁰

Then, Elorriaga's thing shall follow, who will, in his turn, tell us whose thing is to follow, Bellinghausen's, Zack's, Yaotl's, Pineda's, the *compa* from Punk Anarchy's, or I don't know whose thing then, because, because they might have put me in the middle (which would be in verrrry bad taste), or leave me to the end, so that the *raza* would already be asleep and wouldn't have to hear the outrageous things I'm saying here.

Vale. Salud and (like it says on the cover of that fanzine that has the good taste to call itself "ZUPterraneo"), and with such a thing, "something doesn't smell right," which means something like "there are things and then there are things." *Salud!*

From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast
The Sup, tuning up his guitar for the "special appearance."
Mexico, "other" and "different,"
October, 1999.

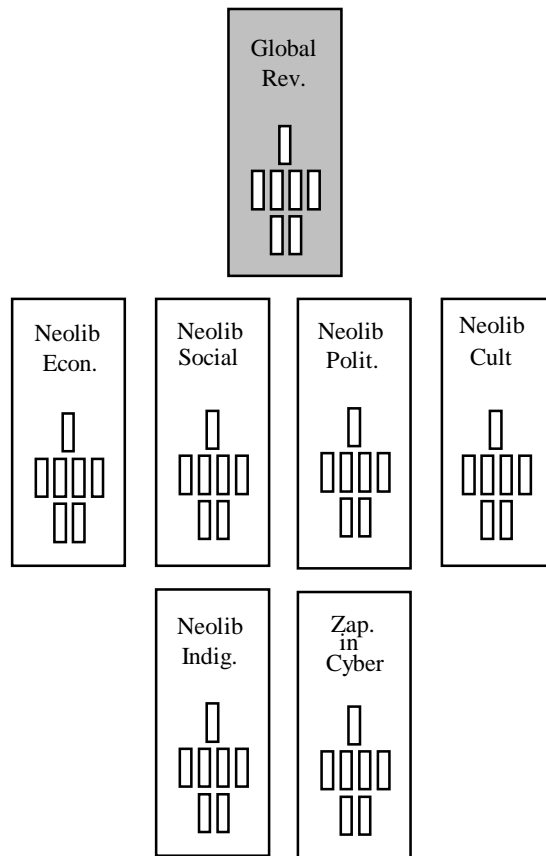


¹⁰ *banda* is band or gang; *chompiras*, *valedores* is defenders, *neros*, *gueyes*.

Neoliberalism:

Global Revolution

One of a series of interconnected notes
prepared by Acción Zapatista de Austin
(www.utexas.edu/students/nave)



Revolutionary change “is about a process which incorporates different methods, different fronts, different and various levels of commitment and participation...[it] is no longer the problem of THE organization, THE method, THE caudillo.”
Don Durito of the Lacandon, June 11, 1995

Reform and Revolution

Neoliberalism is a form of capitalism. Each time mass movements have successfully fought against earlier forms of capitalist exploitation the system has metamorphosed and survived. In the 1930s, North America and European workers fought arbitrary management and periodically devastating unemployment. They demanded control over their work, steadily rising wages, full employment, unemployment compensation, paid vacations and collective voices in social policy and politics. They got Keynesianism: trade unions which collaborated with management, productivity deals that ignored their growing needs for free time, and in general government policies structured in favor of business but wrapped in the rhetoric of a “welfare state” for all. Out and out revolution has been subdued into reform. Mexican, Russian and Chinese peasants and workers who fought revolutionary wars for bread and land, dignity and justice found themselves saddled with a kind of state capitalism where revolution survived only as rhetoric and reforms were structured for the most rapid accumulation of capital possible. Anti-colonial struggles resulted in neo-colonialism ---a change in form but not in substance. The implication is clear: we must change everything, everywhere, i.e., achieve a real revolution.

Struggling Against Neoliberalism

A great weakness of our existing struggles against neoliberalism is our isolation from each other. The business interests and policies which have crafted and imposed neoliberalism are, unfortunately, much more united and coherent than we have been. Neoliberalism has been designed, pushed and implemented by some of the biggest, most powerful institutions in the world. Overcoming our own fragmentation does not require creating similarly concentrated institutions of power but rather elaborating a different kind of unity on as great a scale.

Organizing need not mean creating AN organization. Organizations tend to become bureaucratized, rigid and unresponsive to the evolving needs of organizing --witness the recurrent efforts to “reform” trade unions, etc. Better that we undertake a process of global organizing that consists of establishing linkages among variously organized local struggles and broader movements with the object of accelerating the circulation of struggles and the capacity to undertake joint or complementary actions.

In the past revolutionary efforts have sought “unity”

through the promulgation and adherence to ideologies. We have learned the hard way that this doesn't work. We humans, our ideas, our cultures, our ways of doing things are extremely diverse. Efforts to homogenize us are doomed to fail. Instead, we need to seek a more organic unity, like that of the divergent but complementary life forms that evolve to constitute a self-sustaining ecology.

Communication and the Circulation of Struggle

Struggles against capitalism have always circulated. In the past they have followed or ruptured the circuits of capital itself. Struggles in different areas have been mediated and affected each other through trade and investment. Sailors and immigrants have carried their experiences and practices of struggle from place to place, and sometimes back again. With the development of increasingly rapid means of communication such circulation has accelerated. Trains and automobiles have permitted both news and organizers to circulate more rapidly. Telephone, mass media and fax have each, in turn been used to accelerate the circulation of understanding and cooperation of those in struggle. In the last few years computer networks have dramatically accelerated this process and their spread has made increasingly global complementarity and coordination possible. The mobilization of worldwide support for the Zapatistas has been a vivid demonstration of the usefulness of this new technology.

