To Lead by Obeying

The Political Lessons of Mexican Neo-Zapatismo

Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas

Translation by Noah Mazer

This book develops the main political lessons that the Mexican Neozapatismo movement brings us, in its almost 30 years of public life. Thus, beginning by defining the singular concept of Autonomy that the Neozapatista movement proposes, different from legal, anthropological or political definitions, and conceived as real global autonomy. Then the content of the Neozapatista oxymoron 'Mandar Obedeciendo , 'To Lead by Obeying' is explained as identical to the idea of popular self-government. A new concept of autonomy is linked necessarily with the idea of 'Other Politics' and 'Other Democracy'. The book also presents how Neozapatismo embodies a project of modernity that, having been constructed as a modernity of resistance for five centuries to the dominant modernity imposed by the Spaniards in Mexico, has now been transformed into a project of a real alternative modernity to capitalism.

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Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas

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"And all of this is not a model. You won't find it in a printed book. It's simply present in each of our hearts and in the way of thinking of our peoples."

Speech by Karina, from Caracol 1, at the Round Table on the Other Health, First Gathering of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World, December 31, 2006.

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PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

The book the reader currently holds is comprised of two sections which, while intimately connected, are nonetheless different. The first section comprises an argument which attempts to characterize, in global terms and from a clearly accepted standpoint focused on the horizons of the historical *longue durée*, that which could be considered the essential features of the Mexican neo-Zapatista movement, as a model example or paradigmatic case of the new antisystemic movements which have developed across planet Earth in the last 25 years.

This is thus a characterization of the deep essence and general features permanent in neo-Zapatismo. Taking as its pretext the First Gathering of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World, held in 2006 and 2007, the book's first section explores the fundamental principles of this unprecedented and original Mexican indigenous movement with regard to the most crucial and discussed issues in the contemporary debates of the vast family of antisystemic movements across the world.

Relying on this general definition of the permanent and general features of neo-Zapatismo, the second section of the book (comprised of the nine Appendices included here) focuses on precisely and pointedly analyzing neo-Zapatista understandings of particular issues and the various initiatives which

this movement of the indigenous rebels of the state of Chiapas has promoted and developed over the last 15 years.

While the first section functions as the general framework and underlying foundations of the second, the second section allows for various elements of the first, which have been formulated only briefly or generally in the first section, to be specified, contextualized, and deeply analyzed. For example, while in the first section the original and innovative ideas of neo-Zapatismo on the human activity of politics are developed broadly and in detail, in the second section (in Appendix 1) the complex issue of the neo-Zapatista stance on power, powers, and counterpower is dealt with more profoundly.[1]

For neo-Zapatismo, that which is wrong and must be totally transformed is the entire world of what is currently political activity in general, with its structural elitism (its definition as a matter for the few), its episodic character (defined by limited electoral periods), its perverse hierarchy of leading by commanding, and its deceitful identification of politics with 'sites of power' (such as presidential palaces, parliament buildings, or party headquarters) and with all the ridiculous rituals and empty paraphernalia that surround the phony sanctification of contemporary politics. Without understanding this, it is impossible to adequately understand neo-Zapatismo's radical critique of the strategy of simply conquering the presently existing state apparatus though elections or even through a triumphant social revolution. Neo-Zapatismo instead proposes to modify—radically and from below—the conditions themselves in which state power is exerted and endured. This radical position towards power and politics displays all of its importance and current relevance in light of the successive failures of all the so-called progressive governments of Latin America. By limiting themselves to simply winning the state apparatus through elections, these governments were left completely *unable* to effect substantial change in their respective countries, leaving capitalism and all its poverty, injustice, plunder, exploitation, and essential inequalities untouched.

Likewise, while in the first section the general features of the project of a non-capitalist 'alternative modernity' are defined—a modernity which the Maya peoples of Chiapas have embodied for centuries and which today they defiantly present as an alternative to the dominant, decaying capitalist modernity—in the second section it becomes possible to develop much more profoundly and from a much closer distance the subject (developed in

1 I have delved much more deeply into this point in *Theory of Power: Marx, Foucault, Neo-Zapatismo*, Peter Lang, New York, 2021.

Appendix 5) of the 'we-ist' understanding that the neo-Zapatistas still maintain and defend today. This 'we-ism' affirms that the collective 'we' must always prevail over the individual 'I' and must even be the primary foundation and support of the greatest, most varied, and richest process of general expansion and flowering of individuality itself.

This understanding not only attacks capitalist, possessive, egotistical individualism at its core but also reinforces the idea once formulated by Marx that true individual freedom is only possible through and with the mediation and aid of collective freedom, and vice versa. Furthermore, this conception of the predominance of 'we' over 'I' has now shown its great potential when we bear in mind that the number of COVID-19 deaths in neo-Zapatista communities has been quite low (and indeed practically insignificant). This, according to the Zapatistas themselves, is due in part to the fact that they confronted this pandemic in a *collective, not individual*, manner, as well as to their emphasis on preventing disease over curing it.

Likewise, it is by understanding that Mexican neo-Zapatismo is a direct heir of the rich movement of 1968 in Mexico and of the profound cultural revolution which this movement entailed in our country (as happened, moreover, across the entire world) that it is also possible to understand neo-Zapatismo's profound and lasting impact in current social science (Appendix 6), as well as its significant contribution to the development of contemporary critical thought (addressed in detail in Appendix 7). This contribution to critical thought allows for the radical reconsideration and renewal of both contemporary political and sociological theory, granting us new, much richer and more complex definitions of politics, democracy, autonomy, freedom, and government, as well as definitions of the new forms of social exclusion, the new mechanisms of economic dispossession, the new strata of the social pyramid, the complex and varied relations between the social 'above' and the multiple 'belows,' of hierarchy, power, powers, and micro-powers, and of many more phenomena which have yet to be synthesized and discovered in a more careful and rigorous manner.

In this way, while the book's first section carefully itemizes the general essence of the neo-Zapatista movement and its fundamental political lessons which are still relevant today, the second section takes up this general framework in order to delve into issues like neo-Zapatismo's unique epistemological approach to reality, condensed in its extraordinary metaphor (expanded upon in Appendix 2) of 'looking below and to the left'; in other words, 'looking (to and from) below and (to and from) the left.' This metaphor is no mere figure

of speech or rhetoric: it represents a profound demand to modify the epistemological standpoints from which we observe, analyze, and explain the entire reality we confront and investigate.

Because it is not the same to look from the point of view of power as it is to look from the point of view of history's victims, just as it is not the same to focus attention solely on the actions of the state or of leaders as it is to focus on ordinary people, on the 'pedestrians of history,' or on the masses and the bases of movements, of unions, of protest actions, and of struggle. Neither is it the same to observe these events or occurrences or processes in order to justify the oppressors—or, alternatively, to hopelessly lament the plight of the subaltern—as it is to look to them to seek the causes of past defeats and victories, the lessons of those experiences for current and future struggles, and the ever-present traces and signs of very different futures, signs which even now foreshadow an end to exploitation, to inequality, to absurd hierarchies, and to the oppressive powers and micro-powers which are now dominant.

Likewise, it is the rigorous reconstruction of the neo-Zapatistas' exceptional understanding of what autonomy is and ought to be, explained in the book's first section, that allows us to understand the audacious and creative initiatives represented by their Festivals and Gatherings of CompArte and ConCiencias, developed over the past five years. We address this topic in Appendix 8. The neo-Zapatista idea of autonomy is not at all equivalent to the limited ideas of jurists (of governing oneself according to one's own laws), political scientists (of being independent from the state and defining one's own political forms), or anthropologists (of living in accordance with customary law and vindicating one's 'indigenous' being and identity). The neo-Zapatistas' understanding encompasses, overcomes, and greatly transcends these three understandings in vindicating itself as the demand to define their society in *all* its constitutive spheres, just as they decide to build it, and to be able to build their *whole* life in accordance with their own will and own wishes, without any outside interference. This is a radically anti-capitalist and antisystemic understanding of autonomy which in turn gives meaning to the particular neo-Zapatista understanding of what art should be: another dimension of everyday life and an activity that belongs to all. This is true as well of the likewise-unique Zapatista understanding of science, which sees science as a collective task meant to enrich the various knowledges of the community and to improve, in various ways, the world which we collectively build each day.

These general features and specific profiles of the Mexican neo-Zapatista movement together allow us to discern the history of the successive stages the movement has moved through in its brief historical life (Appendix 4), as well as the exceptional intellectual life lesson represented by the Little Zapatista School, analyzed in Appendix 5 of this book. This school was so out of the ordinary—without a curriculum, courses, or tests—that it directly and experientially showed us not only how radical neo-Zapatista 'autonomy' is built, but also how, with and from this autonomy, a *new world* is built, without exploitation, without politicians, without the powerful, without baseless and absurd hierarchies, without 'aboves' or 'belows': a new world which is 'a world where many worlds fit.' In other words, the Little Zapatista School showed the construction of a world that is free, autonomous, tolerant, horizontal, dialogic, and far superior to the degraded and ever more terrible capitalist world of the present.

In the current global COVID-19 pandemic, the capitalist world system has brutally and brazenly shown us its worst faces. All of the world's governments, without exception, have shown with their actions that the masters they serve preferentially are their national capitalists and global capitalism itself. These governments care only about their respective populations insofar as these are labor power exploitable by capital and to the extent that they can maintain their control and acceptance of the reigning situation, with its social inequalities, antagonistic powers, and abusive hierarchies. Against this, neo-Zapatismo defends life, and in defending life defends the radical anti-capitalist struggle, as explained in Appendix 9.

This defense of life, in the limit situation represented by the current pandemic, is what has also compelled neo-Zapatismo to organize its Voyage for Life. In a manner recalling the journey the neo-Zapatistas undertook in 2006 and 2007 across all of Mexico, then called The Other Campaign, they now undertake a journey on the planetary scale. This voyage completed its "Europe Chapter" in 2021 and will continue in 2022 with its "Latin America Chapter," later moving on to other regions and places of our little planet Earth. This is a kind of Other Campaign, now projected on the world scale, which in the near future will doubtlessly enrich and strengthen the anti-capitalist struggle that this worthy and exemplary Mexican neo-Zapatista movement has been waging for 38 years in total and for 28 years in the public eye.

So, reader, enjoy these lines, this attempt to build a kind of instruction manual for deciphering and better understanding the master keys of this important Mexican antisystemic movement, the neo-Zapatismo of the

dignified indigenous rebels of Chiapas: what it is, what it has achieved, what it has confronted, and what it yearns for.

January 13, 2022.

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION: WHEN THE IMAGINATION TAKES POWER

"We are going to debate the new ways in which leaders 'lead by obeying' and the forms by which the People consolidate and extend their already-drawn paths of Self-government and Autonomy […]"
Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee—General Command of the EZLN (CCRI-GC), *Comunicado del 7 de marzo de 1996*, regarding the process of the San Andres Accords.

An Ordinary and Extraordinary Experience: The First Gathering of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World

In the transit that makes an old year into a new one—for our purposes, at the end of 2006 and beginning of 2007—an extraordinary event took place in the mountains of the Mexican southeast. For four days in the Chiapas highlands, at the Oventik Caracol,[1] three important groups came together who represent a single sector: that sector which grows dizzyingly with each passing day and fights on the planetary scale for the building of a new world which is other to the capitalist world and which is still possible today.

Thus, the ordinary and extraordinary First Gathering of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World, held from December 30, 2006, to January 2, 2007—ordinary in that it was a shared experience; extraordinary for how out of the everyday it was for each of its participants—saw the coming together of (1) the representatives of the Zapatista peoples; (2) a broad and diverse contingent of conscious and critical Mexicans, most of whom were adherents of the Other Campaign; and (3) an enormous group of international activists and fighters from 47 countries.

1 The Zapatista Caracoles are the physical locations that function as points of encounter between the neo-Zapatista movement and Mexican and international civil society. – Trans.

These three different groups, comprising around 7,000 individuals, were united behind one goal: to find the concrete paths to destroy the absurd and unjust system of global capitalism and replace it with a different social system that would be very other, fraternal, free, democratic, and just. Among these participants were between 4 and 5,000 indigenous people, ranging from the Comandantes of the Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee and representatives of the five Councils of Good Government (JBGs) to the representatives of the 31 Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities (MAREZ) and the support bases of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation.[2]

Through the more than 90 speeches delivered at the seven Round Tables of this first Gathering of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World, indigenous neo-Zapatista comrades transmitted and outlined some of the problems, achievements, challenges, and results of their various experiences on the complex and difficult but also innovative path to the construction of their own autonomy and self-government.

This experience transmitted by the Zapatista peoples to the Mexican people and the peoples of the world—in other words, a *horizontal* experience in which those from below convened their *equals*, who are also from below—represents a truly exceptional event. It is exceptional in various senses: firstly for the immense richness and enormous density (evident at this gathering) contained by the singular neo-Zapatista effort to autonomously (and often in adverse conditions) build the forms of popular self-government and spaces of an entirely new model of social organization and a truly new and *very other* society. Secondly, this experience is exceptional for the host of new and unprecedented elements generated by the neo-Zapatista experience of the Councils of Good Government, which serve as useful leads for other antisystemic social movements in Latin America and the world. Thirdly, the neo-Zapatista experience, made public over those four days, is exceptional for the number of varied lessons which it supplies for analyzing social reality and for appropriately understanding, explaining, and transforming this reality.

Because as is evident, what the dignified indigenous rebels of Chiapas are building in their Autonomous Municipalities, their Caracoles, and their territories is nothing other than the embryos of a new and different world, a non-capitalist world no longer ruled by either the logic of capital accumulation and the search for profit or by ferocious and possessive individualism. What they are building is a world where there will be no more of the corrupt politics

2 The EZLN's support bases are the whole of the Zapatista communities of Chiapas. – Trans.

still dominant now or bought and degraded justice, where the official media which transmit and propagate bourgeois ideology will have disappeared, as will have official education and the dominant culture, which reproduce the same capitalist ideology still hegemonic today.

In this context and during the four days of the Gathering, the neo-Zapatistas described the primary content of the new social relations which are germinally beginning to affirm themselves across Chiapas. These encompass relations ranging from the Other Politics, Other Justice, and Other Government to new forms of gender relations and new ways of addressing health, alongside new cultural forms of recovering and vindicating indigenous identity, art, ancient knowledge and popular culture, and the indigenous view of nature and the world. These relations are joined by the new economic relations of working the land, commerce, and distributing products and the fruits of labor.

Likewise, the reports of the seven Working Groups, developed over the course of the Gathering, demonstrated the whole range of new developments implied by the neo-Zapatista experience. As a whole, these developments allude to universal problems which are today shared by the genuinely anti-systemic movements of Latin America and of the entire planet. These reports not only described the incipient forms which this foreshadowed version of a new society is acquiring but also significantly addressed the difficulties implied by, for example, rejecting the old forms of politics which are currently dominant and installing new forms of an Other Politics in which the people command and their leaders obey. This equation not only inverts the functions of ruler and ruled but also completely revolutionizes the ways in which human beings understand, assume, exercise, and link themselves to different forms of power and to the spaces and functions of state power, political power, and social power.

In this way, new paths for Latin American and global antisystemic movements multiplied as the members of the JBGs and MAREZ explained how insertion into the circuits of the capitalist market can be carried out without subordination to that market's objectifying and alienated logic, or how to use the cutting-edge technologies of ultra-modern industry while reassessing and reprioritizing *popular* knowledge and culture and dismantling and transforming the codes and mechanisms of the dominant ideology and culture. Likewise, they explained how to transcend misogyny and patriarchalism, not from an individual, egotistic, and antisocial form of 'empowerment' (defended

by people like Hillary Clinton) but from the reconstruction of the collective 'we,' through joint fraternal struggle on the part of men and women.

Thirdly, the experience transmitted by the neo-Zapatista *compañeros* is full of various lessons for all social scientists, as it is for everyone who takes an interest in understanding and explaining the world we live in today. It is precisely thanks to its exceptional richness and density as an attempt to build a new world which is very other to the capitalist world, as well as its innovative character in how it approaches many of the problems faced by antisystemic movements across the world, that the neo-Zapatista experience opens the way for us to *unthink* our usual categories, *unlearning* a great part of the social sciences baggage we have acquired until now. This experience redefines—with other approaches, from other locations, within other horizons, and by very other intellectual paths—our concepts and categories as well as our analyzes and interpretations. It makes us capable of creating new approaches and new explanations for the old and new problems we face each day.

The experience the Zapatistas convey allows us, for example, to critically unthink the current world to understand the process of the *death of the human activity of politics* which we are witnessing now while reconsidering and redefining democracy not from the majority but from minorities and not from the numerical imposition of the majority but from the qualitative creation of consensus. It allows us to go beyond hegemonic and quantifying book-knowledge in order to reassess qualitative, individualizing knowledge which is born out of direct experience of popular culture. It allows us to overcome the utilitarian vision of nature as a tool and the concept of man as nature's lord and master, transitioning to forms of conceiving of the search for a new, better harmony between the human-social world and the natural world. It even allows us to radically decenter our *Weltanschauung* and cease to consider the world from the Cartesian 'I,' returning to interpret it in the key of the fraternal, collective, and communitarian 'we.'

In the three senses we have referred to, then, the First Gathering of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World was an exceptional event. It is exceptional in many other senses too, in that like every truly relevant historical event its roots sink down to different registers of the temporal order. These roots seek out both certain elements of the situations that immediately precede them (like the scandalous electoral fraud of July 2006 or the fruits of the Other Campaign's first year) and the various junctures we have experienced in Mexico, Latin America, and the world in recent decades: for example, the utter debacle of Mexico's political class, symbolized in its shameful

support for the Indigenous (counter-)Reform of 2001 or the slow but steady strengthening of new Latin American antisystemic movements which today represent the *most advanced vanguard front on the global level* of antisystemic movements across the world. But likewise, and on a deeper level, this exceptional event also leads us to different *longue durée* processes and structures—Mexican, Latin American, and planetary—such as the deep and lasting roots of indigenous resistance in Chiapas and pan-Latin American indigenous resistances and rebellions, as well as the complex history of different experiences of mass self-government and the creation of popular counter-power, which range from the Paris Commune, the Russian soviets, and the workers councils of Italy to the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the settlements of the Landless Workers Movement in Brazil, and the neo-Zapatistas' own Councils of Good Government.

This triple reference to the immediate events, phenomena of the various junctures of recent decades, and old (sometimes ancient) *longue durée* processes allows us to resituate the First Gathering with the Peoples of the World not only in a much broader and more appropriate framework but within a deeper and global horizon that hands us back the complex meanings which materialized at that Gathering, in that exceptional world-place of the mountains of the Mexican southeast, in the state of Chiapas, on planet Earth.

Resituating the Event in Historical Perspective

Beyond its enormous density and richness and its nature as an exceptional event, the First Gathering of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World is only one link in multiple chains that link the event to its immediate pasts, near pasts, and more remote pasts.

It is clear that the experience of three years of Zapatista autonomy and self-government discussed at that first Gathering—an experience that began in August 2003 with the transformation of the five locations previously called Aguascalientes into Caracoles and with the birth of the Councils of Good Government—can only be understood if we understand it as one of neo-Zapatismo's various responses to the deep disappointment that followed the March of the Color of the Earth (February–April 2001). Following the shameful position of all of Mexico's political parties, which without exception supported Vicente Fox's Indigenous (counter-) Reform and turned a deaf ear

to the national outpouring of support for the proposal of the Commission of Concordance and Pacification (COCOPA), the EZLN realized that the entire Mexican political class was in a profound and terminal process of corruption and decay that made it completely incapable of being an agent of the urgent social change promoted by the neo-Zapatistas.

Believing that Vincente Fox's government did not govern and that the Mexican political class was good for nothing more than furiously squabbling over the crumbs of political and state power, neo-Zapatismo decided to unilaterally apply the San Andres Accords, creating the premises and spaces for the exercise of indigenous autonomy and giving birth to the five Zapatista Caracols and five Councils of Good Government, which consolidated the already-existing Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities in the state of Chiapas.

This was a fundamental initiative not only of building popular self-government and a new structure for the construction of indigenous autonomy but also and more broadly an initiative of creating micro-universes of a new and different world. Although existing within and alongside national societies which are still capitalist, these new spaces are no longer ruled by the logics or dominant codes of the latter. Instead, they are governed by *other* modes of functioning and *other* forms of behavior which are not only separate from and opposed to capitalism but are radically different from it.

The creation of these spaces is therefore the creation of a very other and non-capitalist world which has already begun to exist here and now in the mountains of the Mexican southeast, the most radical indigenous communities of Ecuador and Bolivia, the settlements of the Landless Workers Movement of Brazil, and the most left-wing *piquetero* neighborhoods of Argentina.

In terms of the immediate past, the First Gathering is an illustrative synthesis of the first three years of the JBGs as well as the everyday dynamics that reproduce neo-Zapatismo's vast support network, which today is partly responsible for sustaining and energetically promoting the Other Campaign. In terms of the recent past, this Gathering is also a link in a longer chain that stretches back to 1994 and 1983. It stretches back, in other words, to the experience accumulated by the entire history of neo-Zapatismo, which in Mexico and Chiapas has nurtured one of the most advanced movements which currently exist on the face of the Earth.

It is also clear that the experience explained during the First Gathering is only comprehensible in terms of the global, Latin American, and Mexican context created by the double rupture of the world cultural revolution of

1968 and the international economic crisis of 1972–73. This double rupture transformed not only the general character of all antisystemic movements but also the contexts—social, economic, political, even civilizational—in which these movements acted. And while within the global family of antisystemic movements the Latin American section has been the most advanced and vanguard section over the last 15 or 20 years, it is also clear that within this Latin American vanguard front, one of the most central contingents (and in many senses, one of the most developed and advanced) is the Mexican neo-Zapatista movement. Naturally, this point was also demonstrated during the First Gathering.

Furthermore, and beyond these immediate and near pasts which give the First Gathering many of its meanings, this gathering is also a link in other, much older chains. In terms of Mexican history, these chains sometimes lead us to the emblematic dates of 1910 and 1810, while in the history of global antisystemic movements they can take us back to 1966, 1920, 1917, and 1870. They may also lead us back, in terms of Latin American history, to dates as remote as 1692, 1521, and 1492. The recent neo-Zapatista experience of popular self-government and overall autonomy also sinks its roots deep into the foremost social struggles and revolutions of the Mexican people, as well as into the various globe-spanning attempts to create forms and spaces of *popular counter-power* and genuinely *non-capitalist* societies. Neo-Zapatismo is likewise rooted in the trajectories and changing fortunes of the projects of maintaining and defending a modernity of resistance and later a modernity alternative to capitalist modernity which have been developed in Latin America and across the world since the times of the Spanish Conquest and the so-called 'discovery' of the Americas by capitalist European civilizations. In other words, these projects stretch back to the remote times of the birth of global capitalism itself.

These multiple chains in time and multiple historical epochs are also important elements in explaining the richness, density, innovation, and different lessons offered by the First Gathering of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World. It is precisely these lessons and this richness, density, and novelty that are the content of the short essay the reader now holds in their hands.

* * *

· 1 ·

LEADING BY OBEYING: POPULAR SELF-GOVERNMENT, POLITICAL AUTONOMY, AND INTEGRAL GLOBAL AUTONOMY

> "[Autonomy]… therefore means this: what we want to shape is a life, a society, that we ourselves will move, that we ourselves will build…"
> Lieutenant Colonel Insurgente Moisés, speech at the Creating Counter-Power from Below and to the Left Seminar, January 3, 2007.

Defending Autonomy as Integral Global Autonomy

Beyond dictionary definitions and legal conceptions, beyond the long debates and various approaches of schools of anthropology, contemporary Zapatista indigenous peoples understand autonomy as a vast and all-embracing *global social process*. With a clear intentionality and insertion that are fundamentally political, however, this autonomy transcends the sphere of the political and projects itself more universally over the entire complex fabric of society. It is clear that this autonomy includes the idea of government according to one's own laws and the dimension of legal or political independence from external powers or authorities. Likewise, it includes the sovereign affirmation and relevance of one's own cultural, ethnic, or civilizational identity. It is also clear that this autonomy broadly transcends these expressions in the realms of the law, politics, culture, civilization, or ethnicity.

This vision of autonomy as *global autonomy* is expressed in two ways. First is the field of politics, in the idea that this autonomy is a *radically different* form of government: this is the Other Government, which only takes on meaning from a radically different form of doing the activity of politics. This form is the "Other Politics," which is very other to the corrupt and degraded

bourgeois form of politics which is still predominant. Another government, based on another form of politics which necessarily takes inspiration from the intelligent neo-Zapatista oxymoron of "leading by obeying." Fundamentally, this implies not only that in Zapatista territories "the people command and the government obeys," but also and more profoundly entails a *different and unprecedented* way of understanding the very functions of 'leadership' and 'obedience,' as well as of understanding and assuming political and state power. Leading by obeying also implies a total revolution in the way power is wielded and in the way that both "governors" and "governed" relate to the same specific figures of state and political power themselves.

Secondly, beyond the sphere of public relations, Zapatista autonomy takes shape precisely as the project enunciated by Lieutenant Colonel Insurgente Moisés at the Creating Counter-powers from Below and to the Left Political Discussion Seminar held on January 3, 2007, in San Cristóbal de las Casas. In this project, autonomy is defined as the effort to create a new life, a society very other to capitalist society, that will be *built* and *decided*, *moved* and *driven* by its own creators. This idea of autonomy as the constant self-creation and self-motivation of a *new figure* of social organization and a new configuration of life as a whole alludes the same essence of this conception of autonomy as global autonomy. This global autonomy is understood as the holistic restitution or recovery on the part of a subaltern subject of their capacity to decide on their desired forms of sociality—and therefore on the specific modes of defining their own life—in a free, voluntary, and sovereign manner. This is true both in the realm of economics as well as in daily life, in the world of culture and in gender relations, in their metabolism with nature and in how they organize their families, in their political relations and in their art, education, social relations, and their way of solving their problems in health, commerce, communication, and governance, among many others.

This idea of global autonomy as created and continuously renewed by a new society and a new life underlies the singular neo-Zapatista understanding of political autonomy which we defined earlier. It serves this autonomy as a support platform but at the same time broadly surpasses it. It springs from that new life and new society, built and moved by its own creators, the neo-Zapatistas of Mexico. It is precisely the Other Politics and Other Government which are inspired by the logic of leading by obeying and which capture in this political environment that new life and new society, self-managed and -governed by the same subaltern social subject that creates them.