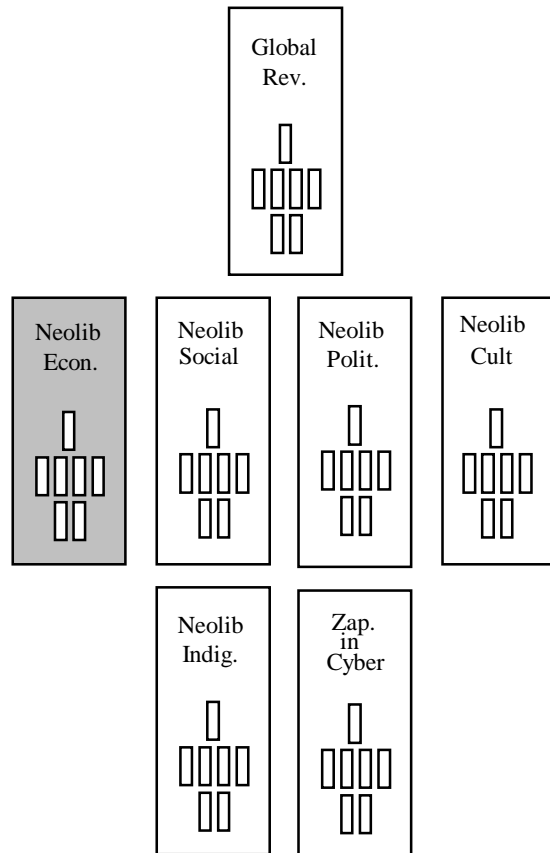
Defining our Desires

To be global a revolution need not happen everywhere, all at once. It suffices that struggles intensify, link and expand, accelerating each other and multiplying to rip apart the sinews of business and empire faster than they can be reformed. For this to happen people need to be clear not only about the kinds of social, economic, political and cultural relationships that they want to abolish but also about those they wish to elaborate and develop. Although moments of revolutionary upheaval are vastly creative, that creativity springs from existing struggles renewed by collective energy. One of the most exciting things today is the plethora of alternatives that are being elaborated. New kinds of human relationships, new kinds of relationships between humans and the rest of nature, new forms of politics, new kinds of families, new approaches to learning, new ways of caring and sharing. The problem of revolution is that of freeing these diverse processes of invention from the stultifying bonds of business: commodification, a one-dimensional measure of value, profit maximization and above all, the subordination of life to endless work.

Neoliberalism:

Economic Aspects

One of a series of interconnected notes
prepared by Acción Zapatista de Austin
(www.utexas.edu/students/nave)



“Neoliberalism is the chaotic theory of economic chaos, the stupid exaltation of social stupidity, and the catastrophic political management of catastrophe.”

Don Durito of the Lacandon, July 17, 1995

Neoliberal Economics

Neoliberalism is a variation on the classical liberalism of the 19th Century when British and other imperialisms used the ideology of competition and “free trade” to justify their own colonialisms. Anti-colonial revolt ended the empires. Worker revolt in the 1930s and anti-colonial struggles ended classical liberalism but was contained by Keynesianism: government management of the wage, the welfare state and “development.” An international cycle of worker, student, peasant, woman, and pro-ecology revolt in the 1960s ended Keynesianism which was replaced by neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism has been designed, pushed and implemented by some of the biggest, most powerful institutions in the world, beginning with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Think tanks, university departments and government agencies house an international army of neoliberal architects, planners and apologists --backed up by the armed might of the state in all its forms. This history suggests that defeating neoliberalism will not be enough, we must go beyond reformism to defeat all forms of capitalism.

Neoliberalism is both an ideology and a strategy. Like so many criminals, it has many aliases, “Reaganomics,” “Thatcherism,” “supply-side economics,” “monetarism,” “new classical economics,” and “structural adjustment.” The ideology of neoliberalism is the worship of the “market” and subordination of all other economic actors to its demands, including government and individuals. The strategy of neoliberal economics includes privatization, reduced social expenditures, union busting, land enclosure, lower wages, higher profits, free trade, free capital mobility and the accelerated commodification of nature.

The Impact of Neoliberal Economics

Neoliberal economics empowers and enriches big business -- especially multinational corporations-- and impoverishes damned near everyone else, including workers, peasants, the middle class and small business. Governments’ debt reduction policies shift income and wealth from wages to profits. Slashed food subsidies, welfare payments and education funding cut the floor from under the labor force. Anti-inflation is a euphemism for anti-wage. Monetary policies attack wages through high interest rates and high unemployment. Unemployment, reduced wages and expensive credit all dramatically increase the amount of unwaged work we have to do to survive. Financial deregulation has diverted profits from new machines to all kinds of unproductive speculation.

Industrial restructuring breaks workers’ power and increases that of corporate capital. Lower-waged workers and poorer communities are pitted against higher-waged workers & better off communities. The global effect is a downward leveling for most and increased power for capitalism. Underdevelopment has replaced development.

Resisting Neoliberal Economics

People are fighting back on every front. Most effective struggles have been collective. Efforts to reduce wages are resisted by rank & file workers. Efforts to reduce social expenditures are fought in legislatures and in the streets. Efforts to enclose free space are fought by peasants, urban squatters and cybernauts. Efforts to use new technologies to break workers’ self-organization are resisted. Efforts to reduce wilderness and community lands to “natural resources” are fought by peasants and eco-warriors. Racist and xenophobic efforts to attack multinational workers (immigrants) are resisted by cross-border alliances. Efforts to monopolize the new informational industries are outflanked by freeware and the creation of new “spaces” in cyberspace.

Struggling Against Neoliberal Economics

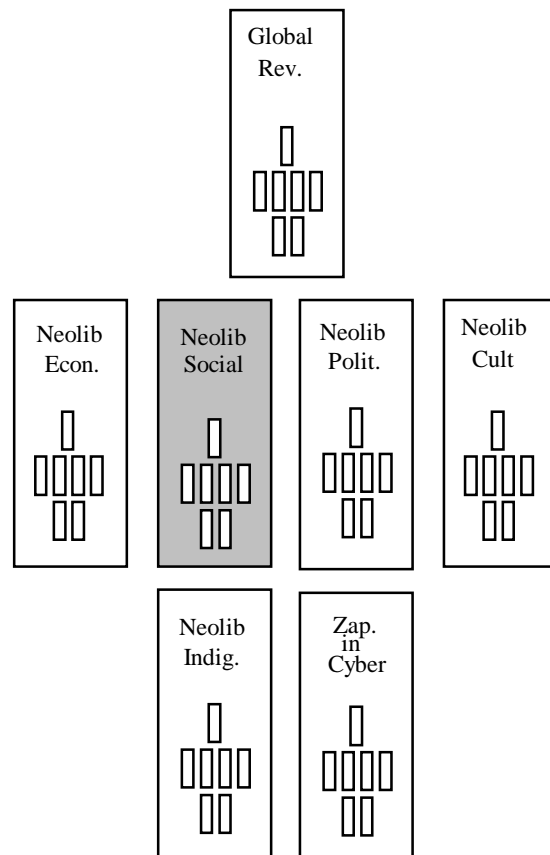
The strength of these struggles of resistance lies in their ability to recompose local social relations to block attacks while elaborating joint or complementary self-defined projects. A weakness is their isolation and separation from each other. We must organize our struggles across regions, sectors, habits and languages through linkages that can achieve a level of global collaboration capable of stopping the global capitalist offensive which oppresses us. The very global scope of neoliberalism creates a fundamental vulnerability: the existence of a common enemy. Not only can its institutions be targeted, e.g., the IMF and local governments, but its policies can be counter-attacked from every direction by all its would-be victims on the basis of their own values and alternative approaches to social organization.

We must also link those alternative new ways of organizing the genesis and distribution of wealth in ways that are complementary and capable of united action. There are many on-going experiments around the world whose experiences and creativity can be shared. This does not mean unity for socialism or any other unified post-capitalist “economic” order, but rather the elaboration of cooperative interconnections among diverse projects. Nor does it mean a delinked and divided localism. It means elaborating a new mosaic of interconnected alternative approaches to meeting our needs and elaborating our desires.

Neoliberalism:

Social Aspects

One of a series of interconnected notes
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(www.utexas.edu/students/nave)



“It will primordially be a revolution that is the result of struggle on various social fronts, with many methods, under many social forms, with varying degrees of commitment and participation.”
El Sup, January 20, 1994

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism as an ideology contains meanings, ideas, and values based on the social tenets of classical liberalism: the free market, individualism, the pursuit of narrow self interest and the proposition that these will lead to the social good. Neoliberalism also supplies a repertoire of strategies through which people may be dominated, subordinated, assimilated and excluded. A response to an earlier cycle of struggle by workers, students, women, minorities and peasants which threw an earlier stage of capitalism into crisis, neoliberalism seeks to disempower all of these groups by converting their differences into antagonisms along lines of income, race, gender and ethnicity.

Neoliberalism's neoconservative public policies undermine the middle class while redirecting their fear of decline against those struggling further down the wage hierarchy. Cuts in social programs and legal rights aim to disempower grassroots movements, leaving them vulnerable to the demands of big business. Struggles for equality are attacked through the criminalization of affirmative action. Victories for cultural heterogeneity in school systems and universities are countered by reducing the diversity of faculty, curriculum and funded programs. Women's reproductive freedom, sexual liberation and economic independence have come under especially ferocious attack by the organized Christian right. Homophobia has also been given religious sanction to roll back gay rights through private violence and public law. Xenophobic nationalism has been used to foster an anti-immigrant hysteria and fear of people of color. Such efforts have produced walled and guarded suburban communities and work places.

Neoliberalism and Violence

Central to the creation of such antagonisms is violence, both manifest and structural. Manifest or physical violence has been enacted legally through the terrorism of public executions, mass incarcerations, and the militarization of many communities and the border. It has been enacted illegally through private lynchings, rape, police beatings and paramilitary shootings and burnings. Structural violence, both economic and social, has been accentuated through symbol, ideology and policy to subject some to poverty, hunger, avoidable disease, under-education, peonage and disfranchisement while only threatening others with these horrors. Despite a pervasive rhetoric calling for the limitation of government, the state

has actually increased its intrusive role in society through the war on drugs, public surveillance and police and military intervention at home and abroad. The Army, INS, FBI and other military units and police agencies have opened low intensity war on the border and in urban areas with such operations as Operation Hammer, Operation Rock Crusher, and Operation Hold the Line. Rapidly multiplying prisons and work camps house growing numbers of young people of color criminalized for their youth, associations with alternative communities and attempts to exploit lucrative illicit markets.

Resistance

Resistance to all this manifest and structural violence has been both individual and collective. The most effective efforts have been based in earlier struggles where people learned to work together in autonomous informal networks, communities and social spaces that accepted difference and diversity. It has not been easy for neoliberals to roll back the gains of the 1960s and 1970s. People have resisted attacks on wages, social expenditures and free time through work slow downs, theft, sabotage and riot. Others have exploited alternative markets through illicit trade and underground systems of redistribution. Still others have elaborated evolving cultural critiques through music, art and theater.

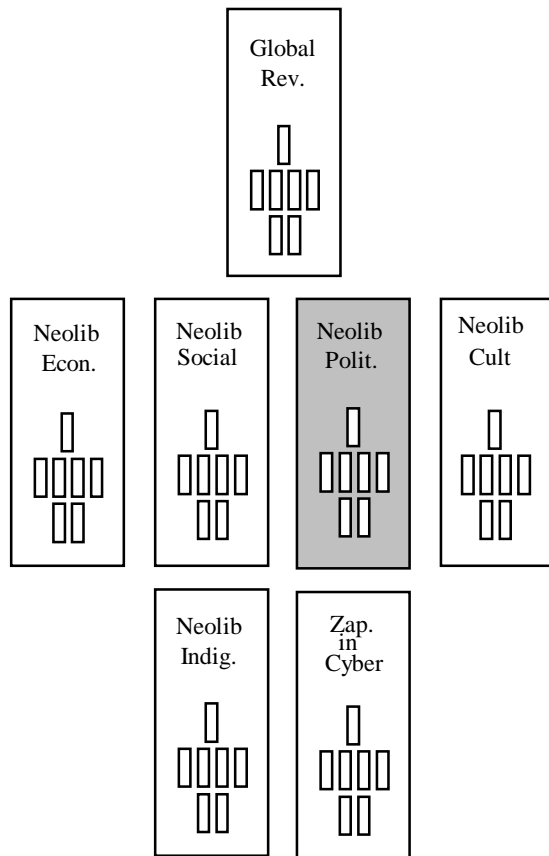
Struggle Against Neoliberal Social Policies