At the same time, however, if global autonomy is the basis and general framework of political autonomy, the latter is also—in the social conditions in which we currently live—also the articulating axis of the former. It is political autonomy that for now constitutes the principal intentionality and essential meaning of global autonomy. This is due to the fact that, as the neo-Zapatistas have often explained themselves, their project does not have to do with creating non-capitalist, non-bourgeois islands or micro-universes of freedom which isolate themselves from the social context of Mexico and the world. On the contrary, their project is to preserve these islands and spaces that represent the *germ of a new, non-capitalist* world as practical examples of the fact that another world is still possible. They represent the fact that the rich and the politicians are useless and that their duties and responsibilities can be abolished without this abolition fundamentally affecting the survival and normal development of society itself.

Furthermore, the point is not only to present these liberated territories in Chiapas as an example of a very other, non-capitalist world which is still under construction, but also to maintain alive, active and critical a vast indigenous social movement comprised of hundreds of thousands of people who today participate in the national movement of the Other Campaign, which aims to first radically transform Mexican society through peaceful, civil, and intelligent means and then, in a not-distant future, to transform the entire planet.

This rearticulation of global autonomy around the axis of political autonomy therefore explains why the creation of the Caracoles in 2003 was accompanied by the creation of the Councils of Good Government (and not, for example, of Good Management or Good Administration). It also explains why, upon releasing the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle and launching the Other Campaign, the EZLN explicitly declared that it was putting on the line everything it had won until then—in other words, the sizeable and rich accomplishments in building that global autonomy and even the free Zapatista territories themselves—in order to promote this national initiative of the Other Campaign.

It is impossible to create liberated phalansteries or local paradises in Chiapas—just as it is impossible to do so in Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador, or anywhere else in the world—while the rest of Mexico is collapsing, destroyed by its ruling economic classes and corrupt political classes. In the terminal crisis of Mexican and global capitalism which we are now experiencing, all

projects of building global autonomy must therefore, for the time being, be rearticulated around their political aspects, around political autonomy.

This rearticulation likewise explains the fact that the inaugural panel of the First Gathering of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World was precisely the Panel on Autonomy and Other Government, as well as the fact that the speeches by the *compañeros* at this Panel dealt with the issue of political autonomy. They repeatedly clarified, however, that this autonomy was connected not only to government or justice or the strictly 'political,' but also to a principle and a project that could only be fully explained and understood as the other six Round Tables which made up this First Gathering addressed the issues of education, health, women, commerce, art, culture, communication, land, and territory.

Let us now examine the dimension of this global autonomy that covers political autonomy, so that in the following chapters we may expand upon other dimensions of that same global autonomy explained and discussed at the six Round Tables of the First Gathering, on New Year's Eve 2006 and New Year's Day 2007.

The Logic of Leading by Obeying

One of the many contributions of neo-Zapatismo—which also expresses its complexity as a new antisystemic social movement—is its fondness for and cultivation of paradoxes and oxymorons. Clearly, this is a form of *critical distancing* from the capitalist reality which still prevails and which is increasingly absurd, irrational, and senseless. Global capitalism perpetuates war, hunger, and massive artificial scarcity. It degrades the sublime and artistic, corrupting values, human relations, and all forms of social creation. It inevitably destroys the ecology and natural environment. Facing this system and its absurd and irrational manifestations, the only healthy and possible intellectual attitude is one of *critical distancing* which separates itself from the likewise-irrational logic which is currently This attitude of critical distancing seeks to find, from *other* spaces and *another* diverse logic, the deep coherence and global meaning of capitalism's apparent senselessness.

One of the possible mechanisms of this critical distancing is precisely paradoxical statements and oxymorons. Facing the reigning incoherence, oxymorons and paradoxes return to us the space of *another coherence* and *another rationality*. This rationality shows us the hidden faces, aspects, and dimensions

of currently which are buried precisely because of the irrationality and absurdity of its immediate appearance.

Such is the case, among many other examples, of the intelligent neo-Zapatista oxymoron that those who lead must lead by obeying. This profound oxymoron not only dismantles the global logic of traditional politics—based for millennia on the rigid separation and opposition of leadership and obedience—but also opens and inaugurates the space of another possible logic. This new and totally divergent logic addresses the problems of managing collective matters, of administrating a community's common resources, and of the ways that human beings understand, wield, and relate to what currently constitutes political and state power.

As we have stated before, the logic of leading by obeying is the global logic that inspires and guides the vision of the Other Politics and its corresponding Other Government. This trilogy represents the basic elements of neo-Zapatista political autonomy.

If this logic of leading by obeying radically deconstructs traditional politics, this is due to the fact that it profoundly questions and completely reformulates, from the bottom up, a truly age-old structure. Because what humanity has understood as the human activity of politics for the last 2,500 years is an activity characterized by its *radical separation* of the function of 'leading' from the function of 'obeying.' The former task is always assigned to a small elite—or even to a single individual—so that the latter task can be assigned to the immense majority of any society's population. Beyond a doubt, the fundamental basis of this understanding of politics lies in the fact that, since the time of Aristotle, humanity has lived in societies which are divided into classes and are therefore societies based on class antagonisms and class struggle.

In this sense, Marx clearly explained how property and the exploitation of the majority by the minority are the result of a definitive separation between labor, on one hand, and enjoyment on the other. The first function is assigned to the immense majority of the population, while the second is assigned to a small elite of the rich and propertied class. Thus, reproducing a similar framework, the separation of leadership and obedience and the assignment of the first to an elite and the second to the majority of humanity is what creates relations of political despotism. It is also what creates the human activity of politics itself as it has been understood until now, with the types of political power and state power that still exist.

When Marx proposes to reunite labor and enjoyment and therefore necessarily abolish property and economic exploitation, he proposes something

very similar to what is implied by leading by obeying, which in this case is the reuniting of leadership and obedience and thus the forceful abolition of hierarchy and political despotism. Leading by obeying also implies the death of politics itself, of political power, and of the state. This death goes hand in hand with the end of class antagonism and the very existence of social classes and the class struggle which was likewise explicitly asserted by Marx in the final passage of *The Poverty of Philosophy*.

Leading by obeying implies not a symmetrical inversion of these two functions, in which those who led now obey and those who obeyed now lead, but rather and more deeply a complete revolution in *the form in which we understand* the functions of leadership, obedience, and the relation between these things. Because if the people, the immense majority, the synthesis of all subaltern social classes and groups now 'leads' and the government, the small minority, must 'obey,' this does not mean that, as before, the majority despotically decides and decrees and that a small group submissively follows commands. Rather it means that the people, the majority, 'leads' itself via the simple intermediary of a limited group that operationalizes and practically implements the collective mandates of the subaltern groups and classes of the whole people.

This entails a complete revolution in the function of leadership, stripping it of any despotic, discriminatory, or authoritarian character and transforming it into a basic function of the instrumentalization and putting into practice of the collective decisions and solutions defined by the entire people. Likewise and concomitantly, the function of obedience is transformed, losing its passive, repressed, marginal meaning and becoming a *self-disciplining* of the community. As it continuously defines and transforms the desired figure of its social organization, the community *governs itself* and eternally recreates itself, obeying its own collective decisions.

This total transformation of leadership and obedience also disrupts the relationship between both. What was once a relationship of rigid opposition and constant clashes becomes a fluid relationship of continuous feedback in which collective leadership inaugurates the entire process and assigned leadership operationalizes it and makes it practical, later transforming it into a freely assumed mandate from its specific results, reformulating a new collective leadership. And vice versa. For if the government 'obeys' this collective mandate it does so to channel and implement it as a collective decision that will be obeyed by the same community that has established and defined that decision. In addition to progressively building a new life and a new society,

this defines both as something that is *not* decided, imposed, or promoted by a far-off government, separate from the people. Instead, it is something constructed and driven by the self-governed community itself, just as Lieutenant Colonel Insurgente Moisés affirms when defining the neo-Zapatista idea of autonomy.

All of this occurs in a parallel double circle in which leading increasingly resembles obeying and obeying progressively becomes one more form of self-leading, of self-governing, and self-imposing a community's own will and collective decisions. In other words, this is a model of 'leading by obeying' and 'obeying by leading' in line with the wise and profound neo-Zapatista oxymoron.

However, it is clear that this reunification of leadership and obedience and the total revolution of both and of their reciprocal relations is only possible to the degree that politics and government are also radically modified, making space for an Other Politics and an Other Government.

Other Government, as we have already stated, implies not that the people lead their government, but that the people lead *themselves* through the mediation of their own organs of government. In the case of the neo-Zapatistas, these organs are the Autonomous Rebel Councils (CARs) which correspond to their Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities (MAREZ), as well as their Councils of Good Government (JBGs). Thus, the slogan found written at the entrances of the five Zapatista Caracoles which tells the reader that 'Here the people command and the government obeys' should *not* be interpreted as a simple inversion of roles between the majority and the minority. Instead, this slogan must be understood in the already-explained logic of leading by obeying, in which the leading people and obeying government become the two primary links of popular self-government itself, of the process by which the Zapatista peoples govern themselves without external interference and without the function of powers external to the community itself.

In addition to being one of the political expressions of global autonomy, popular self-government is also a fundamental mechanism for the reproduction and maintenance of the neo-Zapatistas' own antisystemic movement, as well as for the creation, here and now, of the first spaces liberated from the bourgeois-capitalist logic which is still dominant today.

The Mechanisms and Implications of Leading by Obeying

In this framework, in which Other Government is nothing other than popular self-government and in which the people leads itself through the mechanism of *its own* government and obeys itself, a relevant aspect is the mechanisms that guarantee that this Other Government does not slide back into the old practices of the corrupt capitalist governments which exist across the world. These mechanisms guarantee that the Other Government does its duty as a true "effective government of the people," just as the neo-Zapatista *compañeros* call it. These mechanisms, which spring from profound popular knowledge, are simultaneously very simple and profoundly efficient.

Furthermore (and not by coincidence) these simple and highly effective mechanisms immediately evoke previous historical experiences of building popular self-government or of creating forms of self-management and organized people's counter-power, including the experiences of the Paris Commune, the Russian soviets, the workers' councils of Italy, or the Chinese Cultural Revolution, among others.

In this sense, a first mechanism is the fact that the members of the Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Councils and members of the Councils of Good Government (JBGs) do not earn any salary for their work. At a stroke, this lack of compensation completely eliminates one of the primary sources of economic corruption and of struggle for those government positions, as these positions do not represent any personal financial advantage for those who hold them (as they do in bad governments, i.e., capitalist governments). Whereas Paris Commune reduced the salaries of all its officials and officeholders to the average salary of a worker, the neo-Zapatistas have gone even further, completely eliminating salaries for their own government officials.

With all financial compensation for its officials therefore canceled, the Zapatistas not only build the world's least expensive government but also eliminate the financial temptation represented by a government post. And since the management of the economic resources held by the MAREZ and the JBGs is also decided on, controlled, and closely supervised by the people, neo-Zapatista governments have no possible sources of corruption.

In entailing no salary or financial compensation, the fulfillment of the functions of good Zapatista government eliminates the possibility of economic corruption implicit in all traditional capitalist governments, without exception. It also means that instead of personal interest or the search for individual

advantages, the motivation that leads Zapatista officials to hold posts in their good government will be clearly *ethical*. Officials will be motivated by a calling to serve their community and a deep desire to help others, to serve the people, and to put all their personal abilities at the service of the collective cause.

This deep desire to 'serve the people' reminds us of the spirit of the Chinese Revolution and of Maoist thought, which in these same terms vindicated the profound and essential ethics that were supposed to animate both the social movement as a whole and all types of militants who would commit themselves to their work and to supporting popular causes and the different daily struggles of those same movements. This logic of serving the people is the exact opposite of the logic that today animates the immense and astonishing majority of political parties in Mexico, Latin America, and the world. This latter logic is the logic that animates many of those who declare themselves left-wing, democrats, or even revolutionaries: in truth, these parties are enamored of power for power's sake and are overwhelmingly oriented toward winning public office or political posts in order to secure the cushy jobs, social privileges, symbolic power, and gamut of micro-powers these positions entail.

Objectively eliminating, then, the sources of financial corruption of government positions, and subjectively doing away with the search for personal benefit through the same positions, neo-Zapatista Other Government also reinforces its radically different character as a good government by declaring the immediate revocability of all its government posts, without exception. This is complimented by the constant supervision of functionaries by people's Vigilance Committees.

Once again, we are reminded of the experience of the Paris Commune. All Zapatista officials are only officials for as long as they satisfactorily perform the functions which have been assigned to them and for as long as the peoples who have chosen them feel adequately represented by them. The same peoples may endorse or revoke these officials at any time. Thus, in their (maximum three-year) terms, neo-Zapatista officials are permanently placed in a state of immediate revocability. This condition is essentially nothing other than another form of their clear and constant *dependence on* and *subordination to* popular will, and to their real capacity to represent, in a new and radical sense, the very community that chose them.

It is clear that in keeping with the totally new and different nature of the Other Government in comparison to the old, bad capitalist governments, the concept and content of the process of political representation also changes. This process loses its feature of *delegating* the functions, decisions,

and position-taking which characterizes presently-dominant corrupt political activity. Political representation transforms into a simple task of transmitting and defending the community's points of view, in permanent consultation and feedback between the 'represented' and their 'representatives' and in the agile practical application of the decisions and plans of that vast pyramid of the 'represented,' the community of the people themselves. In Other Government, in other words, political representation becomes one more means of leading by obeying.

For this reason, and to give active, constant life and content to this new, *non-delegative* form of 'representation,' all Zapatista officials are subject to permanent accountability before their peoples and their communities. Under this accountability, they are obliged to explain and justify their practices and the foundations of their day-to-day actions. These daily practices and actions are also constantly monitored by the neo-Zapatista Vigilance Committees, which are comprised of the people themselves. These committees are the constant guardians of appropriate relations between the peoples and their Other Governments, the various structures of good neo-Zapatista government.

By eliminating salaries, the source of all possible corruption for its officials; by eliminating the egotistical, individualist, self-affirming spirit of public office, based on this office's supposed symbolic or social prestige; and by eliminating the possibility that those who occupy public office will become independent or out of control, the indigenous rebels of Chiapas also eliminate the arrogance of politicians of all stripes and the false halo of exceptionality that for millennia has accompanied those who hold political and governmental positions.

By reducing the tasks of government to the simple functions of intelligent administration of community affairs from the logic of leading by obeying and by treating its officials at all levels as simple, common people, the neo-Zapatistas radically desanctify the absurd idea that politics or the functions of governance are complicated activities reserved for exceptional and highly educated men. Not only this: they also demystify that strange secular sanctification that invariably surrounds the capitalist holders and practitioners of both state and political power.

Thus, in contrast to Mexican politicians and politicians around the world, neo-Zapatista officials consider themselves neither little gods come down to earth or exceptional beings tasked with herculean tasks and extraordinary problems. Rather, they see themselves as simple public servants and ordinary people who use common sense to solve daily, normal problems. Far from the

illusions of micro-powers that dizzy and madden the members of the global political classes, the members of the JBGs form, as Marx called the Paris Commune, a simple and well-organized "working body."

This active and effective working body is also supported by the necessary and notable simplification and reduction of the entire governmental structure, a reduction carried out by the neo-Zapatista communities themselves. Just as the Paris Commune did, good neo-Zapatista government suppresses parliamentarism and bureaucracy alike, doing away with upper and lower houses as well as useless, parasitic armies of bureaucrats. Because if the task of governing well is a simple one, there is no need for bureaucrats, parliamentarians, or congresspeople; all that is needed are a handful of people willing to work and to resolve problems efficiently.

This reality rests once again on the logic of leading by obeying. For if the people lead and the government obeys, if the people govern themselves through their organs of good government, this means that the figure making fundamental decisions, defining important tasks, and establishing general directions for resolving problems is none other than the Assembly of the entire people. Through forms of a unique *direct democracy*, this popular assembly makes superfluous the existence of both bureaucracy and parasitic parliamentarians.

Likewise, and once again re-discovering via their own path some essential lessons that the Paris Commune discovered and implemented, the neo-Zapatistas have eliminated the police and the old army. They demonstrate the unnecessary nature of police in the heart of peoples who freely govern themselves; as for the army, the Zapatistas replace it with a vast social movement of hundreds of thousands of indigenous people who not only support but *command* a genuine people's army, which is in reality a variant of the "people in arms," as Marx described the Paris Commune. This army serves the people and is subordinated to the people: it is the Zapatista Army of National Liberation. The EZLN is very much conscious of its own *ephemeral* and *transitional* character, explicitly declaring that it is an army that always struggles to *abolish itself*, that fights to create the conditions for a new world in there is no longer any reason for armies to exist.

The deployment of these simple measures—elimination of salaries for public servants; promotion of an ethical basis for the work of governance; immediate revocability; continuous accountability; permanent monitoring; desanctification of government positions; demystification of the work of public servants; simplification of the practical exercise of governance and

the structures of government; recuperation of processes of direct democracy; suppression of all useless parliamentarism; elimination of the backward and expired organs of the bureaucracy, police, and army—concretely re-implements the logic of leading by obeying and creates the general bases of the everyday activity of good government, of the Other Government of the neo-Zapatistas.

The Principles of Excercising a Very Other Government

As the neo-Zapatista *compañeros* explained, the First Gathering of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World saw the establishment of the practical principles of Zapatista Other Government under the logic of leading by obeying and through the abovementioned mechanisms of this logic's crystallization. There are seven of these principles, and their general spirit advances *against the flow* of the reigning customs of bad capitalist governments, but also and more profoundly against the flow of the degraded (and likewise-bad) bourgeois politics which remains dominant today.

Expressed in seven simple slogans of what Other Government should be, these principles are:

1. To obey and not to command.
2. To represent and not supplant.
3. To unite and not divide.
4. To convince and not to conquer.
5. To serve and not serve oneself.
6. To go down and not up.
7. To propose and not to impose.

As a whole, these slogans explicitly show the ways in which bad bourgeois and capitalist governments have traditionally functioned as being in contradiction with neo-Zapatista good government. The logic of leading by obeying and of direct democracy necessarily points to a practice of consensus-building, unity, service to others, equality, and the prevalence of community and popular will. The logic of capitalist governments and states, on the other hand, moves toward a practice of self-affirmation for the individuals and minorities who have won state and governmental positions—many through ignoble means and illegal tactics, and others through the 'legal' mechanisms

of impoverished formal democracy. This self-affirmation for individuals or for one's political current, party, party faction, or one's own political association or shell of a group is also a practice of destroying enemies, obtaining greater advantages and earnings through the use of public office, through the affirmation of hierarchies, through unbridled social climbing, and through the imposition of the limited will of an individual subject, small group, or specific party.

These two opposed practices of government put different emphasis on the very essence of the act of governing: for the side of bad bourgeois governments, to govern is to wield the power of despotic and authoritarian command; for the side of good neo-Zapatista governments, to govern is above all to obey the mandate of the people, channeling the self-government of peoples and communities. In other words, bourgeois governments deploy a vertical, hierarchical logic which is oppressive, scornful, self-referential, and wreathed in ridiculous halos of arrogance, false exceptionality, alleged complexity, and even a false sense of the arcane. The neo-Zapatista governments, on the other hand, deploy a very different logic which is essentially horizontal, leveling, transparent, egalitarian, and fraternal. It is open to other dimensions of social life and is marked by simplicity and clarity. In other words, where the former is the logic of commanding, the latter is the logic of 'obeying' the peoples: it is the logic of popular self-government, the logic of leading by obeying.

For good neo-Zapatista government, the logic of leading by obeying is also the logic of truly 'representing.' In other words, it is a logic of never breaking the bond between social life and politics or the bond that exists between the community and those who govern it. It transforms governors into civil servants who effectively and eternally depend on the collectives who have chosen them, the collectives who they truly express, serve, obey, and support. This stands in contrast to the bad governments of the capitalist governors, who instead of representing voters supplant them, breaking the connection between the social base and its political extension and illegitimately making themselves autonomous. These now autonomous governors then seek to dominate, command, and even exploit the same voters who elected them. Here we see on one side a constructive spirit of unity and another side of destruction and division. Whereas the Councils of Good Government seek above all to be a mechanism for building a new society and a new world, uniting all communities and peoples and convincing them of their proposals through rational dialogue, the bad capitalist governments seek to destroy their political enemies and overcome citizens and the popular classes in order to continually

reproduce the unjust and absurd capitalist order in politics, economy, social life, culture, and even on the civilizational scale.

This is the difference between service and being self-serving. The politicians and governors of bad bourgeois governments use and enjoy their positions and their power for their own benefit, to enrich themselves, legitimate themselves, and symbolically and socially affirm themselves. In contrast, the good Zapatista governments devote themselves only to serving the people, as the old Maoist slogan went, inspired by the simple and noble desire to help their communities and channel their calling to service, always prioritizing the collective 'we' over the individual 'I' or the small group and exclusively pursuing the satisfaction of doing their duty.

Likewise, bad capitalist governments and their bad governors reproduce the fantasies and insanities of wielding political and governmental micro-powers of all sorts, assuming a superiority that they imagine flows from those governmental positions and political micro-powers. This results in the absurd fantasy that power elevates and betters those who hold and wield it. In truth, neither government, state, nor political power confer any superiority whatsoever. Nor do they distinguish or improve those who hold them, and in the current conditions of the world—in the terminal crisis of capitalism and the definitive crisis of the whole realm of human politics—governmental-political power actually degrades and makes suspect all who hold it, without exception.

Facing this, the neo-Zapatistas not only combat and dispel the mad fantasies which surround power and are characteristic of bad government but affirm an Other Government in which the praise and honor governors receive are strictly *moral*. This honor is limited to the real ability of governors to lead by obeying, to the satisfaction of duty fulfilled, and the fact of having truly and unselfishly served the people well. If, as the Brazilian comrades of the Landless Workers Movement (MST) say, "the head thinks where the feet steps," then facing the pretension to 'go up' and distinguish oneself in a thousand ways from the people, the masses, the great majority of ordinary citizens (a pretension which absolutely all professional capitalist politicians and bad bourgeois governors suffer from), the neo-Zapatistas defend the desire to 'go down,' to not become arrogant, and to remain alongside the people, with the people, and as an organic and undifferentiated part of the people.

Finally, the neo-Zapatistas and their good government apply a logic of proposing and not imposing. Their logic is one of stripping government of its authoritarian and unilateral character with regard to the 'governed' and substituting it with an Other Government that, instead of issuing decrees,

suggests possible solutions to problems, later submitting these solutions to popular consensus and inserting them into a dialogical logic of fraternally seeking agreements and common spaces and of open dialog and reciprocal exchange. This is diametrically opposed to the bad capitalist governments which, upon attaining power or being in government, devote themselves to imposing and decreeing, always deciding based on a personal point of view, on an outlook of egotistical interest, and on the particular view of their own current or association or party, without consulting the 'governed' or taking into account the will or interests of the governed.

The simple principles of neo-Zapatista Other Government are condensed in these seven wise and pithy slogans. These principles, along with the logic of leading by obeying and its mechanisms for implementation, are also significantly based on a radically different conception of what the human activity of politics itself should be; on the very other idea of an Other Politics demanded by the dignified indigenous rebels of the mountains of the Mexican southeast.

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THE DEATH OF THE HUMAN ACTIVITY OF POLITICS: THE OTHER POLITICS AND THE OTHER DEMOCRACY

> "Are we saying that politics serves no purpose? No, what we mean is that THAT politics serves no purpose. And it is useless because it does not take the people into account. It does not listen to them, it does not pay any attention to them, it just approaches them when there are elections […] We are going to try to build, or rebuild, another way of doing politics […]"
> CCRI-CG of the EZLN, Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle, June 2005.

The Other Politics in the Context of the Death of Politics

Facing the genuine debacle and bankruptcy of the entire Mexican political class, one of the central proposals of the neo-Zapatista Other Campaign—which grows stronger across the entire country every day—has been that of promoting a multifaceted idea of what politics should be, and accordingly of the clear vindication of what the neo-Zapatistas have called the Other Politics. This Other Politics affirms itself as a radical negation of worn-out traditional politics, whose essentially elitist approach reproduces the myth of politics as a highly complex and sophisticated activity reserved for a few exceptional mortals. Likewise, it declares itself to be an invitation to radically change logic and horizons, exploring the construction of that Other Politics "from below and to the left," i.e., from an *anti-capitalist* logic and a horizon that moves *against* the current of the thought and practices that are now dominant.

This effort to build or rebuild *another way of doing politics* essentially implies ruptures on various levels. It simultaneously encompasses a clear break from the forms of politics of the last 30 years as well as from the forms of modern bourgeois politics that have reigned for the last two centuries (i.e.,

since the French Revolution), in addition to a break from the politics of the last 500 years, which characterize the whole history of capitalist modernity. But likewise, corresponding to the register of the very long historical *durée*, the Other Politics proposed by the worthy indigenous neo-Zapatistas implies a true break with the *primordial forms* of politics as a human activity in general, an activity established within human societies approximately two and a half millennia ago.

In the particular understanding promoted by the indigenous rebels of Chiapas, this Other Politics is presented as a true *longue durée revolution* in the modes, structures, functions, and primary mechanisms which have configured the activity of politics from the times of the ancient Greeks. This *longue durée* revolution in the very meaning and content of what we now know as politics materializes clearly in the Zapatistas' very different manner of understanding and exercising the functions that this traditional politics has fulfilled for the last 25 centuries. Within the daily practice of the neo-Zapatista movement, this different understanding and exercise completely overcome the traditional model of human politics and at the same time meld with the logic of leading by obeying and the specific forms of Other Government which we have described above.

If we seriously reflect on the multiple implications of the principles of that Other Politics—which also underly the entire political praxis of the neo-Zapatista movement—we will see that those principles are metaphorically condensed in the increasingly circulated theses that those who lead must "lead by obeying"; that we are trying to build "a world where many worlds fit"; that to define strategies of action we are guided by the idea of "walking while we ask"; that the gaze that we must adopt is the gaze that looks "from below and to below" as well as "backwards" and "to illuminate what is missing, what is incomplete." If we analyze all the derivations of these principles, we will see that these principles are only possible in a space that *can no longer be* addressed by what was the activity of politics for the millennia-long journey of its historical life. The existence of these principles therefore necessarily implies something radically *different* that in consequence is no longer and can no longer be that old politics; instead, it is a new and completely different Other Politics.