Overcoming neoliberal social policies depends on the creative transformation of traditional institutions into new social networks which allow people to control their own learning, to redistribute their resources according to their needs and to enjoy difference without antagonism while pursuing the elaboration of their own desires. Many people have broken free from the traditional restrictive exaltation of the nuclear family by pursuing alternative lifestyles, living arrangements and social relationships. Others have openly challenged neoliberal values of private property, competition and emphasis on individual success through endless work and ostentatious consumption. Becoming a part of community organizations, centers and neighborhoods, they promote cooperative efforts in the production and distribution of necessities while reshaping their personal relationships into more self-empowering and mutually supportive forms. Many of these alternatives have incorporated a search for new approaches to the interrelationships between humans and the rest of nature. Successful abolition of neoliberal social policies can only come as all of these efforts to build a new world overshadow the old and provide the strength for its final destruction.

Neoliberalism:

Political Aspects

One of a series of interconnected notes
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(www.utexas.edu/students/nave)



“A profound and radical change of all the social relations in today’s Mexico is necessary. A revolution is necessary, a new revolution. This revolution is possible only from outside the system of the Party-State.”
Don Durito of the Lacandon, June 11, 1995

Liberalism

NEO-liberalism is a “new” classical liberalism in its political as well as economic aspects. Classical liberalism was long the core of Western capitalist ideology. Portraying the world as made up of myriad individuals following their own selfish interests, it provided a rationale for replacing both feudal and communal structures with market capitalism and various kinds of pro-capitalist government. Political life came to be organized through formal elections controlled by professional parties --usually organized around a more or less shared ideology. Behind a facade of pluralism, democracy was confined to those allowed to vote and to lobbying for those who could afford it.

As a result representative democracy as we have known it has been neither representative nor democratic. Democracy has been primarily a spectacle rather than a process through which people control their own destinies. This has been true whether one party has put on the show or many parties have collaborated. (So that shifts from one party states to multiparty systems --as in the ex-Soviet bloc or Mexico-- hold little hope of substantially increasing democracy.)

Despite these structures workers and peasants have won some concessions from the state, usually through non-electoral mass movements. Success in such efforts in the 1930s produced the Keynesian welfare state of the post-WWII period --one that sought to structure capitalist development around conceded improvements in the standard of living. Civil rights movements in the 60s opened the vote to new citizens and garnered new concessions. Eventually, such movements drove beyond the welfare state and threw it into crisis.

Neoliberalism and Democracy

Today, in the wake of the crisis of Keynesianism, neo-liberalism rationalizes the destruction not only of traditional communities but of government social programs won in past struggles to protect people from market forces. It seeks to impose market value in every sphere of life. Nature, pollution, human welfare, education and all social behavior are measured purely by their contribution to profit-making in the most insane capitalist hysteria the world has known.

Neoliberal shifting of public programs to the private sphere has sought to remove all protection from market forces. Shifting power from legislative to executive branches has reduced the effectiveness of grassroots lobbying. The use of mass media to dominate electoral

debate has concentrated power in the hands of those with money and strengthened the monopoly of political parties and corporate backers.

Resisting Neoliberal Politics

All these changes have been resisted, sometimes on a piecemeal basis, e.g., the effort to protect socially beneficial programs, sometimes structurally, e.g., efforts to defend what little democracy there is in contemporary political systems. There has been more success in these struggles than is often recognized. If we compare what the neoliberals have wanted to do with what they have been able to do so far, we can see the extent of their failures. A major problem with most of these struggles of resistance, however, is that by accepting the framework of the system itself they have only been able to hope for marginal reforms. The best ways to resist neoliberalism lie outside and against its own undemocratic framework.

How to Struggle Against Neoliberal Politics

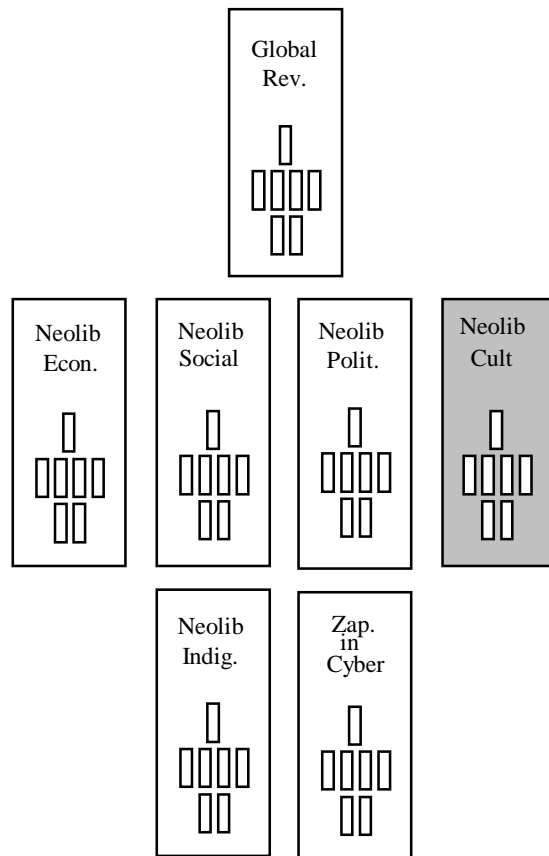
What this history of liberal, Keynesian and neoliberal politics teaches is the need to fundamentally transform the structures of politics: the ways through which people come together to make collective, public decisions about how they live. The democratic facade of professional politics must be ripped away and new kinds of democratic politics invented. While ideologically based parties may survive, they must be demoted to only one form of collective self-organization among others within a truly democratic system. There are alternatives. A wide variety of political self-activity demanding a more participatory democracy contributed to the demise of Keynesianism and defies neoliberal attempts to repress or co-opt it.