This Other Politics should in fact perhaps not be referred to as politics, as it constructs itself in a space which is totally other to the space of the old politics. In order to understand it, we must make two inquiries: one regarding the meaning of the current global crisis of traditional politics which is unfolding in Mexico and across the world, and the other regarding the new

and unprecedented realities and forms contained within the project of this Other Politics. In conjunction with the forms and mechanisms of Other Government and the logic of leading by obeying, the Other Politics forms the basic tripod that sustains the neo-Zapatista idea of political autonomy. As we have discussed, this new and original idea of political autonomy was clearly expressed and developed at the Inaugural Round Table of the First Gathering of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World.

That vindication of the Other Politics seeks firstly to propose a possible solution to the increasingly evident planetary crisis of the entire human activity of politics. This generalized crisis of politics is its terminal and definitive crisis: the process of the radical and true *death of politics* as a general human activity. Along with this comes the reemergence of certain dimensions of human social life which advance towards *reabsorbing that politics* which is today in crisis into the universe of the social, dissolving it and replacing it with a new protagonism and direct action on the part of social and economic actors, movements, forces, and interests who for so many centuries 'expressed' themselves under what we know as 'politics' and 'the political.'

In order to understand this radically new and different form of 'doing politics' we must turn to one of the important (though often-forgotten) lessons of the theory of Marx. Though little considered by contemporary political scientists, this essential lesson retains all of its force and relevance: this is the idea that human politics—politics in general as a specific human sphere or activity—is nothing other than a *derivative and dependent manifestation* (though clad in its own seemingly-autonomous forms) of social life itself. In other words, to paraphrase Marx (himself paraphrasing Hegel), the realm of politics is not a self-sufficient one, as it does not contain within itself the premises of its own explanation. In order to adequately understand it, then, we must always turn to *other* realms of social life, to economic realities, to social groups and conflicts, and to the social movements and forces that inevitably underly the realities of politics and the political across all of human history.

Because it is clear that, since the remote times of ancient Greece, the human activity of politics has never been and *could never have been* an end in itself. Rather, since its beginnings, it has been constituted as a mechanism or reality or set of human relations and configurations meant to meet needs and achieve goals that have always necessarily been *non-political*, *extra-political*, or *external* to the realm of politics itself.

Political power does not exist for power's own sake, and one of the worst perversions that modern societies suffer from today has been precisely that

politicians believe that power is an end in itself, that it is self-sufficient, instead of believing that power is a simple means for *other* realities and social dimensions. Accordingly, they simply ignore the fact that the essential nature of the political has, since the times of Aristotle, been merely a *derivative* level of social life which is *eternally dependent* on the realm of the social. If man is a 'political animal,' this only means that man is a member of the *polis*, the Greek city and community. For this reason, politics, in its basic and original meaning, is merely the activity of managing the public or shared affairs of the community itself, i.e., the *collective social problems* that a community faces. And even when later on, in class societies, politics becomes an explicit activity of marginalizing the popular classes and of struggling to maintain the exploiting, hegemonic classes' monopoly over the management of public affairs, even then politics remains a simple vehicle for expressing *social* conflicts, its inevitable, permanent content.

For this reason, Marx understands the state to be (among many other things) an "illusory community," and for this reason he always defines political power as a derived, parasitic, protocolized form (which takes on the forms of apparatuses and institutions) of the *social power* that emanates from society and its basic relations. For the same reason, Lenin was once able to say that politics was nothing other than "concentrated economy," while Gramsci reformulated the entire theory of politics and the revolution from the framework of the social processes of formation of historical blocs and the construction of these through the primary classes and forces of a society.

Therefore, if politics is only the transfigured and protocolized form of social power and of the social and economic relations that underlie it, it is then logical that, within the clear context of the capitalism's present *terminal stage* as a historic system and of the crisis of *all of its structures*, there is also a total crisis of modern politics which completely reformulates all of its forms of usual functioning. At the same time, that crisis renders many of the relations and most central relations of politics outdated and dysfunctional.

Moreover, and as a process that advances alongside this crisis and destructuring of contemporary politics, certain symptoms are already appearing that, given the genuine *historical transition* currently underway, announce and prefigure the final result of this process. At the same time, these symptoms in a certain way anticipate the possible forms of an eventual reorganization of these same human realities. This is precisely something that gives meaning and content to that vindication of *another way of doing politics* raised as a

banner by the neo-Zapatistas, both in general and more recently within the national initiative of the Other Campaign.

This means that what for three decades we have witnessed on the world level is nothing other than the *death of politics* insofar as it is the human activity of societies; nothing other, in other words, than the definitive extinction of the whole realm of apparatuses, institutions, relations, and realities that were born more than 2,500 years ago.

The activity of politics is one more expression of the profound *human scarcity* that Jean-Paul Sartre theorized so sharply, following Marx. With the end of human scarcity and the kingdom of necessity that accompanies it, and with the extinction of class antagonisms and social classes themselves, there will therefore necessarily come the extinction of the whole kingdom of politics and the political that for thousands of years was one of the deformed (though at the time necessary) expressions of social power itself and of the social-economic realities that supported those forms of human politics and the political. This death of politics is the same death foretold by Marx in the final argument of *The Poverty of Philosophy* when he says that "It is only in an order of things in which there are no more classes and class antagonisms that *social evolutions* will cease to be *political revolutions*."

Implied here is that this complex process of the historical end of these *longue durée* structures (which constitute the realm of human politics and the political) is doubtlessly at the center of a multi-sided crisis whose first victim is the contemporary state itself. It is evident that today all the state structures of the world find themselves in a profound and irreversible crisis and over the last three decades have lost a great deal of their former credibility. This has given way to the development of a certain "anti-statism" that, while somewhat nebulous, has become widespread and deeply-rooted in practically every country in the world. Moreover, states across the world have fallen into the so-called fiscal crisis of the contemporary state and have simultaneously become gradually less able to fulfill their traditional and most basic responsibilities: providing the essential services of public health, state-run education, and a minimum of public safety.

This crisis in all dimensions of the state is accompanied everywhere by a *crisis of legitimacy* of the activity of politics in general, which ordinary people across the world now see as a despicable and semi-corrupt activity almost intrinsically tied to influence peddling and dirty dealing and which is plagued with nepotism, backstabbing, and agreements made by leadership without consulting their bases.

This vast global crisis of politics then anticipates and foretells this *final extinction of the human activity of politics* which is now underway and which is at the heart of the shouts of the Argentinians who demand that "They should all go and not one of them should stay!" These protesters refer to absolutely *all* members of the Argentinian political class, without exception. The same is true in the wise neo-Zapatista slogan which states that the only politics that makes sense today is that which is based on the logic that those who lead must lead by obeying. As we have already seen, this logic *rejects and fundamentally opposes* the entire human activity of politics in the way it has been understood and practiced not only during the last 500 years but over the course of its whole existence.

This general process of crisis is also expressed, for example and as we will see further on, in the relationship between the masses and their leaders and in the relationship between social movements and their leaders. As a result, the last 30 or 35 years have seen a powerful and widespread dissemination not only of generalized distrust of the state and 'professional' politicians of all ideologies, but of the demand to build movements and organizations with *less vertical and hierarchical* structures. The internal structures in currently-existing movements have concentrated all decision-making power at the top of the pyramid, and the demand now is to replace these with organizational structures which are much more *horizontal*, more democratic, and more decentralized in terms of management and decision-making.

In expressing the ongoing death of politics, this crisis of the old forms of leadership, even of genuinely popular leadership, anticipate the necessary process in which the social will *reabsorb the political* and its primary functions, returning to social forces, subaltern classes, and popular movements *the management and leadership* not only of their own struggles but, later on, of their own destinies and of their action as a whole. This returning of the central role to the great subaltern subjects, to "those below," explains the position of the neo-Zapatistas, which Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos refers to in his interview with Juan Gelman in July or August of 1996. Giving this interview during the First Intercontinental Gathering for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism, Marcos says that "[…] we cannot back a repeat of the error of scorning society, scorning the people, whatever equivalent you want to use to talk about the majority of the population. It's not about overthrowing one government and setting up another, abolishing one social system and setting up another without people being able to give their opinion on that social system. We say that instead of overthrowing or destroying a system or

overthrowing or destroying a government and setting up another, what we need is to open a space of political struggle where the citizenry, or the majority of people, can have political participation and give their opinions and decide what social system, what political system, what government they want. We say that it doesn't matter all that much who is in the government; what matters is the relationship between that government and the governed."

This, however, should *not* be interpreted in the absurd sense that we have to try to "change the world without taking power" or under the logic that we should cast aside any type of political work or possible political activity. Rather, it should be understood in the rational sense that we should, in full awareness, accept that we work in a specific context in which the traditional human activity of politics is collapsing before our very eyes. Therefore, we should act within this same context with the aim of accelerating that imminent, inevitable death of politics, promoting the reabsorption of politics into social life. At the same time, we must defend the (basically identical) position that the *other way of doing politics* which the neo-Zapatistas have promoted for years and which is now promoted by the Other Campaign only makes sense to the degree that it *serves and subordinates itself to the social*.

In other words, the neo-Zapatista position only makes sense insofar as (1) those who lead do so by obeying and that fundamental decisions are made by the masses and not their leaders, and (2) insofar as leaders serve the movement and are not served by it. Likewise, this position only makes sense insofar as the *guiding principle* of all possible strategy and tactics is to strengthen the movement and the real conquest of popular demands, not the search for political office or privileges or micro-powers for the leaders of those masses and movements. This is the position that has been advanced in various forms by the neo-Zapatistas of Mexico, the Landless Workers Movement of Brazil, the workers and *piqueteros* of Argentina, and the indigenous peoples of Bolivia and Ecuador, among others.

It is in this context of contemporary politics that we have roughly outlined here that the recurrent gap between the leaders of popular movements and these movements themselves can be explained. This gap goes beyond the intelligence, self-sacrifice, ability, or willpower of these leaders; in fact, on a deeper level, it expresses the ongoing process through which popular classes and movements reappropriate, in different ways, the functions which have traditionally been carried out by their leaders. This is nothing other than one more manifestation of the *longue durée* crisis of the central structures of

modern politics, of the definitive and terminal disintegration of the universe of human politics and its gradual reabsorption by the social.

It is therefore clear that this repeated dynamic of increasingly frequent discrepancy between social movements and their leaders is an expression of a necessary process in which the subaltern classes and popular masses reclaim a leading role which is more direct, permanent, and participatory. By eliminating the customary 'delegation' of decisions and responsibilities to leaders, this leading role necessarily and completely reformulates the internal ties between a movement's social dimension and its political environment, consequently redefining its function, its rules, and its relationship with its own leaders.

The fate of the social struggle and of popular protest and resistance is something too important to totally 'delegate' to a handful of leaders. And given that we are witnessing the slow death of politics as a human activity, the subaltern classes and popular masses in general broadly demand a *much more central and direct role* in the leadership of their vast social movements. They are more vigilant and critical of their leaders and more openly express their agreement or disagreement with any decision or policy or posture made or held by their leaders that contradicts or expresses their most vital needs and demands. As the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle, made public in June 2005, states: "[…] we believe that a people which does not watch over its leaders is condemned to be enslaved, and we fought to be free, not to change masters every six years."

In this context of the clear death of politics as a human activity and of the reemergence of the social—which gradually recuperates the functions fulfilled by the old politics now in crisis—it becomes easier to understand the radical novelty and enormous originality of the Other Politics advanced by the dignified indigenous rebels of the Mexican southeast. This novelty and originality become even more evident when we contrast them with the worldview and exercise of the old politics, today embodied by the entire corrupt and decadent Mexican political class and by all the political classes of the entire world.

These two worldviews and two exercises are diametrically opposed to each other. The side of the corrupt political classes of Mexico and the world shows us a clearly instrumental and utilitarian vision of traditional politics in which the ends justify any possible means and in which the only goal is the conquest of political posts, whatever the price, under a logic where power turns around its own axis like a senseless and unstoppable carousel. The side of the Other Politics offers us a vision of politics that transcends all previous definitions by understanding politics in a qualitative and novel manner, as work guided by

the "spirit of serving others, without material interests, with sacrifice, with dedication, with honesty, which keeps its word, whose only payment is the satisfaction of duty performed," just as the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle declares.

On one side stands traditional politics, understood from above and from the perspective of the dominant classes, defended and reproduced by the decaying political classes of Mexico and the world. On the other stands the Other Politics, understood from below and to the left, from the perspective of the subaltern classes and the genuine antisystemic movements of the entire world. If on the former side politics is considered an activity that should be exclusively practiced by those from above and by a small sector of so-called 'professional politicians,' the latter side sees politics as a matter that concerns the vast majorities that constitute the varied range of those from below. The Other Politics understands politics to be an activity that can and should be carried out by everyone, as the neo-Zapatista Councils of Good Government show in practice.

Because if we demystify the false and ridiculous idea that politics is highly complex and suitable only for a small group of the initiated—if we understand politics as simply being the management and administration of a human group's public and common affairs—we will see that not only can it be practiced by anyone but even that it *should* be taken up by everyone since its exercise always affects everyone directly.

Traditional politics eternally revolves around the climactic moment of elections and subordinates everything else to that moment: it is largely dormant when there is no election on the horizon and resuscitates itself enormously during election season. The Other Politics, however, understands the new form of doing politics that sustains it to br an everyday matter, a permanent, constant daily activity that affirms and deploys itself in spaces of work, life, coexistence, and the most simple and basic social relations. These habitual spaces of daily life in its multiple dimensions are "everyone's place," the nurseries of the millions of cries of "Enough!" from individuals and small groups that later become visible and actively transform large mobilizations and massive collective actions.

As we have already alluded to, traditional politics is governed by unprincipled pragmatism and guided by a utilitarian logic of winning political power at any price by stepping on whoever stands in one's way. The Other Politics, in contrast, is always based on profoundly ethical criteria and constantly weighs the moral implications of its different actions. It makes decisions by keeping

its promises, remaining true to its principles, and respecting its own memory, its past, its dead, and its history. The Other Politics is based on ethics: it moves not based on practical convenience or to acquire fleeting privileges but out of deep convictions and duties consciously and freely assumed as correct rules for life and action.

And just as traditional politics today lacks any ties to the realm of ethics, it likewise lacks connection to the world of *social* forces, movements, and realities from which it sprang some 25 centuries ago but from which it has become totally separate and independent in the last two or three decades. Only in light of that disconnection can the existence of phenomena such as political parties which are simply family businesses be understood. The same is true regarding empty shells fought over by vulgar interest groups, leaders who surround themselves with colleagues who only yesterday were their bitter enemies, and politicians and leaders who repeatedly betray their bases and their own parties without facing immediate expulsion from those parties.

'Taking power' is not the central objective of the Other Politics, although the Other Politics does not reject taking power (either on principle or absolutely). It clearly affirms that the center of gravity of its activities lies in the creation of a powerful, solid, well-organized, and active social movement of the exploited and excluded of Mexico. This anti-capitalist social movement or mass front must be strong enough to compel any government—right, center, or "left"—to consider its appeals and satisfy its central demands. Eventually, this movement will be able to create and impose its *own government*; i.e., it will be able to take the power that currently exists in order to destroy it and radically remake it, building a new power and new government that will 'do what the people command.'

The false slogan that attributes to the Zapatistas a desire to 'change the world without taking power' was explicitly refuted in Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos's August 7, 2005 declaration at the Meeting with Left Political Organizations: "The problem of power isn't our problem. The EZLN repeats that it does not fight for power, *but it does not say that power should not be fought for*.[1] If that were the case we would not have invited all the political organizations who aim to seize power. We say that this is not our role. Our path is a different one. But if there is a party or group of parties who seize power and respond to popular causes, very good, welcome." "Power," Marcos added, "does not corrupt." On February 5, 2006, at a meeting on the isthmus

1 Emphasis mine—CAAR.

of Tehuantepec, he furthermore stated that "What we want is to decide who governs and how. And we want to decide who wealth belongs to and who it is distributed."

From the formation and affirmation of that potent social movement capable of overthrowing governments and changing the social system in its totality, the Other Politics will extend to a situation in which we all watch over those who govern us and in which we will choose who governs us and how they do so. This Other Government and other way of wielding power will no longer take on the form of a state, and its activity will not be *political* in the sense by which we have until now understood that term. Instead, it will be a mere organ for rationally and intelligently administrating collective social issues, and its members will act on the basis of profoundly ethical criteria, weighing the moral consequences of each decision and obeying the people from the principle of leading by obeying. At the same time, they will constantly affirm the importance of the people's history, their memory, their dead, and their various pasts. This, in other words, is what we currently see expressed and functioning in the Councils of Good Government (JBGs) of the neo-Zapatista Caracoles, the first practical and clear model of that very 'other way of doing politics' that the dignified neo-Zapatistas of Mexico proudly defend today.

Deconstructing and Unthinking Limited Formal Democracy: The Other Democracy

One of the important consequences of accepting the ongoing death of politics—and the resulting vindication of a very Other Politics—is overcoming the limited form of understanding and practicing democracy which is currently dominant and which is also experiencing a total crisis. Because while the neo-Zapatistas have indeed defended the central slogan of democracy since New Year's Day of 1994, that defense (logically and in line with the ideas of leading by obeying, Other Government, and Other Politics) also implies a radically different way of understanding democracy itself.

This is not only because they healthily remind us of the *original* meaning of that term—government of the people—but because through their new and very other ways of understanding politics, government, and the functions of leadership and obedience, it becomes possible to reach a very other understanding of democracy and even formulate a very other democracy, an "Other Democracy."

The perversion that replaces the idea of a government *of* the people with that of a government *chosen by* the people began in ancient Greece, inaugurating the concept of *delegating* the functions of government and opening the (initially potential, later real) possibility that a government "chosen by" the people could separate from the people, ignore them, and even act against them. At the same time, governors cease to be real 'representatives' of the people and begin to supplant them, assigning themselves the authority to decide, resolve, plan, and direct. This authority is expropriated from the people themselves and is slowly exploited by these bad governments and representatives, who claim to be 'for the people.'

The trajectory of development that democracy has traveled over history has thus been one in which this supposed people's government progressively became *divorced* from the people themselves. It is also a development that has seen the constant usurpation, on the part of minority and elite governments, of the direct practice of popular self-government; although these governments continued speaking and pretending to act on behalf of the people, they did so only in light of their limited class, group, or even individual interests. This meant that democracy—which for a brief period following its birth was indeed a real government *of* the people—gradually became a merely delegative and formal democracy. Emptied of its real content, democracy became institutionalized and protocolized as a government of the minority and of elites who were economically, socially, and culturally dominant at different points in history.

This deviation from the original meaning of democracy as government of the people towards a formal, rhetorical, empty democracy reaches its highest point with bourgeois democracy. For five centuries, this form of government has been developed and perfected as the embodiment of the capitalist class's domination and government, as well as the booty fought over by the bourgeois political class. Between the 16th and 19th centuries, bourgeois democracy was able to develop without too many conflicts and even played a historically progressive role against monarchical, aristocratic, and despotic governments of all stripes. Beginning in the second half of the 19th century, however, it began to show all of its profound limits and inadequacies as modern mass society developed and demanded a likewise broad democracy of the masses.

But bourgeois democracy was, as we have said, not a real democracy but a merely *formal* one, not a direct democracy but a *delegative* one, and not a representative democracy but one that *supplanted*. Its incorporation of the broad popular masses into its functioning was therefore a purely *quantitative* incorporation, not a qualitative one. Facing the growing development of popular

consciousness and the increasing politicization of the immense bottom layer of the social pyramid, combined with the legitimate and growing demands for *real democracy* and a *real democratization* of society, the profound and insurmountable limits of this deformed version of democracy, the successor to the original government of the people theorized by the ancient Greeks, became evident across the world.

As yet another expression of the terminal crisis we are witnessing, we now see this crisis of the limited formal expression of democracy in its double condition of bourgeois democracy but also and more deeply in its condition as a delegative democracy, indirect and blindly minoritarian. The neo-Zapatista *compañeros* have seen this clearly and appropriately in reminding us of the original and basic meaning of democracy as a government of the people, i.e., as popular self-government, and by proposing to us—based on their practice of the Other Politics, Other Government, and leading by obeying—another, very different form of understanding and practicing democracy.

In this way, they bring about a true *longue durée* double rupture: first from the whole content of formal, qualitative, bourgeois democracy, and secondly and more profoundly from the entire essence of delegative and rhetorical democracy inherited from the ancient Greeks. The neo-Zapatistas newly vindicate an understanding of democracy as *direct* democracy which is truly representative, qualitative, and always open and attentive to the complex diversity and plurality which today characterize all kinds of collectives, groups, and human communities in general.

Because as we have noted above, neo-Zapatista democracy is a direct democracy based on the principle that the highest authority is the assembly of the entire people. This is a universal assembly that—through free, broad, and highly participatory deliberation—makes decisions on all the community's central problems, proposing possible solutions and generally defining both the forms of sociality chosen by the community itself and the community's overall direction.

This universal people's assembly is the highest organ of Zapatista self-government and abolishes at a stroke the entire delegative deformation of democracy, returning to the people their own powers of government and self-government and reducing government officials to mere implementers of the popular interest and will. This beyond a doubt represents a very other path and a very other version of democracy, much closer to a 'government of the people' and very distant from the formal and delegative democracy which we have endured for millennia.

This direct democracy is furthermore truly *representative* in that it suppresses the spaces that make it possible for elected officials to supplant the people and in that it rationally limits and simplifies the functions of government, stripping away the paraphernalia and garish apparatuses that surround the exercise of power. It dissolves the false halos of exceptionality and mystery that officeholders surround themselves in to make themselves autonomous from the people. Neo-Zapatista governors, these officials of good government, are thus transformed into *real representatives* of their communities and peoples.

Furthermore, neo-Zapatista democracy is a *qualitative* democracy which is always attentive to diversity. Facing bourgeois democracy, with its fetishist and quantitative cult of the "majority" and its obligatory domination of "minorities," the indigenous rebels of Chiapas defend a more qualitative and complex idea of democracy which is oriented toward consensus-building and toward the recuperation of different minority points of view. It is obvious that if in regard to any fundamental problem, a 51% "majority" takes a position very different to that of the "minority" of 49%, it would be not only absurd but catastrophic and irrational to mechanically impose the will of one half of the community on the other half. This would produce a fragmented community in which half of the population would unhappily and reluctantly comply with a decision that they did not share and which did not at all convince them.

Against this mechanical, formal, irrational, and quantitative way of understanding democracy, the neo-Zapatista *compañeros* defend the permanent search for consensus through fraternal, free, and direct debate that attempts to reconcile differing positions under a logic of recovering the best parts of each of these divergent postures. Zapatista consensus-building can be taken as far as debating important problems in their communities for several days in a row, and this exercise allows not only for a dialectical relationship between and interpenetration of different positions but also allows for community members to gain deep consciousness of the bases, meaning, implications, virtues, and limitations of each posture and every proposal. This kind of deep consciousness simply does not and cannot exist in bourgeois democracy, with its mechanical and empty game of mere voting and its reified vote-counting for the abstract and impersonal definition and imposition of the "majority" over the ignored, repressed, and marginalized "minorities."

This profoundly enlightening and pedagogical search for consensus reminds us of the wise position that the Brazilian comrades of the Landless Workers Movement (MST) have adopted with regard to situations of closed 'majorities' and 'minorities' of 51% and 49% or similar cases. Instead of

breaking their unity and self-dividing their communities and their movement, the MST *postpones making a decision* on the problem that has created a division, letting it mature for several months or even years. In the meantime, they undertake debate, meditation, reciprocal exchange of positions, and deep reflection on these positions. According to them, this has always produced successful results. When they return to the problem months or sometimes years later, consensus has been produced by the passing of time itself, and through that further reflection, discussion, maturation, meditation, and debate.

At the heart of this more *qualitative* understanding of democracy is the recognition of not only the great value of collective consensus but also of the *equal importance* of all points of view of the members who comprise a collective. For the neo-Zapatistas the point of view of the "majority" is *equally* as important as that of the "minority," as both are points of view of the community and its members. For this reason, minorities are particularly respected and cared for, and their points of view are always attentively preserved and guarded by the community. Because, as the Zapatistas say, if at some point a majority point of view which becomes a consensus point of view does *not* work, then it is necessary to take up the problem again and perhaps to explore the solutions proposed by those who were initially the "minorities" but who through the process of consensus-building joined the point of view of the consensus.

Because another one of the deep and insurmountable limits of quantitative democracy is that it applies a single standard to human beings who are profoundly different, thus doing away with their evident diversity through its homogenizing logic. This is what leads to the absurd measures referenced above, i.e., dividing communities by imposing the will of 51% of the community over that of 49% of its members, marginalizing and annulling the will of the 49% because it is quantitatively smaller than that of the 51%. But moreover and on a deeper level, quantitative, delegative, formal democracy will always be incapable of recognizing, protecting, and practically channeling the enormous plurality and diversity represented by any human community. In contrast, the practices of qualitative and rational consensus-building, as well as giving equal weight to the points of view of minorities and majorities, explicitly and clearly point to the retrieval of plurality and diversity. And in the same way that Marx rightly reminds us in *Critique of the Gotha Program* that, to be just, "right, instead of being equal, would have to be unequal," the neo-Zapatista *compañeros* tell us that democracy, in order to be real, must be

able to recuperate and protect the immense plurality and diversity of human beings. In other words, it must be a democracy very other to the form of democracy that currently exists; it must be a democracy that expresses and reflects that "world where many worlds fit" for which so many of the dignified neo-Zapatista rebels and the national movement of the Other Campaign are currently fighting. All of this, as we have already mentioned, is inspired by the logic of leading by obeying and from the horizons of a very Other Politics and a very Other Government which are being built and consolidated even now.

· 3 ·

MEXICAN NEO-ZAPATISMO, HEIR TO THE WORLD CULTURAL REVOLUTION OF 1968

"The [Mexican] movement of the generation of '68 has been a higher form of exercising autonomy on the part of all the students, at the level of the self-government of a mass democracy. This is valid not only in the student context but should be extended to all of Mexican society, as a democracy that assumes the social transformation that the country needs […]"
José Revueltas, "Un Movimiento, Una Bandera, Una Revolución" (One Movement, One Flag, One Revolution), 1969.