Political struggle today must carve out more space for such self-activity to elaborate and consolidate itself, on all levels, in every aspect of society. The Indigenous people of Chiapas have articulated the conceptual and organizational key to real democracy quite clearly: autonomy. The way to organize it varies widely but the autonomy of communities, of ethnic and linguistic groups, of regions and other self-defined groupings is the only possible basis for a true pluralism, a neo-pluralism which is truly democratic. Autonomy does not mean the abolition of politics or the fragmentation of societies. Politics is an inescapable element of human social life. The politics of autonomy simply refuses the structuring of this dynamic through the imposition of a pervasive set of universal rules of value and behavior. Instead, it celebrates a vision of endless dialog and interaction within an ever-changing community of communities, both locally and on a world scale.

Neoliberalism:

Cultural Aspects

One of a series of interconnected notes
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(www.utexas.edu/students/nave)



“It is necessary to construct a new political culture.... There are no recipes, lines, strategies, tactics, laws, regulations or universal slogans. There is only one desire: to construct a better world, that is, a new one.”
Subcomandante Marcos, May 1996

Neoliberalism and Culture

As the current phase of capitalism, neoliberalism necessarily involves the manipulation of culture for purposes of domination and subordination. Understood as a dynamic and plural process, "culture" refers to all of those ways in which we make sense of the world: images, stories, desires, identities, intellectual work, spiritual development and and aesthetic undertakings. Emerging historically in response to a cycle of struggle that included very powerful cultural components, neoliberalism has sought to commodify, instrumentalize or destroy all those cultural activities that have undermined capitalism while pushing the human experience in new directions.

Thus, in response to the struggles of cultural and ethnic "minorities" for a true cultural pluralism where their differences are accepted and valued, neoliberalism has responded with educational and corporate multiculturalism within which these differences are given token recognition within a context of accentuated hierarchy. In the US Chicanos are allowed to honor labor leader Cesar Chavez while, at the same time, racism is intensified against *Mexicanos* along the border. Cable TV allows local communities some autonomous cultural expression, while an increasingly concentrated corporate culture industry pumps a flood of Western images, narratives and worldviews into the rest of the world -- accentuating the marginalization of that autonomy. Such cultural strategies amount to a new stage of what we might call the flexible homogenization of world culture.

Resisting Neoliberal Culture

Such cultural strategies, however, have not succeeded in reducing everyone to passive subjects or co-optable active ones. People continue to maintain and invent alternative cultural traditions of resistance and "do not plan to die though they may be killed." New intersections between people in the North and South produce ungovernable alliances. Autonomous desires continue to produce values and social relations to which business has always been hostile, including sisterhood and brotherhood and the formation of communities where individuals can define themselves beyond consumerism within collective, shared, and idiosyncratic frames.

Against the business reduction of cultural difference to trivial variations among similar commodities, the valuing and respecting of differences among groups has become an essential political priority. The multiple Zapatista

initiatives to call upon ALL sectors of civil society is culturally as well as politically instructive. This directs us to the experiences of everyday life, which is precisely where a revolution to make possible a revolution must occur, which is to say, ... a revolution in culture. The homogenizing and universalizing forces of business and its Left mirror must give way to endless dialogue and the elaboration of new non-hierarchical relations across cultural difference. This too is Zapatismo!

Cultural Struggle

Axes of differentiation such as gender, sexuality, and ethnicity are constitutive of cultures, even when they regard themselves as unified and insular. Cultural projects of discovering, telling, and revaluing denigrated identities and histories is absolutely essential to the political project of creating the space within which a dialogue can take place between equal political subjects. Thus our struggle against global, neoliberal capital must confront sexism, racism, homophobia, casteism, and religious/ethnic violence, all of which intersect to form the existing structures of domination. At the same time, we must also undertake the very difficult work of translation across sectors and positions, a project that seeks interconnectedness within the context of autonomy.

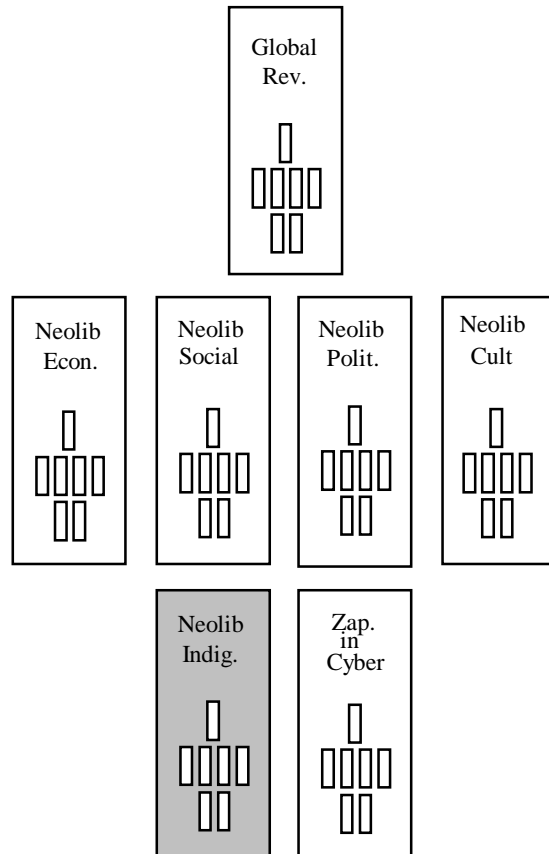
Essential to the further elaboration of cultural struggles is the democratization of the means through which people can become cultural producers and have access to a range of audiences. New media technologies, like the Internet (and related computer projects like ZAPNET! on CD-ROM), micro radio, public access cable and satellite stations, and cheap video equipment for popular filmmaking, all offer the potential for extending the means of cross-cultural expression to hitherto excluded voices. To create more space for such activities we can also fight for a roll-back of the current concentrated corporate domination of the means of cultural expression.