When Being Realistic Means Demanding the Impossible

Other Politics, the Other Democracy, leading by obeying, and the construction of the neo-Zapatista understanding and practice of political autonomy (and global autonomy) are only possible insofar as all of these original and very other versions of governing and doing politics are supported by the existence of a likewise very other antisystemic social movement, which they accompany and draw upon directly. Having been forged in the context that the World Cultural Revolution of 1968 created in Mexico and across the world, this social movement has an essential character which is radically *different* to all antisystemic social movements that came before the rupture-event symbolized by the emblematic year of 1968.

One of the temporal chains synthesized and expressed at the First Gathering of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the world was that of the entire history of the neo-Zapatista movement. In terms of its recent pasts, this presents us with the years of 1994, 1983, and 1974, several important points in the historical context following 1968. It is well known that

neo-Zapatismo was born out of the complex and unique fusion that occurred between an indigenous movement catalyzed and broadened in the state of Chiapas after the National Indigenous Congress of 1974, held in the city of San Cristóbal de las Casas, and a small group of left-wing activists who were shaped in the rich environment of the renewal of Marxism and the entire Mexican left which came as a product of the student-popular movement of July through October 1968.

This was a dense and original fusion of, on one hand, a small nucleus that represented the best products of the left-wing intellectuals and political groups who were the immediate heirs of the political and general lessons of the Mexican '68 and on the other hand a renewed and astute indigenous and *campesino* movement that was the heir to the traditions of a *longue durée* indigenous *campesino* rebellion in Chiapas, as well as the rich exchange of experiences and lessons represented by the National Indigenous Congress of 1974. Beginning to gestate at the end of 1983, this nucleus would slowly mature over the course of a decade before publicly bursting onto the world scene on New Year's Day, 1994. The neo-Zapatistas themselves recognized the singular nature of this fusion, declaring in their August 25, 1995 communiqué that they are "a product of the meeting between indigenous wisdom and resistance and the rebelliousness and bravery of the generation of dignity, who with their blood lit up the dark night of the decade of the Sixties, Seventies, and Eighties. From this meeting we learned to stand firm [...] to live struggling." The "generation of dignity" referred to here is obviously the generation which played the leading role in and faced the immediate consequences of the Mexican student-popular movement of 1968.

As the product of this fusion and of the contexts of Mexico and Chiapas after 1968, the neo-Zapatista movement forms part of the pan-Latin American family of new antisystemic movements, all of which arose out of the post-1968 context. Most significant among them currently are the Landless Workers Movement (MST) in Brazil, important radical segments of the Argentinian *piquetero* movement, and the most radical and left-wing elements of the indigenous movements in both Ecuador and Bolivia. Today, this family of new Latin American antisystemic movements undeniably represents the *global vanguard front* of the entire antisystemic struggle unfolding across our little planet Earth.

Logically, this means that Mexican neo-Zapatismo is triply defined. It is firstly defined as one among many post-1968 antisystemic movements that are the descendants of the healthy ruptures from the pre-1968 antisystemic

movements, which they are entirely distinct from. Secondly, it is the standout movement of the *global vanguard front of antisystemic struggles* which is today made up of the Latin American family of antisystemic movements, a family which is causing the semi-continent's new centrality in the world. Thirdly, it is Mexico's most advanced social movement, the inheritor of the revolution of 1968, and the product of the national and Chiapan contexts of approximately the last 35 years. Here we will examine only some of the various implications of this triple determination which were reflected upon during the various sessions of the First Gathering of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World.

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The collection of enormous novelties and riches contained by the neo-Zapatista movement—which is today transforming into a social movement that spans all of Mexico through the important initiative of the Other Campaign—is a collection that springs, as we have stated, from a multifaceted determination that unfolds and affirms itself on various levels. Firstly, there is the fact that this movement rose out of the context following the World Cultural Revolution of 1968. Neo-Zapatismo is therefore one of the heirs of the true *longue durée* revolution which has radically reshaped all global structures of cultural reproduction and has consequently and necessarily reshaped all the forms of political culture and of the practical exercise of politics as a whole, alongside the different varieties of the culture of resistance and the antisystemic struggle. The worldwide revolution of 1968, in other words, has reshaped the action and practice of all antisystemic social movements across the world.

As Immanuel Wallerstein has so well explained, the double rupture of the World Cultural Revolution of 1968 and the global economic crisis of 1972–73 was the moment of capitalism's entry into the *terminal* phase of its existence, i.e., the stage of the genuine terminal crisis of the global capitalist system. Like any stage of historical bifurcation, this final stage of planetary capitalist is characterized by the clear coexistence of (1) the process of the collapse and disintegration of old, previously stable economic, political, cultural and civilizational structures and (2) the nascent emergence of new structures which in a near future will eventually be able to replace the capitalist structures which are still dominant now but are collapsing before our very eyes.

This simultaneous collapse of certain social structures alongside the birth of others expresses the increasingly clear fact that for some 40 years humanity has been witnessing a clear process of *a historical transition on the planetary scale* whose outcome is as yet unknown to us. It is unknown to us because it depends completely on our reflections and solutions, our own thought and action, and our own concrete responses to the systemic chaos spreading across the social fabric of all the world's societies.

The terminal, systemic crisis of world capitalism is thus the context that explains many of the processes that the neo-Zapatistas have diagnosed as central, such as capitalism's planetary offensive against land, territory, and natural resources, its world-scale war for loot, and the crisis and refunctionalization of nation-states, which are often reduced to mere administrators of that looting and of each nation's local crises. Also central are the many symptoms of what the Zapatistas call the "Fourth World War," including the recent failed and absurd military policy of the United States, massive migration from the poor 'South' to the rich 'Norths,' the unfettered worldwide growth of social polarization and its attendant inequalities, and the increasing infiltration of states on the part of drug-trafficking mafias and criminals of all stripes.

On the other side of the coin is the crisis of the world capitalist system and the historical bifurcation we are now witnessing. It is this crisis and this bifurcation that allow us to understand the re-launching and growing strength of the new global social protest, which encompasses both an important segment of the seven iterations of the World Social Forum as well as the new Latin American social movements, alongside the vast range of movements of peasants, workers, the unemployed, the urban poor, indigenous people, students, feminists, ethnic minorities, queer people, etc. which are genuinely *antisystemic* and are today standing up across the world.

Likewise, it is the global post-1968 context of the historical end of capitalism which explains the existence of nascent forms of a new world which is very other to the capitalist world. These forms are today materializing in the *piquetero* neighborhoods of Argentina, the radical indigenous communities of Ecuador and Bolivia, the settlements of the MST in Brazil, and the Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities (MAREZ), as (once again) was made evident at the First Gathering of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World. The post-1968 context functions as an explanatory framework for the symptoms of the terminal crisis of capitalism described here, as well as for the kernels of a non-capitalist world which are today active across Latin America. It is also the framework which allows us to understand the multiple ruptures

entailed by the World Cultural Revolution of 1968, including the *longue durée* shift that *all* antisystemic movements have undergone in the last three or four decades. It is clear that 1968 also represents a profound break in the history of the antisystemic movements of the capitalist epoch, separating those movements which arose between 1789 and 1968 and those which came after this emblematic year.

> 1968 thus represents a revolution in the nature, composition, character, and function of antisystemic movements across the world: among other important shifts, it modified their objectives, their forms of action, their strategies, their actors, their tactics, their methods, and even their internal forms of organization and specific forms of struggle. These changes also gave direct rise to a profound revolution within the left-wing organizations that accompany or link themselves to antisystemic social movements. Following 1968, these organizations would see their structures and modes of organization transformed, as well as their tasks, objectives, tactics, strategies, and roles, including their forms of acting with and linking themselves to antisystemic movements.

This double revolution of social movements and left-wing organizations has also materialized (with its own particularities) in the neo-Zapatista movement, in its Caracoles and Councils of Good Government (JBGs), and at the First Gathering of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World. This double revolution was also clearly foretold by many of the trajectories of the movements of the symbolic 1968 in Mexico and across the world.

It was apparent, for example, in the evidently and profoundly radical character of these movements, which stood in contrast to the timidity and reformism which dominated the great majority of existing social movements on the eve of the late 1970s. The radicality of the movements of 1968 was at the root of its slogan, "We want everything, right now!" proclaimed by Italians in the celebrated Hot Autumn of 1969. This slogan anticipated the profound shift in the global strategy of all antisystemic movements in the last 30 years.

It was this shift in global strategy that made it possible for the movement of 1968 and its successors to re-actualize their true general objective, i.e., the radical objective of 'changing the world.' Likewise, it was this shift that vigorously renewed the demand to immediately build spaces and structures which were *alternative* to the capitalist social order while beginning to deploy other, non-capitalist and anti-capitalist logics in our spaces, relations, organizations, and concrete everyday practices.

Pre-1968 social movements which became sidetracked by medium-term objectives and lost sight of the true final goal always deformed into purely reformist movements or limited protest movements which were essentially prosystemic. In contrast, among the new global antisystemic movements the demand to immediately begin the radical transformation of society and the world eventually solidified as the contemporary demand to start changing the world here and now, in our own immediate contexts, creating the liberated spaces which are the kernels of a new, non-capitalist world.

At the same time, the primary agent and driver of these movements of the 1970s and 1980s was the student population, a new social actor which until then had been marked by an elitist dimension and played only a marginal role. Through these movements, students would become massive and powerful social actors, playing a major role within all subsequent social struggles. The baptism of students as a new agent of social contestation also prefigured the emergence and new fundamental role of a whole vast range of subaltern sectors, groups, and agents who would come to populate the geography of global antisystemic struggles in the years following the profound revolution of 1968. Naturally, the centrality of the students would not only transform the internal composition of the agents who comprise the new social movements but would also provoke the definitive collapse of the entire family of organizations of the old pre-1968 left and its replacement by various new lefts.

In affirming that "the more I make love, the more I want to make the Revolution; the more I make the Revolution, the more I want to make love," the student movements of 1968 identified the immediate connection between what was traditionally considered 'political' and the rest of the social fabric. In this way, these movements smashed the classic and now-defunct distinction between 'public' and 'private,' foretelling the opening and growing multiplication of various fronts of the anti-capitalist struggle which would characterize all subsequent social movements. These fronts of struggle ceased to be concentrated within or reduced to the economic and political spheres and from then on encompassed culture, the family, the environment, the question of war and peace, problems of gender, ethnic and cultural entities, territory, urban management, sexual diversity, civilizational identity, and the condition of age, among many other elements.

Likewise, the movement of 1968 anticipated the movements that would follow it through its on-the-fly improvisation and invention of the new forms of organization, struggle, work, and even discourse and expression that characterized it. Unleashing the enormous creativity of the students and the

popular sectors in movement, and with "power to the imagination" as their slogan, the movements of 1968 would criticize and overcome the old partisan, hierarchical, and pyramidal forms that characterized the majority of the leftist organizations then existing. They would replace these forms with more horizontal, flexible, and agile structures that were less delegative and closer to direct democracy—a form of democracy, in other words, far superior to the currently-reigning form. Logically, these shifts would spread to the methods of struggle and the new modes of concrete action of these movements, as well as their discourse and self-perception.

The movements of 1968 thus had an anticipatory character in regard to the antisystemic movements of recent decades and particularly in regard to the Latin American iterations of these movements, including Mexican neo-Zapatismo. Their central consequences for the definition of the character of these movements and of the options and solutions facing more contemporary struggles are worth examining in more detail now.

Because Even Today, "We want everything, right away!"

One of the primary criticisms that the movements of 1968 made against the left-wing groups that were then hegemonic was their obvious reformism, timidity, and rigid gradualism when defining their basic objectives and the efforts they would make to reach these objectives. In other words, the movements of 1968 were criticizing the impoverishment of daily struggles that was the result of hegemonic organizations concentrating all political work and planning on limited short-term economic, labor, or political reforms and relegating to an indeterminate future the real task of making revolution. Far from expressing youthful impatience or unfounded radicalism, the shouts of 1968 that declared "we don't want reforms, we want revolution" thus embodied the urgent need to *renew* the true objective of all antisystemic movements of the last two centuries: the objective of radically changing the capitalist world and replacing it with another where there would be no exploitation, dispossession, despotism, inequality, or discrimination.

Per the theory of Immanuel Wallerstein, pre-1968 social movements followed a "two-step" strategy in which the first step was to take state power and the second step was to change the world using the advantages and force supposedly conferred by the power of the seized state. While many antisystemic

movements across the world did successfully manage to take state power in their respective countries, it is clear that all of these movements eventually failed—sooner or later and in various complex ways—to achieve the second goal of radically changing the still-capitalist world.

But as we say above, in this context the revolution of 1968 represents a true revolution of a *longue durée* structure. Its healthy planetary irruption completely shifted the history of world antisystemic movements, bringing an end to the stage that began with the French Revolution of 1789 and inaugurating a *new phase* that stretching from 1968 to the present day. Among many other changes, this new phase delegitimizes and renders null the "two-step" strategy, replacing it with a new strategy that proposes to start changing the world here and now, and to question established power and create popular counter-power on this basis. Instead of "taking state power," it proposes to move forward in the line of "revolutionizing power from below," as one more of the many elements of the creation of a new world, very other to the unjust capitalist world.

The end of the two-step strategy does not imply, as asserted in a mistaken and simplistic manner by at least one author, that the neo-Zapatistas want to "change the world without taking power." Rather, it means that the neo-Zapatistas, like all genuinely antisystemic movements post 1968, have adopted a new global strategy that on the basis of renewing their basic objective of radically changing the world leads them to resituate their specific relationship with state power and political power in general. Consequently, they are driven to reformulate the problem of power: more than wanting to "take" power, the focus shifts to first destroying and then fundamentally "revolutionizing" and "rebuilding" power from below. This is done first by destroying the old state and completely marginalizing the whole of the decaying political class and then replacing these with *another form* of government based on leading by obeying and on a very Other Politics. It is this change that led Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos to say in his May 1996 "Invitation to the International Gathering for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism" that "it is necessary to build a new political culture. This new political culture can arise out of a new form of seeing power. The point is not to take power, but to revolutionize its relationship with those who wield it and those who endure it." This revolution in relations of power advances precisely through leading by obeying and through the Other Politics, whose primary content we have attempted to explain in previous pages.

Upon ceasing to gravitate around the single objective of taking state power, the global strategy of the new antisystemic movements shifts toward

creating popular counter-power and thus toward relationships with social movements themselves and with the vast set of society's groups, classes, and subaltern sectors. This is especially evident in the new antisystemic movements of Latin America and, of course, in Mexican neo-Zapatismo and the recent Other Campaign.

Because it is clear that, rather than orienting themselves by the objective of taking state power (though they neglect neither the constant threat represented by the state nor the struggle to destroy it), all of these Latin American antisystemic movements have aimed to assemble increasingly powerful social movements that will be permanently active, conscious, and participative and that to the greatest possible extent will abolish the delegative aspect that characterized pre-1968 social movements. Likewise, the goal is that these movements will do away with forms of popular participation that are merely cyclical and not constant. Typical of these forms is the recurring movement from widespread activity and enthusiasm at the time of social revolts or revolutionary crises (or of revolutions, the "festivals of the oppressed") to long moments of passivity or purely defensive action that delegate the revolution's leading role to the organizations that claimed to represent the range of classes, groups, and sectors which make up the popular subject.

Mass antisystemic movements have been and are currently capable of overthrowing presidents and bringing down whole governments, as they have done in Bolivia, Argentina, and Ecuador. Their primary logic is that of returning the central role to the masses and popular classes, restoring their essential centrality as the motors and actors of the whole movement. This restoration means that centrality must be given up by central committees, parties, union leaders, and leadership clusters of all kinds. As these movements advance in a line similar to what Gramsci called the formation of a new historical block and advance, as well in the strengthening of the centrality of the subaltern classes, we see a redefinition of the function of leadership itself, and even of its nature and character. In this sense, taking up the wise slogan of the Brazilian MST that "the fate of the entire movement is too important to leave in the hands of one or a few leaders," we see new forms of leadership develop: leadership becomes more collective, rotating, and replaceable. Likewise, it becomes a leadership with a more circumscribed capacity for decision-making; its actions are less crucial to the destiny of the whole movement and less loaded with responsibilities. We see this new form of leadership developing among the neo-Zapatistas as well as the indigenous communities of Ecuador, the *piqueteros* of Argentina, and the indigenous rebels of Bolivia.

Leadership is now mediated but simultaneously much more organically tied to its own bases. Rather than serve as the capstone of a pyramid, leadership integrates itself as merely one more element within these new and powerful social movements which are constantly active, massive, and participative. This participative action and centrality hugely outweigh those that characterized the pre-1968 movements and are embodied in the radical transformation of the new antisystemic movements' global strategy. As we have said, this strategy no longer revolves around seizing state power; instead, it aims to gestate popular counter-power and the consequent immediate creation of the spaces and embryos of a new and non-capitalist world.

This process of 'changing the world' here and now began only a few years ago within the new liberated spaces represented by certain *piquetero* neighborhoods in Argentina, the most radical communities in Bolivia and Ecuador, the settlements of the Landless Workers of Brazil, and the territories governed by the neo-Zapatista Councils of Good Government. These liberated spaces, the embryos of a very other world, simultaneously emancipate themselves from the dominant logics of the commodity and capitalism and constantly maintain and reproduce popular participation. In this way, they course-correct the movement, keeping it living and active, and prefiguring (albeit on a small scale) the conquest of the final objective: the total destruction of global capitalism and the liberation and social emancipation of all of humanity.

These spaces, freed from capitalist domination, practically represent the beginning of changing the world in that they are no longer ruled by the capitalist logics of capital accumulation or the endless search for profit. They are likewise free of egoism and possessive individualism and explicitly reject the hierarchical and authoritarian logics of separating leadership and obedience, of degraded, instrumental, pragmatic politics, and of the desire for power for its own sake. These liberated spaces reject the logic of using knowledge as power and as a mechanism of subjugation, cultural discrimination in all its forms, and open or condescending disdain toward popular forms of knowledge and all kinds of subaltern cultures.

In the liberated spaces of the new Latin American antisystemic movements, bourgeois and capitalist logics give way to new logics of collective work and equitable distribution of goods, logics in which the 'we' is predominant over the 'I.' These are logics of true fraternity, leading by obeying, popular self-government, a new understanding of knowledge as patrimony and a social product, and a radical reevaluation of subaltern and popular cultures and forms of knowledge.

A second important focal point of the transformations experienced by the world's antisystemic movements stems from the fact that the central agent of all of the movements of 1968 was the student population, which reformulated the question of the precise composition of the revolutionary subject and with it the specific social base of the new antisystemic movements to come. For although many of the revolutions of 1968 became broadly popular movements or otherwise resulted in clear alliances between students and the working class, it is also clear that these revolutions gave rise to a new actor of massive and recurring social protest: students.

This was later reinforced by the birth (or in some cases the reawakening) of various new actors and the new antisystemic movements they developed. These include the feminist, indigenous, environmentalist, and peace movements, as well the urban-popular, anti-racist, and gay rights movements, among many others. Although these movements had sometimes existed prior to 1968, they would acquire a new and different prominence after that date, as well as a visibility and centrality they had never known before.

After 1968, students and the groups that followed them (women, youth, indigenous people, land defenders, peace activists, sexual minorities, prisoners, migrants, slum dwellers, ethnic and racial minorities, etc.) would demand their place in the landscapes of daily anti-capitalist struggle. They would redefine not only the social base of the new movements and the contingents that constitute the new revolutionary subject but also the very forms of articulation between all the sectors, groups, agents, and classes of the antisystemic and anti-capitalist subject.

Naturally, this development annulled the pre-1968 majority opinion that the only revolutionary class was the working class (or, in a more intelligent formulation that was closer to Marx's thesis, the entire proletariat), and that all other classes or social groups could at best be 'secondary allies.' In the old opinion's place rose a vast range of groups, sectors, actors, and social agents which together with the main social classes completely restructured the revolutionary subject, now composed by the totality of the subaltern groups and classes of each given society. The new revolutionary subject would now be constituted by the synthesis of these subaltern subjects and would include them all equally, recognizing their specific relevance while respecting each one's space, singularity, and legitimacy, as well as the meaning of each one's claims and struggles. This vast revolutionary subject is precisely the subject the dignified Other Campaign is now explicitly and consciously convening

in Mexico. This movement, with its plural and diverse profiles, is gaining strength daily across the length and breadth of Mexico's dense geography.

The recognition of every element's importance and place does not mean that these new movements ignore or reject the fact that the working class, both industrial and rural, is still at the heart of the capitalist system by virtue of the fact that it creates social surplus value and is capable of halting the entire mechanism of capital accumulation. These movements' awareness of the proletariat's fundamental role, however, represents no obstacle to their acceptance of the equal relevance of the cultural struggle, the fight for gender equality, the fight against social discrimination, the political struggle, or the defense of the rights of oppressed minorities, etc.

The existence of this new revolutionary subject, with its thousand faces and multiple agents, also explains why in recent times protest has begun to emerge from the *banlieues* of Paris, the ranks of Latin American immigrants in the United States, oppressed ethnic minorities in Turkey and Russia, and the youth populations and unemployed of all of Europe. It also explains why protest has also come, in a particularly evident way and in highly developed and advanced forms, from many of Latin America's indigenous groups, the unemployed workers of Argentina, and the landless campesinos of Brazil.

It is worth insisting upon the fact that these new Latin American anti-systemic movements (which, as we have already said, now form the world vanguard front of the global anti-capitalist struggle) are all movements that would have been unthinkable as central and vanguard movements under the pre-1968 intellectual frameworks. For although the indigenous movements of Mexico, Ecuador, and Bolivia (as well as those of Peru, Colombia, and Guatemala, which in the not-too-distant future could join the family of genuinely antisystemic indigenous movements referenced above) are clearly peasant movements, they simultaneously assert their condition as indigenous movements. They demand recognition of and respect for their 'indigenous being,' their cultures, their customs, their civilizational identity, their worldview, their ways of relating to nature, and their specific 'ways of being in the world.'

Although these new peasant movements—which are simultaneously and equally indigenous movements—have existed and resistance for five centuries of capitalist oppression, they have also endured (among many forms of discrimination) a kind of 'invisibilization' that relegated their indigeneity to a secondary status or even completely ignored it, subsuming it within their status as peasants.

It is precisely the global wave of the movements of 1968 that radically changes the planetary context, opening spaces for indigenous movements to become visible and central *as* indigenous movements. The same process occurs with groups which prior to 1968 were defined only as marginal to or excluded by the system and therefore as unable to carry out any effective action in terms of actively and radically transforming that same system. These were groups defined more by what they were not than what they were, like the Landless of Brazil and the Jobless of Argentina, reproducing a situation highly similar to those of indigenous people, who within their respective Latin American countries were the Official-Existence-less and Rightsless.

These actors—excluded, marginalized, and invisibilized from the system's prevailing social-legal structures—derive part of their enormous antisystemic radicality precisely from their active negation of their marginalization, exclusion, and invisibilization, which when contested at their very foundations leads them directly toward the radical critique of the capitalist system as a whole. As so often occurs in history, this antisystemic radicality is born from the very margins of the system. It can only be victorious if it is capable of spreading out to the whole of the capitalist system, reaching its nerve centers, and embracing the entire subject of all of society's subaltern classes and groups.

However, the Latin American movements of the Landless, Jobless, Rightsless, and Existence-less do not limit themselves to demanding recognition for their particular conditions or the solution of their specific demands (although they do indeed do these things as well). Instead, they have managed to synthesize the particular with the universal in their specific struggles and their everyday practices. In fighting from their condition of being excluded and discriminated against, in fighting for inclusion and respect for indigenous identity and culture, the neo-Zapatistas (as well as indigenous radicals in Ecuador and Bolivia) are simultaneously fighting against exclusion and social discrimination of all kinds. They are fighting against every form of marginalization and invisibilization that the capitalist system produces and reproduces across the world by its essential dynamic of sacrificing social subjects as part of the relentless pursuit of profit, the continuing accumulation of capital, and the maintenance of its social, political, cultural, and civilizational domination in general.

This is a reality that neo-Zapatismo has clearly assumed since its beginnings. It is a reality evident in the postscript of the EZLN's May 28, 1994 communique, in which Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos emphatically declares

that "Marcos is gay in San Francisco, Black in South Africa, Asian in Europe, Chicano in San Isidro, a street kid in Neza, a rocker in University City, a Jew in Germany, an ombudsman in the Secretariat of National Defense, a feminist in the political parties, a communist after the Cold War, a prisoner in Cintalapa, a pacifist in Bosnia, a Mapuche in the Andes, a teacher in the National Educational Workers Union, an artist without a gallery or portfolio, a housewife on Saturday night in any neighborhood in any city in any Mexico, a guerrilla fighter in Mexico at the end of the 20th century, a striker in the Confederation of Mexican Workers, a reporter writing filler stories for the back pages, a misogynist in the feminist movement, a woman alone on the Metro at 10 p.m., a retiree at a sit-in in the main square, a landless peasant, a marginal publisher, an unemployed worker, a doctor without a job, an unsatisfied student, a dissident under neoliberalism, a writer without books or readers, and, to be sure, a Zapatista in the Mexican southeast. In short, Marcos is any human being in this world. Marcos is every persecuted, oppressed minority, resisting, exploding, saying 'enough!.' All the minorities whose turn it is to talk and all the majorities whose turn it is to shut up and take it. All the outcasts looking for a word, their word, the word that will make we the eternally fragmented the majority again. Everything that makes power and good consciences uncomfortable: that's Marcos."

This synthesis of particular demands with the universal problems of all the planet's exploited, oppressed, and humiliated characterizes all of the new Latin American antisystemic movements and also explains the fact that "housing, land, work, education, health, [and] food" figure among the Zapatistas' central demands. These are the same demands of vast popular sectors of all the nations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, as well (sometimes) as broad and important sectors in Japan, the United States, and Europe. Likewise, the universality and broadness of the neo-Zapatista struggle for "democracy, freedom, justice, independence, [and] peace" are evident in the vast majority of the world's nations.

The universality of the Zapatista struggle is reflected in the struggle of the Landless Workers Movement of Brazil. Having begun from the simple demand of land for landless rural workers, this movement has now become affiliated with the world-spanning organization of La Via Campesina and structures its struggle as one that fights for the radical reevaluation of the role of land and territory for general development and the very sustainability of human life on Earth. For although modern and technologized urban society tends to make us forget it, the truth is that it is land and territory that provides the

planet's more than six billion human beings with the food we consume each day and all the raw materials needed for life in general. The building of a new harmonic, balanced, and sustainable relationship between humanity and the land (and all of nature) therefore becomes a demand which is clearly universal and more than urgent.

Something similar has happened with the most radical segments of the Argentinian *piqueteros*. Although they initially demanded employment offices and unemployment benefits from the state, by means of struggle these *piqueteros* have gone on to completely rebuild whole neighborhoods and slum areas. As a response to resource scarcity and the exclusion of their members from the active labor market, these neighborhoods have opted to remake the entire social fabric from the ground up, refounding, for example, enterprises and cooperatives that disconnect from capitalist logic and begin to produce for the neighborhood and for collectives. These enterprises reinstitute the direct mechanisms of barter and direct exchange of goods and services, eliminating ferocious economic competition and the search for the maximum amount of profit. These neighborhoods therefore disengage not only from the commodity logic of capitalism but also from the logics of bourgeois power and politics. They recreate mechanisms of direct democracy and of horizontal organization in work and activism, and on the basis of these mechanisms they begin to build new forms of interaction and building community, beginning with new fraternal relations of solidarity between all members of a given neighborhood.

By giving their specific demands and struggles a dimension that makes them universal, or by explicitly connecting them to larger contexts by understanding them as specific manifestations of worldwide struggles, the antisystemic movements of Latin America have attracted global attention and a likewise global prominence. This, in our opinion, explains the fact that the major initiative of the World Social Forum was born here in Latin America and that our region has hosted four and a third of the seven meetings the WSF has held so far.

Likewise, and in keeping with the modification of the composition of the new revolutionary subject (which greatly multiplies the social base of the new antisystemic movements by incorporating as key agents the whole range of groups, classes, and sectors of the excluded, marginalized, and the formerly invisible in addition to the traditional sectors of workers, peasants, and middle classes), there will also be a transformation of the Left and of the leftist organizations that must accompany these new antisystemic social movements. For as Immanuel Wallerstein has also understood, the movements of 1968 are at

the same time the collapse and definitive crisis of the old, pre-1968 lefts and the birth and flowering of new lefts. These new lefts are the children of this salutary World Cultural Revolution.

Although it does not bury them for good, this definitive crisis of the old lefts clearly removes them from the hegemonic role they occupied until the eve of the outbursts of the late 1970s of the 20th chronological century. These old lefts were generally located within the world's communist parties, which followed the guidelines of the Soviet Union. They were lefts that 'expropriated' the direct social protagonism of the masses from the masses, wielding various forms of substitutionism against social movements and maintaining that the Party or Political Organization was the element that 'embodied' (or even monopolized) the consciousness, clarity, understanding, and knowledge of a whole movement. Given its self-proclaimed and unchallenged role as a vanguard, it was the Party's task to 'introduce' this consciousness to the masses through indoctrination, ideological education, and agitation and propaganda work. With the exception of truly exceptional cases—including that of the Russian Revolution prior to the death of Lenin, the Chinese Revolution until Mao's death, the Gramscian Ordine Nuovo group in Italy, and the Mexican Spartacists led by José Revueltas—this pre-1968 left was a dogmatic left, with a limited and mechanistic understanding of Marxism, which it was never able to apply concretely and creatively in analyzing specific national situations.

In general, this left also created rigid and hierarchical organizations in which decision-making power was concentrated at the apex of the pyramid. In these organizations, pyramidal party structures suffocated the creativity and initiatives that came out of the bottom of the pyramid. In this way, entire parties and even social movements as a whole could often depend only on the greater or lesser clarity or on the particular qualities and abilities of the few members of a central committee, and on some occasions only an organization's single strong leader.

In contrast, at the other extreme of possibilities, the new post-1968 lefts (and the new organizations that accompany contemporary antisystemic movements in Latin America and the world) are organizations that try to strengthen the direct protagonism of the masses in various ways. They eliminate substitutionism, instead seeing themselves as companions and supporters of social movements in struggle. Moreover, instead of seeing themselves as the sole custodians of consciousness and knowledge, the post-1968 lefts put their intellectual tools at the service of movements while learning from these movements and constantly dialoguing with them. The post-1968 lefts engage

in this dialogue not from a position of leadership or as a vanguard but as hierarchically equal comrades in struggle, possessing (by virtue of the diversity of their personal experiences) different abilities than other comrades in struggle have.

The post-1968 left is much more open to all the contributions of critical thought of the last 130 years. Without ceasing to be a profoundly critical and reflective left or abandoning the invaluable legacy represented by the keen work of Marx, Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, the Frankfurt School, Gramsci, Mao Zedong, and the genuinely critical Marxist authors of the last 100 years, the post-1968 left is willing to engage with the contributions of the foremost critical thinkers of other intellectual traditions, including Marc Bloch, Fernand Braudel, Norbert Elias, George Simmel, Mikhail Bakhtin, Michel Foucault, Aby Warburg, Ernest Gombrich, and Claude Levi-Strauss, among many others.

On the basis of their greater freshness and intellectual openness, the new lefts of the last 20–30 years are also more creative and more capable of theorizing the new problems facing the contemporary antisystemic movements of Latin America, as well as the new global realities of the terminal crisis of world capitalism we are now witnessing. On this basis, the new lefts are also able to theoretically sift the central lessons supplied by the new antisystemic movements of Latin America.

Groups of this renewed, post-1968 left are located inside much more flexible and horizontal organizations in which decision-making is distributed among the entire collective as much as possible (and even beyond the collective, by including a movement's broad social bases) through decentralized and flexible structures that explicitly aim to secure the greatest possible collective participation and to constantly increase the generation of initiatives and new proposals from all points of the organization and its base. As we have seen, this reality notably reduces the role of all kinds of leaders and of leadership. More radically, it even reformulates the very function that leaders can and should have within a leftist organization or a social movement as a whole.

This is what led Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos to say in his 1999 interview with Manuel Vázquez Montalbán that the Zapatistas "want to build another form of doing politics and that has to do with the form of power. We're looking not for followers but for interlocuters, because we know that on our own we won't be able to build what we want to build. Moreover, we have to constantly problematize the image of the caudillo or leader." This idea clearly expresses the new role of left-wing organizations with regard to social

movements and the new function of the possible leaders of both of these. This was again affirmed at the First Gathering of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World, when at the Round Table on Women *compañera* Adaluz from Caracol 5 stated that "we don't have a leader who directs us: we as peoples are the leaders, because if they kill one, another comes in to organize us so that we can get what we're aiming for."

The new antisystemic movements and the new lefts that accompany them are incomprehensible to the pre-1968 left-wing parties and organizations that have survived until the present day. Sheltering within the 'political,' 'official,' or 'partisan' lefts, they continue to analyze the world through pre-1968 parameters which, though anachronistic, are still in force within certain parties of the decrepit political classes of Mexico, Latin America, and the world. In contrast, neo-Zapatismo establishes a different internal relationship between its representatives and its bases and a different external relationship with other Mexican and international antisystemic movements: it advances by means of open convocation and dialogue, creating spaces of encounter and convergence and weaving a network of networks from below that unites all of Mexico's resistances and antisystemic struggles under the initiative of the Other Campaign. Once again, this was practically and evidently embodied at the First Gathering of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World, an exercise of free, conscious, and non-hierarchical dialogue between neo-Zapatismo and groups of the Mexican and international left, as well as national and international civil society.

These changes in global strategy, the composition of the revolutionary subject, and the type of left that characterizes the new antisystemic movements of Latin America and the world are accompanied by equally substantial changes of the fronts of anti-capitalist struggle and of the methods and tactics used in everyday antisystemic struggle. They are likewise matched by changes in the character and function of these new social movements' discourses.

When Making Love and Making the Revolution March Side by Side

A third pillar of the healthy changes ushered in by the revolutions of 1968 is the pluralization of the different fronts of anti-capitalist struggle. Where these fronts were before limited to the economic and political spheres, they now encompass practically the entirety of the elements that constitute modern bourgeois capitalist civilization. In clear connection to the new social actors who represent the new revolutionary subject and on the basis of their various multiplied demands, absolutely all levels of social life have become politicized. Family relations, sexual relations, gender relations, relations

between romantic partners: all of these have come under scrutiny. So too have the canon of beauty, art, and the social and ideological function of artworks, and the same is true of mass media and the products and cultural results of inter-ethnic and racial relations, among so many new matters addressed as a consequence of the real changes provoked by the cultural revolutions of 1968.

This multiplied and broad-ranging agenda of new problems would be questioned, taken up, and problematized by the post-1968 movements. It was on this basis that these movements would come to build a vast and plural front of new terrains of anti-capitalist struggle. In becoming linked to the older and more well-known economic and political fronts of the struggle, these new cultural, social, artistic, religious, ethnic, anti-racist, ecological, anti-war, feminist, student, etc. battlefields would constitute the social protest upheld by the world's new antisystemic movements—especially those of Latin America—as a profound global and total challenge to modern capitalist civilization as a whole. This challenge is much more universal and encompassing than those that preceded it before 1968, and it now confronts the capitalist social order in every social and civilizational dimension where that order asserts itself.

In the last three decades, this challenge to modern bourgeois society has denounced and made increasingly obvious the poverty, limits, and decay of capitalism's economy, social organization, and class structure. It has done the same to bourgeois politics and modern bourgeois culture, but also to that culture's arrogant and instrumentalizing concept of nature, of its patriarchal, misogynist, and possessive model of the family, and of its irrational and perverse calling in its use of its monopoly on violence. This challenge has denounced capitalism's conscious use and reproduction of age-old racism, its short-sighted reconfiguration of land and rural and urban spaces, its myopic and arrogant disdain for practical, popular, and subaltern forms of knowledge, its frightened and ridiculous understand of madness, emotions, sleep, and passions, and its repression of the body, of sexuality, of pleasure, and of artists, among so many other limits of the modern bourgeois project of society and civilization.

This total critique of the capitalist world is linked to the emergence of the new actors we mention above and allows us to understand one of the sources of the enormously renewed radicality of the antisystemic movements which appeared following the World Revolution of 1968. If what is failing in current society is not only that society's economic or political mechanisms but the entire body of the relations, structures, and forms that capitalist civilization creates, then what is needed is no longer a simple 'seizure of state

power' or even a radical transformation of the 'relations of the capitalist mode of production.' Instead, in a deeper and broader sense, what is needed is the complete destruction of the capitalist world and capitalist civilization and the total reinvention of a new world. Very other to the capitalist world, this new world must be one without exploitation, dispossession, misogyny, repression, war, disdain for nature, despotism, inequality, or discrimination on the basis of race, gender, age, origin, nationality, skin color, etc. It must be a world that is free, just, fraternal, democratic, egalitarian, and solidary.

The total radicality of the new Latin American antisystemic movements was expressed in 1968, among other ways, in the slogan that "the personal is political and the political is personal." That radicality is today embodied in an explicit assumption of the necessarily holistic character of the revolution promoted by these movements. This is demonstrated clearly by Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos in his August 30, 2005 "Carta a ONGs, Colectivos, Grupos…", where he says that "if an anti-capitalist movement does not aspire to transform everything, not just relations of property and production, then there's no point and it will only repeat age-old injustices with a new alibi. If the transformation we're aiming for does not include the radical transformation of gender relations between men and women, generational relations between the 'mature' and the youth, relations of coexistence between heterosexuals and to-each-their-own, cultural relations between indigenous and non-indigenous people, relations of life between human beings and nature, then that transformation will end up as just one more caricature among those which already abound in the book of history."

Carrying on the all-encompassing opening of all fields of possible struggle opened by the movements of 1968, the total character of the revolutionary transformation promoted by the new Latin American antisystemic movements extends to the various projects which are beginning, here and now, to build the embryos of a new, non-capitalist, non-bourgeois world. This new world is starting to affirm itself on all levels (economic, societal, political, cultural, and civilizational) of the general life of the settlements of the Landless Workers Movement in Brazil, the everyday reality of the indigenous communities of Bolivia and Ecuador, and the activity being constructed by the most left-wing *piquetero* neighborhoods of Argentina. Logically, this is also happening in the neo-Zapatista territories of the Mexican southeast.

This total transformation of the world and the holistic understanding of the changes it implies in all spheres of human life were clearly demonstrated at all the round tables and presentations at the First Gathering of the Zapatista

Peoples with the Peoples of the World. Here, participants saw how a new type of education inevitably leads to new and different relations between men and women and how new gender relations obligatorily transform women's rights to land and the economic role of each sex within the family. Participants also saw how these economic and legal changes in property relations in regard to land and the economic sources of maintaining and reproducing the family unit impact (for example) patterns of indigenous identity and culture, forcing an assessment of which ancestral laws and customs should be maintained and renewed and which of these customs, now seen as obstacles to building a new world, should be left behind.

Those present at the First Gathering also witnessed how changes in indigenous identity and consciousness extend, for example, to the realm of politics and to daily life, changing the functioning of direct assemblies, the structures of neo-Zapatista good (self-)government, and political and global autonomy. It is this autonomy that makes way for a new form of education. Likewise, it is this autonomy that opens circuits, paths, communicating vessels, and interconnections that lead from the Other Commerce to the Other Culture, from the Other Culture to the Other Education, from the Other Education to the Other Health, from the Other Health to the Other Diet, from the Other Diet to the Other Economy, from the Other Economy to the Other Management of Land and Territory, from these to the Other Family, from this to the Other Relations of Gender, and from this to the Other Government, Other Politics, Other Democracy, and to political and global Other Autonomy.

Finally, as noted above, the movements of 1968 also anticipated the clear shift in the forms of organization of the left-wing groups and social movements we have seen develop in the last 30–35 years. This shift has seen the abandonment of hierarchical, pyramidal, and party forms and their substitution by much more flexible organizational structures built within a framework of networks and 'networks of networks' which are much more horizontal and decentralized than those that existed prior to 1968. These structures are essentially explained by the new antisystemic movements' radical abandonment of the quasi-military logic that governed the construction of left-wing organizations before the World Cultural Revolution of 1968.

For, as Raúl Zibechi explains in his *Genealogía de la Revuelta*, it is clear that the vast majority of pre-1968 leftist organizations unconsciously incorporated the logic of the enemy into their own structures. This meant the incorporation of the separation between leadership and obedience, authoritarian practices, the concentration of decision-making in the uppermost stratum,

and, in general, military discipline in complying with the orders or guidelines of an organization's strong leader, union leadership, central committee, or guiding nucleus.

But if there is one thing that characterizes both the movements of 1968 (made up of conscious and rebellious youth) and the new Latin American antisystemic movements (made up of conscious and rebellious subjects), it is their conscious striving to leave behind the capitalist and bourgeois logics of the enemy. It is therefore logical that the movements of the global 1968 and their Latin American successors set aside the old organizational structures that reproduce our enemy's ways of being and set up in their place new and totally different organizational structures capable of freely unleashing the enormous social inventiveness and creative capacity of the subaltern subjects who compose these contemporary anti-capitalist and antisystemic movements.

When the students of '68 invite us to "Get rid of the cop in your head!", they are inviting us to transcend the disciplinary logics that Michel Foucault studied with such perception and that inoculate us (in the school, the family, the factory, or the state, among others) with all the hierarchical, classifying, authoritarian forms that we endure daily and that we tend to reproduce in our own creations. We reproduce these forms even in our protest and opposition movements and in the heart of our left-wing organizations and struggles. This is an invitation to leave behind a disciplinary and quasi-military capitalist logic that penetrated and perverted the pre-1968 leftist organizations, replacing it (right away and in every aspect of our lives) with another logic, non- and anti-capitalist: a logic of true democracy, equality, fraternity, and solidarity.

Believing that "the bourgeoisie has destroyed all human pleasures, conserving only the pleasure of perverting and degrading all pleasures," the movements of 1968 and their descendants in contemporary Latin America not only build more open, horizontal, and democratic organizations but also unleash the immense popular creativity of the subaltern. In getting down to work, the subaltern begins to reinvent all forms of struggle, action, and social contestation in a logic that once again becomes playful, tolerant, plural, open, and diverse. This logic is expressed in the rich and vital process of the Other Campaign as well as in the *escraches* (public shaming), picket lines, and road closures of the Argentinians, the besieging of cities like La Paz in Bolivia or the indigenous seizure of Quito in Ecuador, and the camps and settlements of the MST along the highways of Brazil and in their own recovered territories.

These are the new forms of expression of the new Latin American antisystemic movements, which organize massive marches to Mexico City and

Brasilia and disseminate their experiences via the internet and alternative media. They have strategically used silence as much as speech. In certain cases, they have even seized congresses, parliaments, executive palaces, and public plazas; the spaces, in other words, where the corrupt political classes of Latin America live and wield power.

The inexhaustible social inventiveness of the subaltern classes and sectors of Latin America has also been expressed at the level of words and discourse, carrying the rich and novel prose that characterized the movements of 1968 into the new discourses of antisystemic movements. As we know, this new prose and these new discourses are the clear reflection of a different way of understanding the world and the different realities it comprises. For if, as Marx taught us, "language is practical consciousness," then the new words and concepts used by these movements are clearly derived from a new consciousness of the real, stimulated in its novelty both by the specific and unprecedented context of the terminal crisis of capitalism and by the original problems this historic bifurcation presents for all of humanity.

These new discourses find one of their most paradigmatic expressions in the beautiful prose of neo-Zapatismo, articulated by Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos. This prose is refreshing, ironic, and irreverent, but also wise, profound, and incisive. It is not only the antithesis of the worn-out, boring, empty discourses of Mexican politicians of the right, center, and left (and of politicians of all ideological stripes around the world) but is also a prose that, like a new King Midas, resignifies everything it names, giving things new content and showing new facets of old terms and realities while adequately expressing freshly-emerged realities using new concepts and names.

When neo-Zapatismo references democracy or justice, for example, these terms—which have been worn down and prostituted by political classes across the planet—acquire a very other meaning which returns to their original roots in order to understand them as genuine (self-)government by the people, with all the attendant implications of this definition. In neo-Zapatista discourse, justice returns to being the impartial and intelligent application of the rules; the mission to give each person their due in right and reason, without the distorting influences of money, power, hierarchy, or social status. When the dignified indigenous rebels of Chiapas (or the indigenous people of Bolivia or Ecuador, or rural Brazilian workers of the MST) refer to 'land,' this does not mean a mere transferable commercial good or a geographic slice of land degraded to the condition of a commodity: it means Mother Earth, Pachamama, understood as the general and essential source of life and as the

protective environment which provides and propitiates the activities of the human community and the work carried out by men in general, as we will see in more detail later on in our argument.

The resignification of antiquated terms of the political, economic, and legal speech of official, state, and bourgeois discourse is elsewhere affirmed by means of a qualification that adds a second word to an old one. This happens, for example, when the neo-Zapatistas speak of *good* government, vindicate the *Other* Politics, propose an *Other* Campaign, or invert the order of words and affirm that "behind us, we are you." In all these cases, adding a new term or simply inverting personal pronouns immediately produces an effect of critical distancing from the habitual and recognized content of those old terms, piquing curiosity not only about other possible meanings and content that could fill or reconfigure the realities of bad government, corrupt politics, or the dirty and monotonous political campaigns we are made to endure endlessly, but also about the basic (though constantly-forgotten) recognition that although we are always the 'Other' to the 'Other,' all of us are in the end one 'We.'

By provoking the questioning and deconstruction of words that official discourse has emptied of their conten, the mechanisms of critical distancing and resignification make it possible for us to unthink the ossified concepts of dominant thought, opening the way for their redefinition by means of very other paths that are critical of and alternative to official discourse. Moreover, this runs parallel to the process that attempts to name for the first time a whole range of truly unprecedented realities and phenomena which, having emerged in the context of the terminal crisis of capitalism in the last 30 years, are bursting into view in contemporary human societies. Given the historic systemic transition we are witnessing, this attempt to name new phenomena is expressed above all in paradoxical statements, striking metaphors, and unexpected couplings of words and concepts.

These paradoxical affirmations and oxymorons thus give meaning to the neo-Zapatistas' statements that they "are soldiers who fight so that one day there will be a world without soldiers," that they are "the world's most peaceful guerilla movement," that they fight for a government that "in leading, leads by obeying," and that they risk their lives in search of "everything for everyone, nothing for [themselves]." Paradox also gives meaning to the Zapatistas' explanation of their strategies through the stories of Old Man Antonio and through the ingenious metaphors that encapsulate deep popular wisdom, e.g., that we can defeat the lion (power and the powerful) with its own force and that we can overcome a sword with water (through the simple and tenacious

perseverance of resistance). Stories such as the tale of the night and the stars or the story of the clouds and the rain demystify 'vanguards' by reminding listeners that their existence only has meaning in relation to their 'bases,' among many other examples.

On other occasions, recurring oxymorons or profound metaphors taken from popular knowledge are better described as unexpected combinations of terms. In the affirmation that the New Politics or Other Politics is that which "has to do with the ethical meaning of politics," we understand that the new or other politics is something so radically different from what we now recognize as politics that it needs a new term to describe it. In understanding autonomy, the neo-Zapatistas go beyond the limited definitions that political scientists, anthropologists, jurists, and sociologists give this term, making it a political and global autonomy undergoing a complex process which is still open and underway. This was what led Comandante Brus Li to say, at the presentation of the Round Table on Autonomy and Other Government at the First Gathering referred to above so many times, that "there is no manual that tells you how to make Autonomy and the Other Government." This was reaffirmed by *compañera* Maribel from Caracol 5 at the Struggle for Land and Territory Roundtable when she said that the Zapatistas "don't have a written book yet; as we act, we take notes, so we're still building autonomy."

This manifold renewal of discourse is a common feature of neo-Zapatismo, the new antisystemic movements of Latin America, and the movements of 1968 across the world. It is not limited to the pure realm of spoken and written language and extends to other spheres, such as the language of symbols. And given that the indigenous worlds of Chiapas and Latin America, as well as the world of subaltern cultures, are still worlds populated by symbols, images, rituals, and underlying messages, it is logical that new symbols should appear and that old rituals should be reinvigorated. These include the complex and multifaceted symbol of the ski mask and the likewise-profound symbolic condensation that has created the figure of Votán Zapata. It includes the ceremonies of respect for Mother Earth and the reclamation of the figure of the snail (the Caracol), among many other symbolic elements that accompany and strengthen the clearly anti-capitalist neo-Zapatista struggle.

These are some of the central legacies the movements of 1968 have passed down to the world's new anti-capitalist movements, particularly those of Latin America. Reclaimed and updated by Mexican neo-Zapatismo, these legacies have been combined with the more immediate elements of the circumstances recently experienced by this rebel indigenous movement (circumstances we

have already examined) and other *longue durée* processes. The legacies of 1968 have shaped this Chiapan revolt, which appeared publicly more than 13 years ago. Next, we will examine these *longue durée* processes.

· 4 ·

THE MEXICAN NEO-ZAPATISTA MOVEMENT AND THE TRANSITION FROM A MODERNITY OF RESISTANCE TO AN ALTERNATIVE MODERNITY

> "They are indigenous rebels. In this way, they break with the traditional framework that was imposed on them, first by Europe and later by all those clothed in the color of money, to see and be seen. And so they fit neither the diabolical image of those who sacrifice humans to appease the gods nor that of the destitute indigenous who stretches out his hand waiting for alms or charity from he who has everything; nor of the good savage perverted by modernity; nor of the infant who delights his elders with his babbling; nor of the meek peon on all the haciendas that scar Mexico's history […]"
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> Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, "Chiapas: la treceava estela" (Chiapas: The Thirteenth Stele), July 2003.

The Multiple Modernities of "Modernity"

While the neo-Zapatista movement of Mexico and the important event of the First Gathering of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World are partly explained by the immediate circumstances of the Mexican and planetary situation of the last months and years (as well as by the history of Latin American and global antisystemic movements developed around 1968 and in the following decades), it is also clear that the roots of this movement and Gathering stretch down, past recent dates, to *longue durée* processes and realities. Just as the First Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle states, neo-Zapatismo is the "product of 500 years of struggle" and is therefore a conscious descendant of the dignified resistance and rebellion waged by the indigenous peoples of Chiapas over five centuries, from the very beginnings of the Spanish

conquest of the Americas down to our own times. This tenacious indigenous resistance and rebellion appear, in certain regions of Mexico and other parts of Latin America, as true *longue durée* realities or structures that are not only present in the entire history of Latin American civilization but also significantly influence a whole series of important countries across Latin America.

It is impossible to adequately understand the histories of the areas that are now Mexico, Guatemala, Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia—all nations where indigenous peoples are social actors of the highest order—without understanding the presence and prolonged struggle of the indigenous peoples of Latin America. This is true not only due to their overwhelming numbers (which in itself is a major element to consider) but because of their fundamental *qualitative* role in concretely defining the trajectory of these nations. This qualitative role has developed to the point that indigenous peoples have been able to successfully resist violent attempts at negation and homogenization imposed by the dominant groups of all these countries; in other words, attempts to totally and completely impose the project of Mediterranean European modernity brought over from Spain and Portugal. In the cases of these indigenous peoples, this project has achieved only a highly partial, incomplete, contradictory, and deformed consolidation and has intermingled with other elements which are foreign and even opposed to this project.

Successful resistance to attempts to negate indigenous identity and culture and to the project of 'modernization' through the imposition of the Western European iteration of capitalist modernity is repeated to varying degrees across the non-European world. In the indigenous areas of Latin America, however, this resistance reaches a particularly elevated level. Latin American indigenous peoples not only refuse to passively accept the model of Mediterranean European modernity transmitted by Spain but in fact rework it from within and modify it substantially, thus creating a highly diverse hybrid model which, though also modern, is radically distinct from its original version.

Among the Maya peoples of Chiapas and other indigenous peoples of Latin America, this hybrid model creates a *unique modernity* which is constituted not only as a synthesis and reconfiguration of elements derived from indigenous identity and 'ways of being' and from the Mediterranean (more specifically, the Spanish) variant of European capitalist civilization but also as a singular *modernity of resistance*. In the centuries-old *longue durée* history of Latin America, this modernity of resistance exists—more or less antagonistically and in a complex trajectory of clashes, collisions, and even violent confrontation—alongside the spaces and realities of the *dominant Latin*

American modernity, which is much more permeated by the European project and is closely and harmoniously related to that project. In our opinion, it is this unique modernity of resistance created by the indigenous peoples of Chiapas and maintained over 500 years to which Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos refers in his 1996 interview with Yvon Le Bot when he says that "Soon, through journalists, outsiders discover what lies behind the Zapatista army. There are communities and they're organized in this way, and they meet people and they discover that this is another world. A different world, with its own political organization, its own social organization, and that this is how it survives in resistance."