In cultures based on the domination of many by the few differences are manipulated to divide and conquer. This necessarily involves the creation or reinforcement of hostility and intolerance toward those outside particular traditions. In a truly pluricultural world, differences can be valued as essential stimuli to mutual development. Such a new political culture has been under construction for some time. Its development is an essential component of rebuilding the world exemplary model of this movement. This forum allows for permanent dialog among indigenous communities and opportunities for joint action against potentially devastating neoliberal policies at both local and national levels.

Neoliberalism:

Identity Aspects

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Neoliberalism and Identity

Neoliberalism's most dramatic impact on indigenous communities has been its attack on their access to land. Throughout North America NAFTA has provided a rationale for new enclosures of indigenous lands for purposes of commercial exploitation. In Canada indigenous land claims are being overridden with growing ferocity. In the US efforts to privatize public lands and commercialize indigenous ones are rampant. In Mexico the privatization of *ejidal* lands is aimed at their concentration in the hands of agribusiness. On a world scale the GATT has provided a rationale for the enclosure of all public and indigenous lands and the reduction of life everywhere to private property exploitable for private gain. Such enclosure degrades all of nature to a mere "natural resource" to be raped via mining, clear cutting, ranching, the rip off of indigenous knowledge or genetic engineering. But such enclosures not only destroy the land, its flora and fauna, mountains, river systems and oceans. It also wipes out the material foundations of indigenous community survival and cultural development.

As a replacement for the cultures undermined, and for the self-determined identities of those excluded from the land, neoliberalism offers only the hollow rhetoric of development and a new identity of "homo economicus" --the selfish economic person without ties to others and standing alone in work and consumption. The rhetoric is hollow because it hides a vast concentration of wealth and spreading poverty. Homo economicus is not only an impoverished abstraction but even the usual formulation of "consumer" rings false amidst starvation wages and endless work for the wealthy.

Indigenous Resistance to Neoliberalism

From local artisan and farming cooperatives to human rights watchgroups and armed guerrilla movements, indigenous peoples throughout the Americas have organized themselves to resist such attacks. Local coalitions have merged to form multi-ethnic alliances and multi-national organizations that recognize the common struggles that all indigenous and subordinate groups face. The Foro Nacional Indigena in Mexico stands as an

exemplary model of this movement. This forum allows for permanent dialog among indigenous communities and opportunities for joint action against potentially devastating neoliberal policies at both local and national levels.

Decades of repression and subsequent political struggle have developed strong, vibrant and militant indigenous movements that present sophisticated, well-organized challenges to the capitalist system and the new era of neoliberal policymaking. Because of their well-developed sense of purpose, of the clarity of their autonomous conceptions of alternative, non-capitalist ways of being and doing, the influence of these indigenous movements has reached far beyond their own communities and organizations. Their ideas and self-activity have come to provide models of organization against neoliberalism for others engaged against the same enemy. Perhaps most obvious in this regard has been the struggles of those concerned with ecological degradation who have often looked to the indigenous for alternative approaches to the relations between humans and nature.

Indigenous Leadership Against Neoliberalism

With the development of the struggles against neoliberalism around the world, growing numbers have also come to appreciate the politics of indigenous networking: collaboration with respect for autonomy and new, creative ways of discussing democracy, justice and peace. Through their discussions of self-determination and democratic practices rooted in community-level cultural, political and economic traditions and needs, the international indigenous movement has reinvigorated debates over developing democratic practices and alternative community consciousness in many non-indigenous left and radical communities.

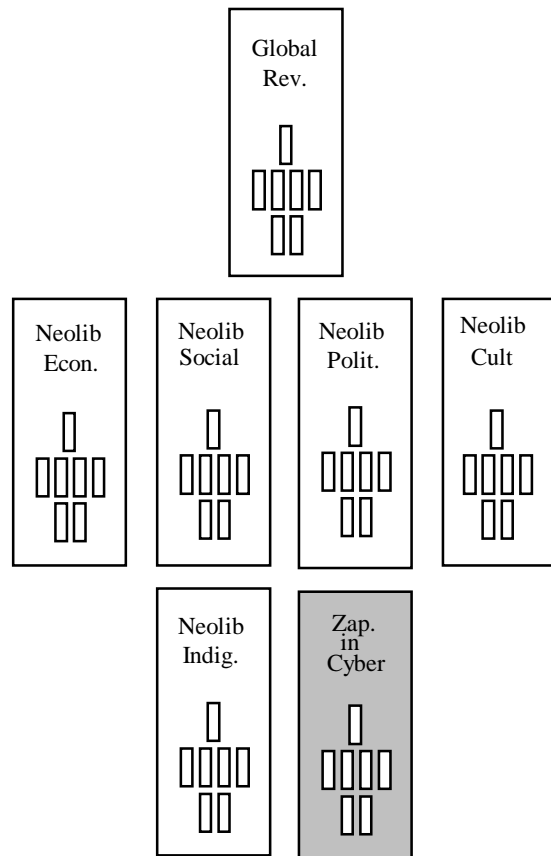
The indigenous movement has placed community autonomy at the center of the development of democratic practices and the renewal of community consciousness and identity. Indigenous autonomy goes beyond simple economic self-determination to include social, cultural, legal and political community autonomy. This notion of autonomy recognizes local and ethnic differences and is not based on a universal notion of rights, needs, culture and desires but on a plurality of political, economic and cultural systems. This conception of autonomy allows for a radical pluralism that accepts and fosters both differences and dialog among people everywhere --an essential ingredient of a better world.

"In my view it was the reform of Article 27 that most radicalized the *compañeros*. That reform closed the door on the Indigenous people's strategies for surviving legally and peacefully. That's why they rose up in arms."
Subcomandante Marcos

Neoliberalism:

Zapatismo in Cyberspace

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“What governments should really fear is a revolutionary expert in communications technology.”