It is well known that the capitalist history of European expansion across the world since the 15th century and its gradual conquest of all non-European peoples has never been fully completed. Over the course of its journey toward planetary domination capitalism has come to dominate different civilizations, peoples, spaces, and social and geographic spaces, but it has only managed to do so in a highly uneven and unequal manner. And if in the overall terms of the social fabric it is clear that Europe's colonization of the world has been most successful on the economic level—where it has everywhere managed to impose the capitalist mode of production and the law of capital accumulation—it is also evident that in geographic terms, the space of the planet that seems to have most widely adopted the project of European capitalist modernity is the space of the Americas. This so much the case that Fernand Braudel was able to qualify the American civilizations developed during the age of capitalism as being the "Europes outside of Europe" par excellence.

That the Americas are the foremost space of European capitalist modernity, however, should be broadly qualified based on the recognition that Latin America—the synthesis of its European, indigenous, and African components—is a profoundly hybrid civilization. Likewise, it cannot be denied that, observed on the comparative scale of the entire world, it is in the Americas where the project of European modernity is most deeply rooted. This deep-rootedness explains why it is that today, North America and Latin America are thought of as the 'Western' world in contrast to the Eastern civilizations of China and India, the vast African continent, or the complex world of the Muslim civilizations.

This greater penetration of the European project of modernity (Northern European in the United States and Canada, Mediterranean across Latin America) must nonetheless be carefully qualified when we analyze the history of the indigenous peoples of Chiapas, Bolivia and Ecuador, and Guatemala

and Peru. For when we compare mestizo and baroque modernity (which, as Bolívar Echeverría has brilliantly explained, was established as Latin America's dominant modernity over several centuries) against the cases of the above-mentioned regions, we immediately note the enormous dissimilarity and even contradiction between this modernity and these examples. This opposition is a result of the clear fact that dominant baroque modernity has been unable to implant itself (or has implanted itself only superficially and ephemerally) in the aforementioned spaces of the indigenous world.

This is true not only because of the obvious but important fact that in these three regions the historical process of biological miscegenation simply did not exist and that in these places the indigenous population is still the overwhelming majority, but also (and equally importantly) because of the special history of the Chiapan, Peruvian, Guatemalan, Bolivian, and Ecuadorian indigenous peoples, who continue to resist the project of European modernity. From the standpoint of *longue durée* tenacious struggle and popular rebellion, these peoples rework certain elements of European modernity, mixing and synthesizing them with elements of their own identity to create a genuine and original *modernity of resistance* to purely European modernity.

This is a different project of assimilating modernity; doubly so, in that it neither simply assimilates the codes, practices, and behaviors of the 'pure' or original project of European-Mediterranean capitalist modernity (as certain Spanish elites established in the Americas try to do) nor simply reproduces the baroque mestizo modernity becoming dominant in Latin America. Instead, this project opts for a third path that gives a much greater role to the (now modernized) reproduction of a whole series of features of indigenous worldviews, identity, customary law, and culture. By opposing the path of cultural *mestizaje* that became dominant and created baroque Latin American modernity, this third path or 'entryway' into modernity necessarily became a marginal and non-hegemonic modernity: an authentic modernity of resistance.

This rebel, marginal, minority modernity is also a modernity of resistance in that it is the specific response that the indigenous peoples of Latin America found to avoid complete submission to the domination of the conquerors—first Spaniards, then *criollos*, and finally mestizos and citizens of the new nations—and to successfully safeguard certain features of their deep identity as peoples, modernizing these features in a unique way and synthesizing them with other elements. This modernity, moreover, has been forged over centuries-long processes of social and political resistance struggles. These processes explain, for example, the fact that the Spanish conquest came so late to and was so fragile

in Chiapas: the conquest took nearly two centuries to achieve completion and later survived only precariously, constantly challenged by indigenous rebellions that filled the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries and were renewed on January 1, 1994, lasting until today.

The histories of Bolivia, Peru, Guatemala, and Ecuador are also full of indigenous rebellions: these histories, alongside that of southern Mexico, form the specific geography in which the modernity of indigenous resistance to the dominant baroque Latin American modernity has prospered and become consolidated. This history of persistent and repeated struggle and of recurring rebellions, insurrections, and revolutions gives clear meaning to the neo-Zapatista declaration in the early hours of New Year's Day, 1994, that the Zapatistas are "the product of 500 years of struggle." In other words, the Zapatistas are the product of five centuries of indigenous resistance to conquerors of all stripes, rebelling against the dominant models of European and Latin American modernity and cultivating for half a millennium that modernity of resistance which is their own creation and one of the central strategies of their age-old struggle.

The modernity of resistance created by the dignified indigenous rebels of the Mexican southeast is one of the *longue durée* structures of the history of Chiapas. Like so many other *longue durée* realities, it underwent a profound mutation on the same scale as what it represents—i.e., a *longue durée* revolution—following the fundamental shift represented by the world revolution of 1968, which transformed the five-century modernity of resistance into new modernity alternative to capitalist modernity. This transformation happened through a movement from an essentially defensive position of insubordination, rebellion, and tenacious resistance to a new, more radical *offensive* posture of total critique of dominant capitalist modernity across the world which aims to immediately begin building a multifaceted, very other model alternative to the currently hegemonic model of capitalist modernity.

The shift to an offensive posture, to an anti-capitalist and alternative modernity, has world-historical significance. In Mexico, this shift occurs via the birth of the neo-Zapatista movement and through its action; likewise, with its own particularities, this shift occurs in Ecuador (with the most radical sectors of the CONAIE) and in Bolivia (with the indigenous movement further to the left of the lukewarm positions of Evo Morales and the MAS). As an effect of the new, post-1968 context of the terminal crisis of capitalism, the *longue durée* revolution of the modernity created by Latin America's indigenous peoples also expresses itself in the new leading role and visibility

taken on in the last 15–20 years by indigenous Latin American subjects and movements. After centuries as invisibilized agents or subsumed into the figure of the *campesino* or as purely marginal groups, these movements have in recent years become recognized, identified, and respected as *indigenous* movements with a central role in Latin America's future.

The deep and *longue durée* shift which turns the modernity of resistance into an alternative modernity is apparent in the existence and everyday practice of the Zapatista Caracols, now more than three years old. It is also reflected in different presentations and the different Round Tables of the First Gathering of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World. Alternative and anti-capitalist modernity nourishes the neo-Zapatista movement at its core and is today an important reference for vast Mexican movement of the Other Campaign. We can approach this modernity more closely by analyzing several of the theses expounded upon at several Round Tables of the First Gathering with the Peoples of the World.

The Other Economy: Mother Earth, Collective Labor, and Equitable Distribution

If the project of modernity developed by the indigenous peoples of Chiapas has for 500 years been a modernity of resistance to capitalist European modernity, this is due in part (as we have said) to the fact that it has successfully resisted the purest imposition of the European-Mediterranean model of modernity. This resistance has taken place across a series of dimensions which encompass space and geography, the area of culture and imaginaries, economy, society, and politics, as well as certain profound civilizational realities.

One example of a deep domain that fundamentally impacts the area of economy but also goes far beyond this area is humans' understanding of their own immediate natural environment, particularly their understanding of and fundamental attitude toward land. This attitude stands in radical contrast to the worldview of European capitalist modernity, which has degraded land to the vulgar condition of a commodity, a mere material good for buying and selling. European capitalist modernity attempts to exploit land indiscriminately as a result of understanding land as a source of various products and raw materials and as a simple instrumental space of agroindustry. This commodifying, degraded, instrumentalizing understanding of land is the logical result of European capitalist modernity's myopic attitude toward nature in general,

which conceives of man as the 'lord and master of nature' and of nature as an inexhaustible store of resources for man's use, a space subject to the whims of its supposed 'master' and the repeated assertion of human domination over the natural.

In this context and from a much keener vision of the permanent and necessary metabolism between humans and nature, the indigenous peoples of Chiapas have upheld a conception of the land as Mother Earth for 500 years. They look upon this Mother with great respect and affection, recognizing her as the origin and source of life, as well as a generous provider of spaces for work, rest, and leisure and of materials for building their houses and the furniture that fills them, of plants for medicine, and of materials for their own art. Mother Earth is the practical source of the immense majority of these peoples' everyday objects. Given that they are *campesinos*, Mother Earth is also the nourishing, ever-present, indispensable field of daily nutrition and the very materials of their tools.

The Mother Earth of the indigenous peoples of Chiapas is the Pachamama of the indigenous peoples of Bolivia. Full of colors, forms, and landscapes, she is a place of artistic inspiration as well as the source of the complex indigenous worldview's stories and legends, which are doubtless largely inspired by her mechanisms of daily functioning. Mother Earth gives rise to artistic motifs and the themes of indigenous stories: she is the place where the dead rest, where the ancestors of indigenous peoples sleep and are still alive. She is the place where they hold their ceremonies, rituals, and assembles, the collective's most important community acts.

This is a caring, respectful, non-commodifying understanding of Mother Earth which applies to all of nature (which is sometimes by extension referred to as Mother Nature). Mother Nature is likewise understood not as an opponent or rival to be overcome but as a world and reality that must be respected and with whom balanced relations of mutual feedback must be established.

This conception of nature and land, radically different to the capitalist understanding, explains the statements of Comandante Abraham from Caracol 1 at the Fight for Land and Territory Round Table when he said that "For us as indigenous Zapatistas, as *campesinos*, this is an important point because it has to do with our Mother Earth. We call her Mother because we need her daily, we need to eat and drink daily […] and we not only feed from her; we live here, we move here, and we rest here. In other words, she is the sustenance of human beings and living beings in past times and in the present time and in the time that comes later; in other words, generation after

generation." Constituting itself as a kind of general horizon of the overall life of the indigenous *campesinos* of the Mexican southeast, this profound view of Mother Earth prevents land from being reduced to a commodity or economic good for exchange: to do so would be to deny and eliminate the identity, worldview, culture, memory, history, and civilization of the indigenous peoples of Chiapas (and elsewhere, of Bolivia, Peru, Guatemala, and Ecuador).

Such an elimination and suppression was in fact attempted in the colonial era and in the 19th and 20th centuries but was fortunately defeated by tenacious indigenous resistance which preserved this keen understanding of Mother Earth and Mother Nature. This understanding, however, was preserved not as a reverential anachronism of a 'pre-capitalist' or 'pre-modern' past that has survived untouched for 500 years but rather through an active and dynamic process in which indigenous peoples modernized and adopted new agricultural technologies, new crops, and new methods of working the land within the framework of a respectful and affectionate relationship with nature. As stated above, indigenous peoples modernize only via their own unique path of a modernity of resistance which adopts modern methods of working the land without ceasing to deeply respect it or understand it as Mother Earth.

The modern but non-commodifying and non-capitalist understanding of land—a clear barrier to the imposition of the European-Mediterranean model of modernity and the dominant baroque model of Latin American modernity—has spread to and been sustained (to varying degrees) by other indigenous peoples of Mexico and Latin America. This was made evident, for example, in the National Indigenous Congress's (CNI) recent Mezcala Declaration. Made public on November 16, 2006, this document declares:

> "First: We are born of Mother Earth, we are on her, we guard ourselves in her heart; from their beginnings, our peoples and communities have settled upon Mother Earth, where our lives, cultures, and symbols are held and grow.
>
> Second: Mother Earth, watered with the blood of our ancestors, shelters the word, memory, and history of our peoples; in her our culture lives and our dead rest; therefore, she is not a commodity to be bought and sold."

This declaration of the value—not only economic but symbolic, historical, social, and civilizational—of Mother Earth to the indigenous peoples of Chiapas and all of Mexico is echoed by the indigenous peoples of Guatemala, Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, Chile, and Bolivia, thus presenting one of the characteristic features of the indigenous peoples of Latin America in terms of the populations of our semi-continent.

This indigenous understanding of Mother Earth is just as modern and up-to-date as the European or baroque-Latin American understanding. Alongside its essential respect for the earth, this conception holds that Mother Earth spreads out more broadly as territory, encompassing not only arable land or places where houses are but also water, mountains, forests, jungle, flora, fauna, etc., as is made clear again in the Mezcala Declaration. Further on, this declaration states:

> "Third: For our peoples, the elements that compose Mother Earth, like the water, lands, mountains, wind, forests, deserts, jungles, animals, plants, stones, springs, rivers, lagoons, coasts, and seas, are not commodities either; like our Mother, they are ancestors and they are sacred."

This multifaceted and more advanced perception of Mother Earth has not prevented the neo-Zapatistas from adopting the latest generation of agricultural technology in their lands and territories, taught to them and implemented by, for example, Mexican students from the University of Chapingo or foreign engineers and agricultural technicians who come from around the world to work in solidarity with the neo-Zapatista movement. These state-of-the-art techniques represent the world's most advanced methods of cultivating Mother Earth's products and are later carried on by neo-Zapatista agroecology promoters and easily accepted by all the campesinos of Chiapas's rebel indigenous communities.

In addition to transmitting and maintaining care and respect for Mother Earth, the tasks of these agroecology promoters include constantly improving agricultural techniques, maintaining ecological equilibrium, and monitoring soil degradation and the best methods for regenerating natural resources. This work has led them, for example, to reject cultivating GMO crops and certain chemical fertilizers, instead reclaiming green and organic crops and fertilizers and non-GMO seeds. Here they show an attitude which is caring to the earth but simultaneously highly modern and informed of the latest scientific-technological advances in agriculture; not by coincidence, this attitude recalls similar practices carried out by the Landless Workers Movement (MST) in Brazil. The prohibition on using GMO seeds and certain agrochemicals is complemented by bans on illegal logging, poppy farming, polluting rivers and springs, and hunting endangered species, as well as by permanent reforesting of the jungle and carefully protecting forests, animals, and plants.

This intelligent and even ultra-modern (though neither commodifying nor capitalist) neo-Zapatista understanding of Mother Earth shows us

the specific dimensions of the enormous value the indigenous rebels of the Mexican southeast attribute to land. They see the act of selling the land as a crime and dispossession of land as an attack on life itself. At the Round Table on the Struggle for Land and Territory, Lorenzo, from Caracol 4, stated that "For us, as indigenous *campesinos*, land is not sold: we care for it and love it because we know that we are born on it, eat on it, and live on it. If someone sells the land it means that they have sold their mother."

The selling of land is simply inconceivable within the modernity of resistance cultivated by neo-Zapatismo, which explains the profound affront (which is not only or even a primarily economic affront but an affront to life itself) represented by being dispossessed of Mother Earth, whether by the government, farmers, or landlords. (Or even, more recently, by PRI- and PRD-affiliated *campesinos* sheltered by the state and federal governments of Sabines and Calderón). The Zapatista understanding of dispossession of land as a major offense explains, among other things, why the changes made to Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution by the Salinas de Gortari government in 1992 were one of the principal catalysts for the uprising of January 1, 1994, as the Zapatistas have themselves repeated many times.

This understanding also explains the great value the Zapatistas find in the lands recovered after their movement's public irruption (which are now once again under pressure from bad municipal, state, and federal governments). The language used to describe this situation is highly significant and clarifying. As a result of their struggle and their armed uprising, the neo-Zapatistas managed to recover lands that were unjustly expropriated from them hundreds of years ago and whose plundering they endured for decades or centuries. Thanks to their organization and emergence as a movement, they were able to "undo the injustice" and redress their age-old grievance, reinstating justice and the right they had lost for centuries by recovering their own lands.

The Zapatistas' recovery of their lands and territories therefore has all the value of a long-lasting and far-reaching historical restitution, of a yearning—now finally fulfilled—nourished by centuries of constant and dogged rebellion, protest, struggle, and insubordination. This recovery is understood as a profound rehabilitation facing a dispossession that was also experienced as a *longue durée* dispossession; this understanding is well exemplified by Abraham from Caracol 2 at the Inaugural Round Table on Autonomy and Other Government when he says that "Here, in our country which is now called Mexico, from the time of the foreign invasion of the Spanish in 1492, the destruction and dispossession of our rights as the original peoples of these

lands began." Later on, he adds: "Because for more than five hundred years we have been dispossessed and enslaved on our own land."

These lands were recovered with the blood of those who fell during the 12 days of combat in January 1994. Far from being a simple 'reappropriation' or 'retaking' of land, the recovery of these lands is understood as a *reunion* or *reconnection* with Mother Earth that makes it possible to be with her once again, to nourish oneself vitally and completely from her, and to respect and care for her once more.

If it is not possible to chop this mother into pieces and distribute her among her children and it is only possible to share her collectively, then neither is it part of the neo-Zapatista worldview or the worldview of the indigenous modernity of resistance to distribute land on an individual basis to each *campesino*. For this reason, as various *compañeros* stated during the events of the First Encounter of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World, the Councils of Good Government (JBGs) never make 'agrarian distributions.' All recovered land belongs to the community as a whole and can therefore only be shared and worked collectively.

As Marx explains, collectively working the land is the original form of agricultural labor in all human peoples and civilizations. This form of work is also a second essential feature that has been preserved (as far as possible) by the centuries-old project of indigenous resistance, as well as by its more recent heir, the neo-Zapatista project of an alternative and anti-capitalist modernity. For if the earth is everyone's mother and everyone is born to her and enjoys her collectively, it is thus logical that everyone should work her collectively and collectively ask her to provide the products necessary for human life as a whole and the social life of the community.

As the *compañeros* reminded us at several round tables of the First Encounter with the Peoples of the World, the revindication not only of working the land collectively but of collective work in general is part of important traditions and features of indigenous identity, of the indigenous way of being in the world. Elías, from Caracol 3, expressed this in the following words at the Round Table on Autonomy and Other Government: "We have our own way of thinking about the things that make us different from others. For example, our way of being and working collectively […]" This illustrates the fact that this collective work (whether in working the land, making artisan crafts, or in coffee-growing, agricultural, or shoemaking cooperatives) rests on a deep foundation and more general 'way of being' which is also communitarian and collectivist and, as we will see, extends to many other areas of

neo-Zapatista social life and the neo-Zapatista project of a radically alternative anti-capitalist modernity.

Collective labor not only reaffirms the age-old communitarian way of being of indigenous peoples (and now the indigenous neo-Zapatistas) in the social sphere of labor but is also the basis of a product which is a *collective* product that acts as a major barrier to the capitalist logic of individualism in general and to the search for the greatest possible individual benefit in particular. Given that the global fruit of collective work (whether of the land or in a cooperative) is a collective and not individual fruit, its magnitude benefits (or harms) not any individual member but the collective as a whole. And since the point here is to combat the possessive individual that characterizes European capitalist modernity, then the complement of collective work is the equitable distribution of the fruits of that work or of the profits earned from the sale of those fruits.

This equitable distribution is not 'proportional' to the work supplied by each member of the collective—rather, it is equitable in the literal sense of distributing *identical* shares to each of the collective's members. And although it is clear that, according to differences in family and personal situations, there are *campesinos* who may work more than others do and there are women who work more intensely than others in artisan cooperatives, everyone receives the same share of the overall product. Sometimes, as a small hint of a higher form of product distribution, those who need more receive a bit more than those who need less, independently of the work they contributed to creating a collective product. This means that the neo-Zapatista communities have in practice gone beyond the socialist principle of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his work," replacing it with the principle "from each according to his ability, to each the same." As Marx clearly illustrated in the *Critique of the Gotha Program*, the latter principle is not totally just, but in the current conditions, in which material scarcity prevails and available wealth is limited, it is as just as possible. It is also closest to the truly communist principle of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs," which is occasionally and episodically glimpsed in the neo-Zapatista communities.

The equitable distribution of the fruits of labor (which is sometimes inequitable but more just, for as Marx said, to be just, "right, instead of being equal, would have to be unequal"), collective work, and the understanding of land as Mother Earth are the three fundamental pillars that have allowed the modernity of resistance to unfold in the economic sphere over the course of the

centuries. In the *longue durée*, this modernity has confronted and restrained the penetration and unlimited imposition of the devastating logic of capital accumulation, which commodifies all goods and creates the egotistical economic individual, a prisoner of the logic of uncontrolled productivism obsessed with obtaining the greatest individual benefit. While over the last five centuries this clear barrier to the economic logic of capitalism served to strengthen and give shape to the modernity of resistance in the economic sphere, today it works as the central pillar of the Other Economy and Other Commerce promoted by the neo-Zapatistas in the vast territories encompassed by the 31 Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities (MAREZ) which are well governed by the Councils of Good Government.

The Other Economy and Other Commerce are not, as we have said, mere holdovers from the past or an anachronistic recovery of pre-modern and pre-capitalist realities and relations. They are instead a complex synthesis of elements that resist being modernized in the European capitalist style and which the Zapatistas opt to modernize in a key of resistance to the dominant model, recycling and reinventing pre-capitalist elements and recreating them in new, complex forms on the basis of advances in technology, culture, social relations, family relations, and civilizational advances of all kinds. The Other Economy and Other Commerce therefore sometimes even anticipate futures to come in a post-capitalist society now clearly being foretold in multiple ways within the horizon of human history.

The indigenous neo-Zapatistas who today rebel against reigning capitalism and neoliberalism are not the old undifferentiated members of a pre-capitalist community that subsumes them as mere constituent parts of itself. They are conscious individuals who, having endured first-hand the processes of individualization characteristic of modern capitalism, have chosen to consciously explore another path of modernization and another version of modernity. Alongside and beyond these processes, the neo-Zapatistas have sustained the solid and vital communitarian structures of their indigenous being, a being they have also modified substantially over these five centuries without disappearing into the ferocious, isolating, egotistical individualism characteristic of capitalist modernity.

Understanding this allows us to respond to one of the urgent underlying questions posed, for example at the Other Commerce Round Table at the First Gathering of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World: if it is possible to enter and act within the spaces of the dominant capitalist market without succumbing to the overall logic of capitalism and becoming corrupted

and subordinated to it. At its heart, this question leads us to a more general question: how this indigenous modernity (first of resistance, now alternative) has been able to coexist with capitalist modernity in Europe and in Latin America itself. The obvious response is that this coexistence has been thanks to the reproduction and maintenance of the realities, structures, and understandings external to capitalist logic. In the case of economy and the first question, these structures lead us to the concept of land as Mother Earth and to the defense of collective labor and equitable (and sometimes more just) distribution of the fruits of that labor.

In being an expression and materialization of tenacious age-old indigenous resistance to capitalist modernity, the maintenance and reproduction of indigenous worldviews and structures has functioned as a support platform for every indigenous rebellion in Latin America over the last 500 years as well as for other logics—non-individualist, non-commodifying, and non-capitalist—that survive and prosper in the present day within indigenous communities. These are the logics of solidarity with the neediest or with those who have a particular urgency. These logics make it so that, for example, every time an individual or group within the Zapatista communities must attend a meeting or cover an exceptional expense (organizing a party, financing a project, building a school or clinic, etc.) there is always a fund formed for voluntary donations to which each gives as much as they can and by which the collective solidly supports their member, group, or specific initiative.

This solidary and generous communitarian logic recalls the principle of potlach studied by Georges Bataille, in which the beneficiaries are the producers and not voracious commercial middlemen; potlach is even applied as *economic competition in reverse*. This is demonstrated, for example, in the story one *compañero* told at the Other Commerce Round Table in which the Zapatistas began paying higher prices to coffee producers—Zapatista and non-Zapatista alike—to force coyotes (middlemen) to pay somewhat higher prices and compensate producers somewhat more fairly. This strategy worked. (Although the Zapatistas are aware that this inverse, anti-capitalist strategy of paying more money instead of less can only be a partial and fleeting palliative to reign in the limitless capitalist ravenousness of middlemen).

The struggle against capitalist middleman and coyote practices has led the neo-Zapatistas to try to build parallel and alternative structures for the storage, distribution, sale, and commercialization of their own products. They have created local and regional community warehouses and stores that sell their products at cheaper prices. The profits from these sales are (once again)

distributed equitably and equally and are sometimes also used to directly finance the projects of the Zapatista communities. While the parallel structures of the Other Commerce govern themselves under a logic that is no longer commodifying or capitalist, they are still forced to coexist with the capitalist structures and spaces of the market and economy still dominant in Mexico and across the world. This reality naturally constitutes a limit which, despite being clearly external to the neo-Zapatista alternative economic project, is a limit this project cannot avoid. The Other Economy and Other Commerce—supported by the anti-commodifying and anti-capitalist logics of respect and love for Mother Earth, collective labor, and equitable distribution—have been able to affirm themselves only by arduously marching *against the current* of the dominant capitalist market and economy, which buy, sell, parcel up, and traffic in land. The dominant market and economy fragment labor and communities themselves through their promotion of individually searching for the greatest profit and affirming oneself over others at any price in every kind of exchange or transaction.

As the essential essence of all genuine contemporary antisystemic and anti-capitalist movements, the march against the grain of capitalism also characterizes the Mexican neo-Zapatista movement. The neo-Zapatista project, however, transcends the purely economic sphere to deploy itself (among other fields) in the field of predominantly social realities and everyday social coexistence.

Laying the Foundations for an Other Society: A Truly Anti-capitalist Feminism and a Holistic and Anti-commodifying View of Health

Another central element that has nourished the modernity of indigenous resistance over the centuries and today nourishes the alternative modernity of the neo-Zapatistas is the survival of *communitarian bonds and structures* as a fundamental element of the social life of indigenous peoples and communities. The centrality of these features is such that, among the indigenous neo-Zapatista rebels, the 'we' is broadly dominant over the 'I,' imbuing all daily activities and affirming itself in various ways across the entire framework of social relations.

As referred to above, the dominant role of the collective dimension over the individual one is considered to be an essential part of the indigenous way of being itself, of indigenous peoples' deepest and most ancient cultural and civilizational identity. This reality, however, does not blunt or impede the development of individuality: instead, it channels individuality in ways distinct from modern capitalist individualization. Far from understanding herself to be an isolated monad and as an atom opposed to society and collectiveness, the neo-Zapatista individual perceives herself as a conscious and individualized member of a greater totality—the collective.

Neo-Zapatista individuals see the world not from the limited and falsely autonomous 'I' described by Norbert Elias but from the complex 'we' that constitutes the framework of multiple interdependences which, at its core, society is and always has been. Without suppressing the individual condition or the modern dimension of individualization the 'we-ist' vision of the world transcends and reintegrates these within a socializing understanding of reality. It is no coincidence that this understanding overlaps with positions held by the most advanced currents of contemporary critical sociology, which have long criticized the bourgeois idea of the modern Robinson Crusoe, i.e., the myth of the supposedly free, autonomous, sovereign, self-aware, and self-determining individual who is the desired creation and result of modern bourgeois-capitalist society.