El Sup

Communications and Popular Struggles

Talking to one another is a human quality. Innovation in the means of communication has derived from repeated human inventiveness. Within capitalism, however, such innovation has fallen prey to greed and commodification. Mail, telegraph, telephone, radio, television, and fax have all been turned into industries dominated by business and further developments in their technologies manipulated for profit. Groups in struggle have often been able to find ways to use these means of communication for their own purposes but they have been forced to operate in the shadow of business control (e.g., public access TV on the margin of the networks and cable companies). As business has followed its normal path of increasing monopoly in each of these industries, people have been forced to seek new avenues of communication.

Computer Networks

The extremely rapid expansion of computer networks for purposes of communication can be seen, in part, as a response to such forces. Whereas access to radio and television broadcasting has been limited and the costs of long distance telephone and fax prohibitive for sustained interaction, computer networks have been created whole cloth and have provided a dynamic new means of grassroots organizing and solidarity among geographically dispersed groups.

Prior to the Zapatista uprising, computer networks had been utilized extensively by grassroots groups in Canada, the US and Mexico to oppose NAFTA. After January 1, 1994 both pre-existing and newly created networks in cyberspace made possible a mobilization and coordination of solidarity that helped limit the Mexican government's military offensive and made possible the opening of a political terrain where the Zapatistas soon out-classed the government and its apologists.

Computer communications have by no means replaced other essential forms of organizing, from face to face encounters to radio programs, underground newspaper articles, revolutionary artwork, music and the occasional TV show. But computers have made possible a more rapid dissemination of information and analysis than has ever been possible in grassroots movements. Not only has dissemination been fast, but the ease of archiving in gopher and web sites has made possible the creation of easily accessible reservoirs of information unlike anything we have had before.

Zapatismo in Cyberspace

Computers have also made possible a new kind of organizing very much in keeping with the spirit of Zapatista organizing in Chiapas. Computer networks allow the creation of a rapid and free flowing fabric of democratic communication and cooperation. Unlike traditional organizations which have tended to have rigid, top-down hierarchical structures -- including revolutionary organizations-- this electronic fabric of organization is a horizontal networking with infinite cross-linking. Efforts to IMPOSE hierarchial structures in cyberspace are very difficult because participants can easily abandon such a terrain and create their own new contacts, lists, conferences or newsgroups.

Inspired by the Zapatista struggle, and by accounts of direct democracy in Zapatista communities, people all over the world are using the Net not only for solidarity but also for discussing the meaning of these new approaches to organizing and democracy outside of Chiapas. All of this suggests not only that the Net has become an important vehicle for the rapid circulation of struggle but that it is also circulating new ideas and new approaches to struggle. The active role of the Net in the preparation of the Continental and Intercontinental Encuentros demonstrates vividly its potential in creating an international movement of complementary local struggles against neoliberalism and for new ways of life.

The Net and a New Global Movement

If a great weakness of contemporary struggles against neoliberalism around the globe is their isolation, then the Net provides an important vehicle for linkage. Those struggles which can access the Net, can have frequent and efficient contact with others in such a way as to feel a part of a global movement. They can know quickly what is being done elsewhere and can act accordingly. Those struggles which do not have access can, of course, use more traditional and slower methods to achieve the same end --but the efficiency of computer networks suggests that their extension to all communities around the globe should be an urgent priority. NOTE BENE: we emphasize the importance of collective access to the Net rather than individual access because acquiring it can be achieved more quickly and because not everyone will either need or want to be involved in this aspect of organizing and struggle.

For more information visit the Accion Zapatista home page which contains links to many other pro-Zapatista web sites and information about participating in Net activism: (<http://www.utexas.edu/students/nave>)

Links and Resources

(Adapted from Chiapaslink, Irish Mexico Group, and Accion Zapatista)

>>ZAPATISTAS

HTTP://WWW.EZLN.ORG

This is an unofficial US web page devoted to the EZLN. It contains an extensive collection of nicely formatted EZLN Communiques, a variety of news reports (mostly in Spanish) about the struggle in Chiapas, a set of interviews with Marcos and other EZLN commandantes, a set of FAQ and answers about the EZLN, a ready made form for sending e-mail messages to the EZLN, information on how to send financial aid to the EZLN, a variety of digital photographs of the EZLN, information on where to send protests to the Mexican government and links to other related pages.

ENLACE CIVIL

<http://www.enlacecivil.org.mx/index.htm>

Along with the FZLN, the Enlace Civil is one of the most important organizations in Mexico supporting the EZLN; this organization can help you further your research, facilitate travel, or send donations.

Enlace Civil was formed in 1996 at the request of indigenous communities in Chiapas struggling for better conditions of life, to act as a bridge between these Indian villages and national and international civil society. Enlace Civil responds to specific requests from villages for human rights observers, in particular from the Aguascalientes, and is also engaged in health, education, agriculture, art, culture and communications projects.

ENLACE CIVIL, A. C.
20 de Noviembre no. 36
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FRENTE ZAPATISTA DE LIBERACION NACIONAL

<http://spin.com.mx/floresu/FZLN/> (Spanish)

<http://www.peak.org/~joshua.fzln> (English)

These are the pages of the Frente Zapatista, the national political organisation which was organised in response to the EZLN's calls for the mobilisation of civil society. The web pages explain the genesis of the Frente and the role of the Special Commission for the Promotion of the FZLN in Mexico which manages

the web-presence. The site contains considerable material not only concerned about the creation and functioning of the FZLN but also recent materials from the Zapatistas concerned with negotiations, with the National Indigenous Congress, and so on.

MUJERES ZAPATISTAS - ZAPATISTA WOMEN

<http://www.actlab.utexas.edu/~geneve/zapwomen/>

Created "in honor of the women who have offered their lives to the Zapatista Movement", this web site contains a variety of materials and possibility of interaction around the struggles of women in Chiapas. The materials include Marcos' "12 Women in the 12th Year", two analytical papers by Diana Goetze, several reports from Mexico and the 2nd Intercontinental Encuentro, directions about obtaining the video on Zapatista Women and links to other websites with materials on women's struggles in Mexico. A web "Forum on Zapatista Women" provides a vehicle for discussion and interaction among those who visit the site.