In opposition to that myth and against the possessive individualism of capitalist modernity, the indigenous rebels of Chiapas (yesterday's and today's) have asserted the strong validity of the communitarian bond and the 'we' that derives from it. As we have seen, this validity stretches out to the Other Politics and the Other Economy, as well as to the more social, cultural, and civilizational spheres of those rebel indigenous peoples. Communitarian relations and the collective point of view are clearly predominant over the individual perspective, but far from denying or negating individuals or their condition as individual beings, these relations and this perspective wisely *return* to the individual their deep condition as a *social individual*. In other words, the individual reclaims his condition as an individualized structure who, from the cradle to the grave, is always and inescapably a *constituent element* of a greater entity: his entire society. The individual is linked to and largely dependent on this society from the moment of his birth, when that society assigns him a name, a social condition, a language, a worldview, and a social function that the individual, placed in these circumstances, does not and cannot choose.

Understanding that *all* individuals are links in the multiple chains of interdependence that precede and surpass them—chains that constitute what we call society—the neo-Zapatistas thus transcend the fallacious and limited bourgeois vision of society. They cease to see society and the individual as being antithetical (an idea which is precisely the shared essence of all philosophical and sociological versions of the bourgeois outlook), instead vindicating a much more rational and scientific view of this problem which sees the individual as a link of the 'we' and sees this 'we' as a synthesis, or chain, or complex framework of the interconnections, actions, and relations between all these individuals. Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos recalled this in his speech on January 1, 2007 at the First Gathering of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the world when he said "Our history cannot be told in little pieces, in what each individual gives or takes of their personal history. It is a collective history. A history where the 'I' does not fit. A history where we speak, listen, see, and feel collectively." He added: "We, men, women, Zapatista men, Zapatista women, are not meant to each be an individual. This is why there are people who are here for a little while and then leave, or who peek in but do not enter. Because the word that made us and makes us be what we are and be where we are is the word 'we.' And this is something that many people do not understand."

This clear-eyed worldview is based not on the egotistic, solitary, isolated, unreal 'I' that the bourgeois understanding of the world has tried to postulate and defend but on the intelligent 'we' that recognizes the social dimension that structures and determines the 'I.' As Marcos affirms and as the *compañeros* demonstrated at all the Round Tables of the First Gathering, this worldview is present across the entire social fabric, i.e., across the whole of the activities, practices, actions, attitudes, analyzes, and responses of the indigenous neo-Zapatista rebels of Chiapas. It is therefore present in the field of gender relations as well, constituting the foundations for the genuine and profoundly radical and anti-capitalist feminism of the Zapatistas. Likewise, this worldview is present in the field of caring for the body and its reproduction, forming the unique basis of the holistic and anti-commodifying project of the Other Health.

This we-based understanding of the problems of gender and gender relations therefore transcends from its outset the impoverished worldview of the "light" or "diet" feminism which is so broadly prevalent (and even dominant) today. This "light" feminism believes it has discovered the essential root of women's problems in the singular and isolated relationship between men and

women and therefore in the misogynist and patriarchal attitudes, beliefs, and practices of 'backwards' and 'elemental' man. In contrast, considering the entire world and the question of gender relations from their intelligent we-ist and collectivist framework, the neo-Zapatista *compañeras* realize that the true cause of the unjust relationship between the sexes lies not in men or individuals or even the male gender but rather in the capitalist social system. To reproduce itself and keep itself alive, this hierarchical, despotic, subjugating, and discriminatory social system must recreate and refunctionalize antiquated unequal and asymmetrical social relations, which naturally include the patriarchal relations of male domination over women and children and the misogynist relations of male discrimination against and subjection of women.

Thus, believing that on a certain profound level men are just as victimized by the misogynist and patriarchal model as women are—in that, for example, they are forbidden to be sensitive, tender, weak, overly sentimental, etc.—and that though they are placed above women they are also boxed into and subsumed within an impoverished and castrating model of romantic relations or gender relations, the neo-Zapatista *compañeras* reject the ridiculous position of "light" feminists that the point of the struggle is to seek "empowerment" vis-à-vis men, as if men were the central enemy to overcome. Instead, they vindicate the idea that the point is to *radically transform*, through the joint antisystemic combat of men and women, the impoverished patriarchal model of gender relations and to replace it with another model that will be forged in the process of anti-capitalist struggle and be egalitarian, democratic, and just.

The indigenous rebel *compañeras* of Chiapas are fully aware that this new model of gender relations can only flourish and affirm itself organically and completely in a non-capitalist society. This, however, does not mean that we need to wait for this new society to be won to begin radically modifying this model. Just the opposite: in line with the positions of the new global antisystemic movements we have summarized above it is clear that this transformation must begin (and has begun) here and now. Those who begin this transformation, however, are deeply mindful of the fact that its total emergence and consummation depend on the likewise-total elimination of the world capitalist system, which represents the true basis and source of reproduction of the patriarchal and misogynist model currently in force.

In this way, against the flabby and limited discourse of the still-dominant feminism which promotes an absurd "empowerment" for women *in comparison* to men (and which, not by coincidence, has been easily recuperated by Mexico's entire corrupt political class, from Martha Sahagún and Margarita

Zavala to Patricia Mercado and Rosario Robles), the *compañeras* intelligently declare what Esmeralda from Caracol 4 affirmed at the Round Table on Women: "Now we're fighting, men and women, boys and girls, old men and old women, to defend our dignity as indigenous people, as women […] because we're not seeking to be like those from above or to be treated as men. We do not seek vengeance against our own *compañeros*. What we seek is equality, to be taken into account: we don't want to be excluded anymore, we want to struggle together, men and women, for our dignity as indigenous women, and for us to have the same opportunities to participate and decide how to live our lives, and to together defeat that which has done us so much harm."

This idea clearly identifies the central enemy of these women not as the men who are their *compañeros* and allies and who also suffer the misogynist and patriarchal model, but as the capitalist system itself and as the "powerful": all the dominant classes who benefit from the continuing reproduction and maintenance of the global capitalist system.

This is a different and more perceptive explanation of the causes and character of the dominant set of gender relations which attributes them to the capitalist system itself, allowing for the establishment of a truly radical, antisystemic, anti-capitalist feminism. This feminism has affirmed itself not in words but in deeds, greatly transcending the moderate and widespread "feminism light" by virtue of having been forged within and from the everyday struggle of the dignified neo-Zapatista movement.

This we-based worldview makes it impossible for its adherents to fall into the "light" feminist misconception that individual women are oppressed by individual men who oppress them by virtue of being a woman's father, husband, brother, or grandfather. The we-ist and collective understanding of unjust gender relations instead sees the real problem as the structure of the patriarchal family as a whole and the hierarchical and discriminatory organization of all of capitalist society. It is this structure and organization that define the asymmetrical roles suffered by the men and women of this capitalist society, i.e., by the collective 'we' that is the *subaltern* subject, which is exploited, oppressed, humiliated, and discriminated against by the capitalist social system as a whole.

In tackling the root of the problem by defining its enemy as the global capitalist system, this is a truly anti-capitalist indigenous feminism. This feminism also distances itself from the 'victimization' of women that characterizes the 'empowerment' of 'light' feminism, a fact that was repeatedly expressed in the speeches of the neo-Zapatista *compañeras* who participated

in the Round Table on Women and told us over and over that they were describing and denouncing their experiences not so that we would pity them but so that we could learn from them and their real struggle to transform their circumstances, not in words but in deeds. For them, men are not enemies but comrades in struggle in a shared process of building equality of opportunities, duties, possibilities to choose, and unity and fellowship against their true shared enemy: capitalism.

According to the *compañeras*, their equality was built in parallel to the construction of the neo-Zapatista social movement itself through a process in which Zapatista women—without bombastic proclamations or grandiose speeches, but practically and effectively—began to demonstrate in everyday practice that they were *just as capable as men* at keeping secrets, withstanding long marches, patrolling paths, or participating in political debates. They thus shattered in practice (not in words) the negative and discriminatory stereotypes that hold women to be 'gossipy,' 'weak,' 'distracted,' or 'less intelligent' than men.

The break with traditional stereotypes of the female condition is a double break. It is firstly a break with the terrible and backwards situation in Chiapas (and in many other parts of Mexico) in which indigenous women were treated as eternal minors, handed over to husbands without having a say and treated as people without autonomy, judgment, or the capacity to make decisions. In general, they were treated without consideration for their own wishes or desires. This break constitutes a true *longue durée revolution* of the age-old structures that preceded capitalism, were refunctionalized by capitalism to buttress its own general domination, and will be in essence radically transformed and overcome, first within the neo-Zapatista movement itself and then in all the Zapatista communities and territories well governed today by the Councils of Good Government.

For this reason, *compañera* Magdalena from Caracol 2 told us at the Round Table on Women that "Before entering the EZLN organization, the situation was still very difficult for women. Because as women we aren't considered: there was no right to expess our opinion and even less to make decisions about our own lives. For example, many women were forced to marry men they did not want to marry, they were forced to by their parents, regardless of their age. When they are married there is no respect for them: they endure beatings, abuse, and humiliation from their husbands, and more when the men got too drunk." Later on, she clarified: "But our fathers and grandfathers aren't to blame: we received this idea when the Spanish conquistadors came

to our country more than five hundred years ago. And later on, the bad governments went on like this…" This situation began to change radically when women entered the EZLN and imposed—in practice and through their shared participation in the struggle and everyday activity—respect from their male comrades, the break with age-old stereotypes, and the validity of an egalitarian and fraternal relationship between the sexes.

The two-fold revolution or break with the ancestral condition of women encompasses, in the first place, the mutation in the age-old practices of women's marginalization and discrimination and capitalism's refunctionalization and recycling of these over the last 500 years. Secondly, this break encompasses the radical transformation of the neo-Zapatista movement itself, which in its own process of construction was obliged to accept and abide by the new condition of Zapatista women as equals in rights, duties, opportunities, and decisions within the movement. This reality has led Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos to say that the "first revolution within the revolution" the Zapatistas are carrying out was the one realized by neo-Zapatista women when they established within the movement the equal treatment, respect, and camaraderie that characterize neo-Zapatismo. This was clearly embodied by Comandanta Ramona, the dignified and rebellious woman whose mere presence demanded respect and equal treatment from all men.

The revolution within the revolution was expressed, for example, in the neo-Zapatista Women's Revolutionary Law, which quite possibly represents the *most advanced women's law on the planet*. If it were applied organically and holistically across the world, this law would completely dissolve the extremely *longue durée* misogynist and patriarchal relations that humanity has endured for at least the last 2,000 years of our history. Recognizing gender differences and the specificity of women—and therefore the need to give women "special treatment," in contrast to the crude and unreal egalitarianism advanced by the light feminism of "empowerment"—the Women's Revolutionary Law defends not only women's equal rights to participation, economic goods, and decision-making within the family and society, but their legitimate rights to rest, recreation, education, and the "right to be different." This law outstrips by far the achievements of bourgeois legislation on women over the last three decades. As the expression of the truly *anti-capitalist* feminism of the neo-Zapatista women, the Women's Revolutionary Law can only be organically, systematically, and completely fulfilled upon and alongside the destruction of the contemporary global capitalist system.

This radical and anti-capitalist women's law is already in force in Zapatista territories and communities as clear equality in treatment and rights between men and women. It causes women to be incorporated alongside men in all activities of resistance and the exercise of autonomy: women serve as education, health, and agroecology promoters as well as authorities at all levels of the MAREZ and Councils of Good Government. Equality of rights to participate in community life are found within the Zapatista Army of National Liberation as well, where women occupy positions at all levels, from support bases to Comandantas. As is well known, various women led Zapatista troops in major battles in the first twelve days of January 1994.

Equality of rights and treatment for women within the Zapatista communities and the EZLN applies also to various aspects of daily life, where for the first time in millennia women have the same rights as men to possess and in particular to inherit land. For centuries, women's lack of these rights was the foundation for their condition of eternal *economic dependence* on men and for their clearly *marginal and secondary status* in a peasant society that revolves—as we have seen and in so many senses—around Mother Earth. As one of the central aspects of the new equality of treatment and rights between men and women, the right to possess and inherit land is also a genuine *revolution of a longue durée economic structure* that subverts the central pillar of the patriarchy and of the dominant role of the man within the family. At the same time, in the economic sphere, this revolution establishes the premises for true equality between men and women.

This *longue durée* economic revolution goes hand in hand with other social and political changes of the same magnitude. Another recent victory for neo-Zapatista women, first within their movement and then in their communities and territories, is the recognition for the first time in millennia of their freedom to marry or divorce whoever they wish, thus affirming their autonomy over their own bodies and their own will, wishes, and entire individuality. And all this without the need for grandiose speeches about women's empowerment or their self-identification as feminists but as a logical demand stemming from equality of treatment and collaboration in a shared struggle and as a natural way of reinforcing that collective 'we': internally democratic, just, and egalitarian.

Because given that women have demonstrated in deeds that they are equally capable of sustaining the revolutionary movement and given that they have led troops in attacks on cities and barracks, then it is logical that in the Community Assemblies they should now have the same voice and vote as

men do, the same voice and vote that they were denied or that was discriminatorily curtailed for generations. And given that in the struggle and within the movement women occupy all positions, including those of the uppermost hierarchy, it becomes normal and even necessary that the same be true for the responsibilities of everyday civic work within Zapatista communities, municipalities, and Councils of Good Government.

Once again, this reality emphasizes the profound character of the modernity of resistance and, later, the alternative modernity defended by the neo-Zapatistas. As is apparent in all these examples, this alternative modernity does *not* at all preserve the pre-capitalist past or maintain pre-modern structures within the modern era: instead, it modernizes and changes along a path *alternate to and different from* that of dominant modernity. This is true in the case too of the transformation of gender relations within the project of an Other Society. The Other Society is constitutive of neo-Zapatismo's *alternative* modernity in a much more advanced and superior sense to the poor and limited project of European-Western modernity and even to baroque Latin American modernity, both of which have essentially recycled and maintained, in new forms, that age-old misogynist and patriarchal discrimination against women. In contrast, and with a profoundly antisystemic and anti-capitalist attitude, Zapatista women have managed to impose—in practice and from the best of all schools of gender equality, the *school of antisystemic social struggle*—an *alternative* path of modernity in regard to gender relations that overcomes the backwards and anachronistic "uses and customs" of misogyny and patriarchalism and that opens the path to true equality.

At the same time that it maintains the predominance of the communitarian 'we' and collective point of view and renews these with contemporary content, the Zapatista alternative modernity rejects and overcomes certain uses and customs that prejudice the rights and equality of women. This was reflected, for example, in a March 26, 2001 speech by Comandanta Esther in the Congress of the Union in Mexico City, when in one of the culminating moments of the March of the Color of the Earth she stated: "We know which of the uses and customs are good and which are bad. Bad are those of paying for and beating women, of buying and selling them, of capturing them by force without her consent, of not letting them participate in Assembly, of not letting them leave their houses." This clear distinction makes evident the different and *alternative* nature of the project of modernity now promoted by the neo-Zapatistas of Mexico.

The hybrid project of an alternative modernity recuperates certain elements of the modernity of indigenous resistance maintained over 500 years and other elements of European-Mediterranean modernity and baroque Latin American modernity in order to synthesize all of these with the *anti-capitalist vocation* that animates the neo-Zapatista movement as a whole. This vocation is also evident in, for example, the field of reproduction of and care for bodies and individuals, giving the specific project of the Other Health its content.

In contrast to capitalist modernity, the Other Health does *not* see the practice of medicine as a business or the sick human body as a faulty commodity in need of repair. Instead, the Other Health understands medicine to be a service of support for *compañeros* who have unfortunately fallen ill. It understands their bodies to be integral human beings, living and conscious, who are afflicted by a particular disfunction of their global metabolism. As opposed to modern bourgeois medicine, the neo-Zapatistas have maintained a holistic understanding of the human body and its functioning which refuses to break that body down into organs which are supposedly mutually independent and can each be assigned to a respective traditional 'specialist.'

The parceling-up of the body into various organs, systems, and functions is typical of bourgeois medicine. It cures a throat infection, for example, by destroying a person's intestinal flora and causing gastritis, which it later cures via a medicine that creates stones that must be cured using a medicine that produces vomiting and nausea, which must be attacked with vertigo medication that causes an allergic or even anaphylactic reaction in the patient, which when aggravated must be treated with an immunosuppressor that lowers the body's defenses and opens the doors once again for the throat infection that caused this ridiculous cycle. Neo-Zapatista medicine, on the other hand, sees each human being as an *organic whole*, as an integral unit who as part of the 'we' must be healed integrally without damaging an organ or impairing a function as a result of a process that supposedly cures another organ or function.

Healing from a holistic and integral perspective draws, among other elements, on ancestral indigenous medicine and herbalism, which as part of deep popular knowledge are able to cure men without producing the senseless and unwanted 'side effects' of dominant bourgeois medicine. As the neo-Zapatista *compañeros* told us at the First Gathering with the Peoples of the World, using the same plants that Mother Earth generously provides for free, indigenous medicine cures diarrhea, vomiting, asthma, fever, bronchitis, tuberculosis, the venomous stings of certain animals, gastritis, colitis, diabetes, rheumatism, cramps, epileptic seizures, and swollen skin, i.e., the most common non-serious

illnesses that afflict not only the indigenous population of Chiapas but the entire population of Mexico and even the world. Indigenous medicine cures these ailments without the harmful side effects that in the end only seek to bind the millions of patients of traditional bourgeois medicines to the health-peddlers who are the vast majority of present-day traditional bourgeois doctors.

Naturally, however, the Other Health does not reject the use of bourgeois medicine and its pharmaceuticals when traditional or new indigenous medicine does not work, or when a case worsens and goes beyond the curative possibilities of indigenous medicine. According to the *compañeros* who spoke at the Round Table on the Other Health, "pharmacy" medications are used when they are believed to be useful or necessary, and the Zapatistas may attend state hospitals—always in the company of a neo-Zapatista health promoter—in difficult cases with no other solution. In this way, indigenous rebels simultaneously receive the benefits of indigenous medicine and Western medicine from a holistic perspective of the human body and under a non-commodified and non-capitalist logic of treating illness.

The recuperation of indigenous medicine and herbalism is in no way passive or contemplative but rather active and transformative. Popular knowledge of the medicinal uses of immediately-available herbs and plants, accumulated over the centuries, has continued to 'modernize' and constantly update—this modernization explains the existence of an Indigenous Herbalism Laboratory in the Oventik Caracol. Here, *new uses and medicinal applications* for old plants are constantly experimented with and the curative properties of new plants are discovered as one more of the many expressions of the alternative modernity promoted by the neo-Zapatistas.

Moreover, once again asserting a position that is more advanced than that of the bourgeois modernity still dominant today, the Zapatistas understand the problem of health in a totalizing and holistic manner. For the Zapatistas, health is a problem that can only be understood and resolved in connection with other social dimensions and realities, thus making it possible (effectively and not declaratively) to attend to the *preventative* dimension of illnesses. In explaining and practically implementing the consequences of the idea that good collective and individual health is only possible on the basis of an Other Education, of a better but very different nutrition, of a very different attitude toward nature and Mother Earth, of the qualitative transformation of the material conditions of each community and family, and with the support of a good government that leads by obeying and other similar conditions pointed out by the Zapatistas themselves, the Zapatistas reiterate the (obvious

but frequently-forgotten) thesis that an Other Health is only possible in conjunction with an Other Economy, Other Government, Other Politics, Other Culture, and Other Society. In other words, the Other Health is only possible as one of many links in the creation of a new world and as one more path that leads to another, non-capitalist world that is free, just, fraternal, and democratic. Expressing itself, among many other spheres, in gender relations and the project of the Other Health, this Other society or form of social coexistence is also logically accompanied by the projects of an Other Culture and a likewise very Other Education.

The Other Culture: The Recuperation and Reappraisal of Deep Popular Knowledge

Another highly important element of the modernity of indigenous resistance cultivated over five centuries—and now of the alternative modernity advanced by the neo-Zapatistas that is currently germinating in their territories governed by the Councils of Good Government—is the defense, rescue, and modernization (via other paths) of the broad space of *popular culture and popular knowledge*. The rescue and recuperation of popular knowledge very consciously understand themselves to be *forms of resistance* to the dominant culture and knowledge that, through mass media, schools, museums, songs, novels, paintings, and art in general often retransmit and reproduce the dominant bourgeois ideology. This ideology not only attempts to justify and intellectually legitimate today's ruling social order but in fact has no qualms about lying, concealing information, and distorting its central messages and content in order to modify the point of view of a sector of so-called public opinion to favor the perpetuation of capitalist society.

Sustained and tenacious indigenous resistance to dominant bourgeois ideology refuses to accept that ideology's validity, codes, hierarchies, and central values. It expresses itself firstly and on the most basic and immediate level as *linguistic resistance*: as the conscious refusal to adopt the conqueror's language and as the active and persistent reproduction of a people's own indigenous language. For as Marx said and as we have referred to, "language is practical consciousness," and for this reason language is also a kind of *Weltanschauung*—a particular conception of the world, nature, and life in general. Consequently, to defend the use of Tojolabal, Tzotzil, Tzeltal, or Chol over the use of Spanish ("la Castilla," as the indigenous peoples of Chiapas call it) is not only to

preserve the precious thing that is one's own language as a vehicle for communication or only a defense of one of the main features of indigenous cultural and civilizational identity itself—it is also and simultaneously a *way to resist the imposition* of another worldview and another vision of reality that is expressed through, connected to, and transmitted with *language*: first the language of the conqueror and later the language of each dominant class in turn.

For centuries and down to the present day, the indigenous rebels of Chiapas have maintained their own languages, and with these their cultural identity, civilizational identity, and specific worldview. These, not by coincidence, are directly connected to their own culture and popular and ancestral knowledge, although this of course has not impeded them from learning Spanish and even using it *in a different way* than it is used by the dominant classes. From their own languages and specific codes, the indigenous peoples of Chiapas *reframe and resignify* Spanish within the alternative modernity of resistance that they have been cultivating for more than half a millennium.

The recovery of popular culture is therefore also a recovery of its central features. And if, as Mikhail Bakhtin explained, facing hegemonic culture—which is always serious, stiff, solemn, hierarchical, rigid, and dull—popular and subaltern culture is always playful, flexible, demystifying, leveling, agile, and fun, then we can clearly understand why the neo-Zapatistas are constantly dancing and playing, combining struggle with celebration and the construction of autonomy on all levels with football matches. They do so not because they do not take struggle and the germinal construction of a very new and other world very seriously but for precisely the opposite reason: the Zapatistas play and celebrate because they understand the enormous subversive potential of laughter, pleasure, irony, and mockery, and therefore of celebration and recreational games. This festive, ironic, subversive attitude of popular culture is also reflected in communiques written by Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, especially in his always-incisive postscripts, which not by coincidence confound, antagonize, and irritate the entire Mexican political class; a class entirely imprisoned within the serious and ridiculous codes of the dominant ideology and culture.

The biased, partisan, even deceitful character of the dominant ideology and culture has been clearly perceived by the indigenous neo-Zapatistas—who unmask and denounce this dominant ideology—in its crude and obvious functions as an ideological weapon wielded by society's hegemonic classes and sectors against society's subaltern groups and classes. This is why Patricia from Caracol 2 declared at the activities of the Round Table on the Other

Communication, Other Art, and Other Culture that "the big national and foreign companies, like television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and others, are not at the service of the peoples, they never tell the truth, they serve only to spread the ideas, thought, interests, and lies of bad government and the rich in order to control the peoples politically, ideologically, and economically. The peoples, the workers of all the lower classes, have no right to their own media. For bad government and the rich, it is a crime for the peoples to have their own media to transmit their ideas, their thought, their interests, and their culture."

Ideological and cultural domination is exercised, among other mechanisms, through mass media, and can therefore only be combatted by constantly brushing *against the grain* of its discourses, codes, concepts, and central theses and explanations. In other words, ideological-cultural domination can only be combatted from a position of active counter-cultural and counter-discursive resistance that travels along paths which are *alternate to and divergent from* the paths of hegemonic culture to offer us *other explanations* of the problems that concern all of us and to show *other facets and dimensions* of our reality that allow us to grasp its fleeting and transitory nature and show us the Hegelian "bad side of history." Brushing against the grain of ideological-cultural domination moreover brings *other possible positionings or gazes* to the surface to diagnose, understand, and make understood, in an unprecedented way, the new and old realities we investigate.

As Walter Benjamin suggested, brushing against the grain of historical events and contemporary social reality allows us to observe and explain historical and contemporary realities from the point of view of the victims, i.e., from the perspective of the vast subaltern sectors, classes, and groups who make up the broad base of the social pyramid. This perspective is therefore that of the multiple *subaltern cultures* who endure, resist, and struggle against hegemonic culture and its associated dominant ideology.

The perspective of the victims, from their specific subaltern cultures, is not only the essential basis of the neo-Zapatista projects of building an Other Communication, an Other Art, an Other Culture, and an Other Education but is also the platform that makes it possible to dismantle and overcome the dominant bourgeois culture's central hierarchies and structures of knowledge, clearly evincing their limits and showing possible paths for their real overcoming based precisely on the reappraisal, recuperation, and new centrality of the subaltern and popular cultures which until now have been repressed, scorned, marginalized, and discriminated against in various ways.

As noted by Carlo Ginzburg, for example, it is clear that dominant bourgeois knowledge is a bookish and scholarly form of knowledge that through the project of the French Encyclopedia attempted to condense in books all the knowledge accumulated by humanity from its origins until the end of the 18th century, when this evidently bourgeois project unfolded. Bourgeois knowledge arrogantly disdains knowledge born of direct experience (i.e., the knowledge that is always the direct patrimony of the working and popular classes) and is therefore only able to grasp one or a few dimensions of a complex and multifaceted reality that encompasses not one or five but 20, 30, or 50 dimensions in its multicolored and varied global fabric. Goethe and later Lenin (quoting Goethe) knew this truth well when they said "Theory, my friend, is grey, but forever green is the tree of life."