ZAPATISTA REBEL AUTONOMOUS EDUCATION SYSTEM

<http://www.serazln-altos.org/eng/index.html>

Information about the Zapatista education project as well as classes in Spanish and Tsotsil for Internationals.

CENTRO DE DERECHOS HUMANOS FRAY BARTOLOME DE LAS CASAS

The Human Rights Centre Fray Bartolome de las Casas is an non-governmental organisation whose objective is the promotion and defense of human rights, created by the Catholic Diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas. The centre trains and accredits human rights observers to go into the conflict zone, and responds to specific crises by sending in small teams to collect statements of victims and reports on conditions.

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>>GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

ACCION ZAPATISTA

<http://www.humboldt.edu/~mc92/accionzapatista>

Maintained by the Accion Zapatista group in Austin, Texas (which also manages Chiapas95 and Zapatismo), this webpage contains background material on the Zapatistas, a series of interventions on various aspects of neoliberalism, e-text versions of AZ's print publication El Paliacate, an Internet Encuentro graffiti wall where web browsers can register their opinions on neoliberalism and the struggle against it, information on how to join the list Zapatismo, an illustrated e-text version of the Tales of Durito, and links to other Zapatista and Mexico related web sites.

SCHOOLS FOR CHIAPAS / EDUCATION CARAVANS FOR PEACE

<http://www.schoolsforchiapas.org>

This project allows internationalists to live and learn in the Maya communities of Chiapas, MEXICO as guests of the Zapatista Education System. Volunteers participate in building schools, play basketball with student teams, meet unique peoples struggling for justice, dance and sing with community members, and make friends from around the world while directly supporting the Zapatista effort to create model, experimental schools designed to renew public education worldwide.

IRISH MEXICO GROUP

<http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico.html>

An extensive collection of documents, communiqués, links and background information on the Zapatista struggle.

CHIAPASLINK

<http://www.chiapaslink.ukgateway.net/>

Information, communiqués and more. Also the writers of Zapatista: a rough guide, published on their site; an introduction to Chiapas and the Zapatistas and resources for getting involved.

GLOBAL EXCHANGE

<http://www.globalexchange.org/countries/mexico/>

An human-rights NGO based in San Francisco with social justice projects around the globe, including Chiapas. The site has many pages of resources and links about the current situation in Mexico.

CINCINNATI ZAPATISTA COALITION

<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/1364/index.htm>

The CZC homepage on the Zapatista Rebellion contains an essay on the history and nature of the uprising, a report of a 1998 visit to the Zapatista community of Moises Gandhi and links to a number of other sites.

>>NEWS FROM CHIAPAS

CHIAPAS INDYMEDIA

<http://chiapas.mediosindependientes.org>

Indymedia-Chiapas is a collective of women and men dedicated to developing a network of communication focusing on the struggle of the indigenous communities of Chiapas, as well as other popular movements in resistance in Mexico and the rest of the world. We emerged as a direct response to the EZLN's call for the creation of alternative media and communication networks. Indymedia-Chiapas provides a space for the indigenous communities of Chiapas to distribute their written, photographic, video and audio material at the state, national and international level.

RADIO INSURGENTE

<http://www.radio insurgente.org>

RADIO INSURGENTE is the official voice of the National Zapatista Liberation Army (EZLN). RADIO INSURGENTE is a radio station which is completely independent from the bad Mexican government. It diffuses the ideas and contents of the zapatista struggle on FM and shortwave radio, as well as on this website and through its own CD-productions. It also informs about the progress made in building the zapatista autonomy through the Good Government Juntas and the Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities. Fm, shortwave, communiqués, documentaries

REVISTA REBELDIA

www.revistarebeldia.org

CHIAPAS95

Chiapas 95 is an internet "list" which distributes news and debate about social struggles in Chiapas and related struggles in other parts of Mexico and abroad, collated from other lists on the internet, human rights and grassroots research organisations. There are three different lists: Chiapas95 is aimed at activists and scholars who are involved in mobilisation around the struggles in Mexico and related issues, and want a regular and detailed flow of information. Chiapas95-lite provides a reduced flow of information deals strictly with Chiapas. Chiapas95-English which provides an even smaller flow on only those subjects that deal with Chiapas and are written in English (about 4 messages a day).

To subscribe to one of the lists send one of the following messages:

- **subscribe chiapas95**
- **subscribe chiapas95-lite**
- **subscribe chiapas95-english**

to: majordomo@eco.utexas.edu

Make sure you put the message in the body of the message text and leave the subject line blank. You will receive an automatic reply that will tell you how to get more information and how to unsubscribe.

CHIAPAS MEDIA PROJECT

<http://www.chiapasmediaproject.org>

A bi-national partnership to providing video and computer equipment and training to indigenous and campesino communities in Chiapas and Guerrero, Mexico. The emphasis has been in the area of video production. The Chiapas Media Project is currently distributing 16 indigenous productions worldwide. The Chiapas Media Project was a producing group for the film ***Storm from the Mountain***, covering the Zapatista caravan to Mexico City.

NARCO NEWS

<http://narconews.com>

The Narco News Bulletin: reporting on democracy in Latin America.

LA JORNADA

Daily newspaper from Mexico City; publishes communiqués from the EZLN.

<http://serpiente.dgsca.unam.mx/jornada/> (Spanish)

Mirror Site: <http://unam.netgate.net/jornada/> (Spanish)

>>GLOBAL ACTION

PEOPLE'S GLOBAL ACTION

www.agp.org

A worldwide coordination of resistances to the global market, a new alliance of struggle and mutual support called Peoples' Global Action against "Free" Trade and the World Trade Organisation (PGA). This platform, defined by the PGA hallmarks, manifesto and organisational principles, is an instrument for communication and coordination for all those fighting against the destruction of humanity and the planet by capitalism, and for building alternatives.

VIA CAMPESINA

<http://www.viacampesina.org>

Via Campesina is an international movement which coordinates peasant organizations of small and middle-scale producers, agricultural workers, rural women, and indigenous communities from Asia, Africa, America, and Europe.

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¹ Compiled by the Accion Zapatista Editorial Collective, September 2003.

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