Facing life—rich, multiple, always active and in movement—bourgeois theory shows itself to be opaque and limited. Now, at the beginning of the 21st chronological century, having lost the self-sufficiency and arrogance that characterized it in the so-called Age of Enlightenment, bourgeois theory displays all its great limitations and shortcomings in terms of its ability to really and adequately grasp and globally and rationally explain multifaceted and plural life. Today, it is clear that dominant bourgeois theory was only able to affirm itself historically by ignoring or even denying the existence of multiple realities it was incapable of understanding or explaining—realities such as madness, dreams, feelings, instinct, the unconscious, passions, art, magic, religion, popular beliefs, love, myth, popular culture, sexuality, etc., etc. These dimensions are precisely those aspects of the real tat have been and will always be terra incognita for dominant bourgeois culture. For the popular and subaltern cultures of the planet, on the other hand, these aspects are familiar spaces. For this reason, the indigenous neo-Zapatistas can easily explain that their project of building autonomy cannot be found "in a printed book" and is "simply present in [the] hearts and in the way of thinking of [the Zapatista] peoples." In this way, they show us that they have no issues in recuperating limited bourgeois knowledge's useful tools, incorporating these into *other ways of knowing and assimilating reality* which are incomprehensible and unthinkable for the dominant and hegemonic classes of Mexico, Latin America, and the world.

The limits of modern bourgeois knowledge and the dominant bourgeois culture become evident in, for example, their impoverished understanding of the relationship between reason and feeling, which it conceives of as antithetical, mutually exclusive, and deeply irreconcilable: "my reason does not

understand what the heart says, for what feeling speaks thought does not grasp." In contrast, for popular and subaltern culture, truly wise words are those that come from the heart, while truly profound feeling is that which does not scorn the advice and lessons of thought and reason. The false antithesis between feeling and reason is proper only to modern bourgeois culture, which by separating the mind from the body and knowledge from its eternal source of nutrition creates a *false opposition* between feeling and reasoning. Although it has profusely nourished the art of the last five centuries—sometimes with extraordinary results—this opposition is revealed as totally artificial and baseless when examined from the point of view of the subaltern classes and popular culture.

The artificial opposition between thinking and feeling simply *does not exist* in the indigenous understanding of culture, whose elements (which coexist harmoniously) include science, knowledge, and intelligence alongside art, creativity, and music. Alfredo from Caracol 2 expressed this at the Round Table on the Other Communication, Other Art, and Other Culture when he said that "culture is part of the origins of our Mayan ancestors. Because it was the strength, consciousness, way of living and coexisting, of organizing themselves, of governing and defending themselves as a people. And as a people they had everything, their science, their intelligence, and their creativity. For this reason, as culture they had music, dance, their songs, their dances, their verses, their beliefs, and their language as indigenous people." This broad and encompassing vision of what culture is reminds us of certain totalizing definitions anthropologists have of the concept of 'culture' itself, but it also clearly reveals how, within the indigenous worldview, there is a conflict-free coexistence and harmonization of realities and elements that in the bourgeois outlook are always seen as divergent, autonomous, mutually independent, and sometimes even antithetical and exclusive.

The dismantling and questioning of the limits and hierarchy of bookish, scholarly knowledge (as opposed to popular knowledge born out of direct experience) and of its ability to grasp the vast and divergent universe of the affective, emotional, psychological, instinctive, mythical, magical, loving, religious, artistic, or popular economies of human beings also leads us to question our deepest cultural values and the central canons and criteria that structure them. For it is valid to seriously ask ourselves why it is that we believe that if we enjoy a symphony by Beethoven or Bach we cannot also enjoy a song by the rock group Jethro Tull or an indigenous musical composition. It is valid to question why we must think of a Van Gogh painting, an artistic caricature,

and a beautiful and complicated weaving made by a Chiapan indigenous person as being in opposition to each other. Beyond the unequal difficulty that might be implied in the creation of these works, our particular and historically determined idea of beauty and the beautiful is also implicated—an idea that to a great extent has been imposed on us by the modern, European, and capitalist view of the world.

If in Europe itself, art created by the dominant classes is valued over popular art—which is paternalistically degraded by being considered folk art or handicraft or precisely "popular" art—the same phenomenon occurs when so-called European "high culture" confronts popular art in general or the indigenous arts of Chiapas. These difficulties in classifying works of art become evident in the heart of "high culture" itself when we seriously pose the question of who the superior artist is when comparing Van Gogh and Picasso. In the very moment of posing this question it appears absurd and newly remits us to the inescapable historicity of our standards of beauty, and beyond this historicity (which does not exhaust everything), to the complex question of whether or not something like 'progress' or 'evolution' or some sense of specific decipherable advance exists in the artistic trajectory humanity has travelled since our origins.

Thus, asserting a direct questioning of the multiple cultural hierarchies that structure the dominant bourgeois culture, the neo-Zapatista project of an Other Culture and Other Art obliges us to re-think and then un-think the very premises that lead us to accept as valid the supposed existence of an unbridgeable gap between scholarly, bookish, academic knowledge and knowledge born out of direct experience, but also between "cultured art" and popular art, between art and handicraft, between classical dance and popular dance, between opera and the songs of the people, between so-called "Great Theater" and tent shows, or between supposedly "high" culture and the cultures of the subaltern classes in general. Questioning these limited dichotomies, which are characteristic of dominant capitalist culture, we are reminded of the basic fact, reiterated by the best theorists and historians of culture, that all of what is considered to be classic "great literature" (to cite only one example) is always born out of popular literature and that behind Goethe stands the anonymous author of the legend of Doctor Faust, which itself draws on previous German legends born and developed within the popular tradition itself.

If, as Friedrich Engels once said, a major practical need is more able to spur the development of science than the work of a hundred universities together,

then scientific knowledge in all its branches always refers us to the needs and priorities established by the direct practical experience which is so tied to popular knowledge and so disdained by the bourgeois culture which is still in force. We are also reminded of the history of music, which shows us over and over that the great revolutionary musicians who broke the dominant canon of each moment and opened new paths for musical creation, from Vivaldi to Bela Bartok and Bach to Beethoven, always did so by drawing on popular music and music's marginal currents. This pattern is repeated in theater, painting, and sculpture, as well as in history, sociology, economics, biology, geography, and medicine, among other fields.

This is what leads the indigenous neo-Zapatista rebels to reassess and proudly vindicate their music, art, clothing, language, worldview, relationship with nature, and we-ist and collective way of being. They defend these not only as features of their own indigenous identity but as elements of their culture, which is as important, legitimate, rich, and profound as European culture, baroque mestizo culture, or any of the planet's cultures. And if, as we have seen, a central thesis of the neo-Zapatista political project is the *return of central protagonism to the people themselves* and to the whole of the subaltern groups and classes, then the logical consequence of this thesis on the cultural level will be the *return of protagonic centrality to popular culture*, resituating indigenous art, culture, language, education, and worldview in a nuclear and structuring position for the totality.

As the neo-Zapatistas clarify, however, this return does not mean the installation of a new *exclusive* form of cultural domination, now of indigenous culture over other cultures. On the contrary, it represents the establishment of a "world where many worlds fit," a world in which a hundred different flowers will bloom at once, allowing for the coexistence of many cultures without the subordination of one to another. Rather than excluding and confronting each other, these cultures will interconnect freely, openly, and dialogically in an exchange and dialogue always established between entities that consider each other to be *equals*.

The new centrality of indigenous peoples' art, way of being, identity, language, *Weltanschauung*—of all of popular indigenous culture—manifests in a thousand and one ways. Some of these were detailed by the *compañeros* at the Round Table on the Other Communication, Other Art, and Other Culture, as well as at the Round Table on the Other Education. They explained, for example, how the idea of what an 'artist' is and their responsibility and role in the community are has changed: whereas in the creation of the first murals

that adorn Zapatista territory and buildings artists were given total freedom to paint however they liked and to choose their motifs, subjects, and scenes on an absolutely individual basis, nowadays the entire community participates *with* artists in planning the content of each mural. The community's participation, however, does not limit or supplant the creativity, inventiveness, or ability of each artist, but only serves to jointly decide the themes and content that each mural should address.

Practically and simply, this recalls the basic (though often forgotten or ignored) fact that the artist is a *social* individual and their work is a *social product* that responds to the specific social context and particular social circumstances in which the artist or creator works. Therefore, far from encouraging the absurd but widely-disseminated idea of the artist as an isolated creator and the genius product of their own absolute individual singularity, community participation enriches the participation of the artist themselves, strengthening it through the artist's dialogue with the community, who suggest motifs, meanings, forms, and possible messages and then entrust the final result to the artist's own individual inventiveness and creativity.

Walter Benjamin once affirmed that in capitalist culture, "there is no document of civilization that is not also a document of barbarism," for capitalist culture is built upon the unjust division that condemns the great majority of the population to labor, separating it from the exercise of art and cultural development as it delegates the production of cultural products and works of art to a tiny, privileged minority. In the Zapatista communities, the stigma of barbarism *begins* (only slightly, but still importantly) to be erased from the works and cultural documents produced there to the extent that the first steps are outlined for critiquing and transcending the division between the people and certain forms of art or between the subaltern classes and culture, both on the basis of the reappraisal and new centrality of popular art and culture and of a new attitude of the subaltern classes to art and culture in general.

The first steps taken towards overcoming the age-old division between certain forms of culture and the popular classes provokes a genuine creative eruption among the indigenous neo-Zapatistas. This eruption not only leads them to involve themselves in defining the themes of their murals or in promoting the creation of their own music and own art in general but also leads them to create videos, establish community radio stations and community bulletin boards, and learn to navigate the internet for daily use. In other words, the neo-Zapatistas become involved in a clear *reinvention*, through their own strengths and with the tools available to them, of a whole *alternative structure*,

belonging to them, of media and mechanisms of communication. These media and mechanisms are local and regional but achieve universal circulation and once again oppose official, bourgeois, and state means of communication.

Once again demonstrating that their modernity (formerly of resistance and now alternative) seamlessly combines modern technologies such as video or the internet with communitarian social structures that date back millennia, the neo-Zapatista peoples have built a whole network of alternative media that, recognizing the rupture that 1968 represented for the history and social function of these media (by turning them into real means of *forming public opinion* and into vehicles for the education and even deformation of consciousness), is a network that is just as agile and efficient (and sometimes more so) than the network of capitalist media. This alternative and anti-capitalist media network not only dedicates itself to revealing and disseminating among rebel indigenous communities all the information *silenced* by the official media but also very consciously orients itself toward educating and developing the political consciousness of all the Zapatista peoples, strengthening the movement itself and animating their struggles by transmitting the problems and experiences of other peoples who struggle, such as those of Atenco and Oaxaca.

In this way, the Zapatista peoples are just as informed as anyone, or more informed, as they use the internet to follow the progress of the Other Campaign, the struggle of dignified Oaxacans against Ulises Ruiz, and the experiences of other rebel peoples of Latin America. They are moreover *better informed*, as they are informed from a point of view that is critical and therefore more objective and truthful. The intelligent and alternative use of old and new media—the bulletin board, for example, as well as video—leads the Zapatistas to use the mechanism of video, the "film camera," as a *compañero* said at the Round Table on the Other Communication, Other Art, and Other Culture, not only to inform themselves but now to inform others, to inform the whole world, of their own struggles and experiences. Their video promoters film the testimonies and experiences of the neo-Zapatista communities in struggle and their recordings are later disseminated in other rebel communities of Chiapas, as well as in Europe, South America, the United States, and across the world.

The neo-Zapatistas innovate in the arts, beginning to close the *longue durée* gap between subaltern classes and certain art forms, and they combat the noxious influence of official bourgeois media by creating a parallel and alternative media structure that disdains neither simple and local forms of

communication or the modern technologies of video and the internet. In the same way, the project of an Other Education is developing in the rebel territories and communities of Chiapas. The Other Education is very other to dominant bourgeois education and radically *alternative* to it in terms of its objectives, content, forms, mechanisms of transmition, methods, and general and specific strategies.

In the first place, this very Other Education does not see education as a commodity, as a good for buying and selling whose benefit to its 'consumer' is that it skills their labor power, increasing their labor abilities and making their labor power more expensive. Nor does the Other Education see education as the mere routine and dull exercise of transmitting abstract and useless knowledge through authoritarian, backwards, and monotonous methods. On the contrary, against these dominant visions of private bourgeois education or the declining public education imparted by the state, the neo-Zapatista project of education vindicates an education which above all teaches *the process of critical thinking*, which attempts to shape in children and consolidate in adolescents the habit of *critically reasoning* through reality. Neo-Zapatista education cultivates a scientific and critical consciousness of the world, emphasizing the why and then the how of things much more than the where and when.

This is a non-commodified, non-capitalist view of education which neither charges (as private schools do) or is funded with taxes (as public schools are), making it the only completely free education in Mexico and perhaps in the world, with the single and not coincidental exception of the schools of Brazil's Landless Workers Movement. Neo-Zapatista education promoters receive no salary or benefits whatsoever in exchange for their work. In this way, the act of teaching critical thinking, the act of this new education, is restored its noble and selfless character of cultivating and transmitting knowledge for the love of knowledge itself and out of the deep desire to help others critically interpret the contemporary world so they can change it in a positive sense, in a kind of return to the original meaning of the *Academy* of Plato's time.

Neo-Zapatista education is really and strictly free in its totality and is built upon the explicit criticism of traditional education imparted by the government, which is correctly perceived as one more means of reproducing the dominant ideology and culture, as well as, in this sense, a clear vehicle for the legitimation of the powerful and of hegemonic powers. For this reason, *compañeros* from Caracol 2 stated at the Round Table on the Other Education that "the educational models that exist everywhere in the world have served only the destruction of humanity and nature, as well as the interests of the

great capitalists and exploiters of humanity. Those who create the education imparted in official schools have concerned themselves with developing plans and programs of study at all levels which favor the interests of power."

The direct and radical critique of official bourgeois education's ideologically biased character is furthermore accompanied by the denunciation of this education as an abstract education that is separate from real life and its fundamental problems and concerns, as well as being an education that is rote, stiff, dull, useless, and falsely studious. Official bourgeois education is always presented as a mere accumulation of facts, dates, events, and descriptions which are essentially *alien* and profoundly *useless* to learners. More than scientific knowledge, this impoverished form of education seems designed to transmit and inculcate *capitalist discipline*, the authoritarian hierarchies of bourgeois society, and the practical and intellectual passivity of the subaltern classes. It is no coincidence that this recalls the highly similar questions that the Chinese Cultural Revolution posed to the education that still prevailed in the China of its day. With their own specific characteristics, these questions were also posed in the French May of 1968 and in the tragic Mexico of the months leading up to the Tlatelolco massacre, as well as in practically all the student and popular movements of the world revolution that took place in the late 1960s of the 20th chronological century.

The total questioning of capitalist schooling, with its antiquated, stagnant, worn-out forms of knowledge, was expressed once again by the *compañeros* from Caracol 2 who spoke at the Round Table on the Other Education when they expressed that "with this education we seek action that transforms society [because] teaching is for life, for better understanding our world." This necessarily leads the Zapatistas to build an education which is profoundly and genuinely *alternative* to that which currently exists, both in its *content*—which in their words is "more realistic and true, transmitting what the people really need for their liberation"—and in the *ends* and *objects* it pursues: to foster and strengthen scientific consciousness and critical thinking as intellectual weapons for the neo-Zapatista peoples' resistance and struggle for a new world very other to the capitalist one, a world "where many worlds fit."

This alternative education is thus instruction in things which are *useful* for life and *necessary* for the struggle. It will reinstate, as we have discussed above, the perspective of the victims, of the oppressed, of the (until now) conquered, humiliated, and marginalized, and of all the subalterns of society and history. For the Zapatista communities, this alternative education is unique even in its forms, as it tries to adapt in particular to the indigenous way of being by

being imparted entirely or partly in the indigenous languages of each region of Chiapas at the same time as it cultivates, promotes, and proudly reproduces the cultural and civilizational identity of indigenous peoples as such.

This project of education, alternative in content, objectives, and forms, is furthermore alternative in its *methods* of transmitting knowledge, putting an Other Pedagogy in play. The Other Pedagogy breaks with the hierarchical and unilateral idea of the educator-educated relationship, in which the first half of the binary claims to be the only and absolute repository of all knowledge and thus the active element of the relationship, while the second half of the binary lacks all knowledge and is therefore a totally passive and receptive element. By contrast, in direct opposition to this assertion, the neo-Zapatistas believe, as Marx does in his celebrated "Theses on Feuerbach," that "it is necessary to educate the educator himself." The Zapatistas believe that the teaching-learning process is one that teachers and students *share*, one in which teachers and students learn and generate knowledge collectively and actively. This is why Cristóbal, from Caracol 5, stated at the Round Table on the Other Education that "the role played by the [neo-Zapatista education] promoter does not consist, like teachers at the official school who are authorities over children, where what mostly happens is that the teacher is the one who knows and the children just store ideas, memorizing them as if they were machines. The promoters, in the autonomous schools, are the children's *compañeros*, are *compañeros* and students, promoter and children learning together."

In a line reminiscent of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, neo-Zapatista autonomous education also seeks to be a means of conscientization and politicization among students. By gaining access to a *critical* vision of reality and events and by seeing the world from the perspective of society's victims or subaltern classes, students learn to discern the true roots of the oppression, humiliation, exploitation, dispossession, and discrimination which rule today, identify the global capitalist system as the culprit responsible for these things, and take a critical political posture against this system, as well as a clearly antisystemic and anti-capitalist intellectual position. This manifests, to cite only one example, in the way that history is taught in the autonomous Zapatista schools.

Instead of beginning with world history (which is always seen with an obvious and not-at-all-innocent Eurocentric bias) and then approaching the history of the Americas, then Mexico, and finally Chiapas, as is done in official bourgeois schools, Zapatista schools completely invert this process. History begins to be taught from the *most immediate local history*—i.e., from

the small village or community where children or adolescents live—and is also reconstructed from oral tradition and the testimonies of these children's grandparents, old people, and parents. Only then, when the specific temporal sequence and unique historical trajectory of the local Zapatista community has been understood do history classes begin to open the range of the spatial dimension, moving from the community to the history of (for example) the Chiapas highlands region, the history of Chiapas, the history of southern Mexico, national history, the history of Latin America, the Americas as a whole, and finally world history.

This inversion naturally alters *the entire meaning* of learning the discipline of history. The history of the low-intensity warfare endured, for example, by the community of Polhó, can only be understood in connection with the whole history of the neo-Zapatista uprising on the Chiapan scale, which itself can only be understood within the history of all of southern Mexico since at least the time of the Mexican Revolution. In the same way, the history of southern Mexico is only comprehensible within the history of the three Mexicos that, in the *longue durée*, make up what we now call Mexico. And this last history is incomprehensible without the history of the Spanish conquest and the Spanish and later European histories of the civilization located on that little cape of Asia that we now call Europe. This inverse path also emphasizes the idea that Zapatista education is an education *for life* and an education in *things that are useful to students*, who naturally wish to fully understand why they have lived for years in a climate of harassment, aggression, and disguised war on the part of municipal, state, and federal governments.

Zapatista education is autonomous, critical, and useful for life, and has for this reason consciously decided to structure itself around the thirteen Zapatista demands, which today are the *articulating axis* of the body of knowledge and teachings imparted in Zapatista schools. In a creative, intelligent, and entertaining way, these schools connect, for example, the teaching of biology and ecology with the conception of land as Mother Earth and territory as Mother Nature in the class called Life and Environment (at the primary school level, whereas at the middle school level this class is called Natural Sciences), under the profound logic we have explained above.

Zapatista schools explain the history of the great cultural and civilizational development achieved by the Maya peoples of Mexico and Central America and the exploitation, destruction, and subjugation brought by the Spanish conquest, but also the tenacious and age-old resistance of the dignified indigenous peoples of Chiapas. This serves to explain why part of the objectives

of the current neo-Zapatista struggle are to recover freedom, usher in true justice, and create a new democracy that will be the complex and updated synthesis of ancient direct democracy with conscientization, citizenization, democratization from below, and the attainment of new human rights developed over the last five centuries. Likewise, Zapatista schools teach indigenous languages not as mere instruments of communication but as a fundamental feature of indigenous identity. When they are explicitly vindicated from the understanding that indigenous identity was repressed, marginalized, and discriminated against for centuries, language education provides the Zapatista demand for freedom with a highly solid foundation.

This radical shift in 'pedagogy,' in methods of handling and transmitting knowledge, recalls similar pedagogical experiences in the Brazilian MST, which in this field has developed to the point of establishing its own university for the inhabitants of its settlements (as well as for others). The neo-Zapatista project, based on an Other Pedagogy, is complemented by other important changes, e.g., in the forms of relations between teachers and students, which made it possible for one *compañero* participating in the Round Table on the Other Education to say that Zapatistas are not "teachers who beat," as teachers in official schools are, but are rather teachers who are above all *compañeros* to their students who do not hold students' attention by means of violence or abitrarily imposing their false authority. Zapatista teachers engage students with entertaining, intelligent, and inventive methods that awaken the curiosity of children and adolescents, addressing the subjects at hand through, for example, particular cases, problems, or anecdotes related to the community to which students belong. This is completely possible and can even happen spontaneously given that teachers or education promoters are always members of the communities where they teach.

Easing the recurrent and problematic division between education imparted at home and that which is imparted at school which is typical of official bourgeois education and is simply abolished in neo-Zapatista Other Education by virtue of the fact that teachers and students are members of the same community, autonomous education is enriched by its conscious refusal to separate manual and intellectual labor and practice and theory. In this way, the Other Education prefigures the future and not far-off post-capitalist society, which will do away with the sterile division between manual and intellectual labor, abolish the antithesis between town and country, and suppress social classes, as well as complete the happy total death of the contemporary activity of human politics and put an end to the terrible institution that has

been the state, as well as other realities and relations which will fortunately be wiped from the face of the earth in a near future.

As the *compañeros* described at the First Encounter of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World, the global project of an Other Education is essentially oriented toward encouraging love for activity and nature over material goods, rejecting the egotism and individualism promoted by official schools. In their place, from the we-ist and communitarian perspective we have referenced above, the Other Education promotes the idea of serving and supporting each teacher's community and the neo-Zapatista movement in general with the knowledge imparted in schools.

These general features of the Other Education are part of the project of the Other Culture, but also, on a deeper level, of the alternative anti-capitalist modernity promoted by the neo-Zapatista. Sinking its *longue durée* roots down into Chiapan indigenous peoples' five-century modernity of resistance, anti-systemic modernity moves toward the future as a clear, living, active, and bright embryo of the non-capitalist Other World that draws nearer every day.

That Other World is already visible on the horizon of the new dawn being built across the planet upon the multiple struggles and resistances that, in a thousand languages and with many different clothes and histories on their backs, shape and reshape in thousands of ways the radical "Enough!" of that memorable January 1, 1994 that today continues to illuminate our everyday struggles across the length and breadth of our little planet Earth.

* * *

A CONCLUSION THAT QUESTIONS INSTEAD OF CONCLUDING

"**Marcos:** Well, we're going to win. There's no doubt about that.
Manuel Vázquez Montalbán: Win everything? There's a lot of room between everything and nothing.
Marcos: No. Winning means winning, because even if we lose, we win. I mean that the Project of Zapatismo is so broad that even if it loses it wins."
Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, *"Marcos: el señor de los espejos"* (Marcos: Lord of the Mirrors—Interview with Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos), 1999.

As any complex social issue does, the Mexican neo-Zapatista movement poses a series of specific questions to critical analysts and serious social scientists. These are recurring, universal questions that appear whenever we seriously and critically attempt to explain a process, phenomenon, or relevant social or historical event. They are the classic questions: the when, the where, the how, and the why. But in this case, in which we deal with a fundamentally *critical* and explanatory (not merely descriptive or acritical) perspective, these questions are reformulated on the basis of the question—now collective and multiple—of the various whys. We believe that if we pass the brush of history *against the grain* of the facts, phenomena, and processes we wish to understand, neither linear temporal sequences of the whens or simple geographical descriptions of the wheres are enough. But limited descriptive radiographies of the hows that try to pass themselves off as real analysis are also inadequate, as are the monotonous, unilateral, obvious, and immediate causes of the most obvious whys.

In contrast, and for a genuinely *critical* perspective that stems from a necessary estrangement in the face of immediate reality and that attempts to access the real, deeply-rooted structures of society and history through multiple points of entry, the relevant questions are transformed. Instead of the simple "when?", the question becomes "why in *that* precise moment and not before or afterwards?" Likewise, instead of the direct "where?" we find the more complicated question of "why in that specific place and not another?" The same occurs with the how, which in this approach becomes the question of "why that particular concrete form and specific mode and not any of the

other thousands of possible forms?" Finally, the why is replaced by inquiry into the multiple whys behind the various interconnected causes that in their totality cause the event, phenomenon, or process in question.

Naturally, critical questions surrounding these various complicated whys are not easily answered. In the case of our particular topic—the central political lessons that the neo-Zapatista movement has provided in universal terms—these critical questions would include "why January 1, 1994, after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the World Cultural Revolution of 1968 but prior to (for example) the Seattle movement or the seven World Social Fora held until now?", and "why in Chiapas, the 'last forgotten corner of the nation,' as the neo-Zapatistas themselves say?" and "why in the south of Mexico, and why in Mexico and Latin America instead of Europe or the United States or Africa or Asia? Why not in Guatemala or Peru or somewhere else in Mexico, like Jalisco or Coahuila?" Among these questions would also be "why as a movement with an *indigenous* social base but with *universal* demands?" and "why as a synthesis of the Mexican left after 1968 and a movement with deep *longue durée* roots?" Another obligatory question: "why as a new type of post-1968 social movement but simultaneously as part of the *vanguard front of the planetary antisystemic struggle* today comprising the antisystemic and anti-capitalist movements of all Latin America?"

Likewise, prolonging these essential concerns, we must ask ourselves why neo-Zapatismo arose as a radical anti-capitalist movement that dialogues much more with civil society than it does with the state, and with other Mexican social movements than it does with the national political class. Why did it transition from its stage of "fire" to a stage of the "word," and from the latter to a new stage (which we might call the stage of "hearing")? Why does the movement now promote the important and dignified initiative of the Other Campaign in Mexico and the project of the Sixth International on the global level? Why did it immediately cause an echo and interest on the planetary scale which has endured until now? Why is it so quickly and constantly becoming a universal point of reference for the world's anti-capitalist and antisystemic struggles? How has it managed to put the national indigenous movement back on the Mexican stage once again, and how has it done the same for the pan-Latin American indigenous movement? Why was it the *central factor* in the fall of the PRI and that party's 70-year single-party dictatorship? Likewise, how is it that today neo-Zapatismo has provoked a crisis within the PAN, PRI, and PRD, and indeed the entire political class which this class is afraid of naming and even confronting? Why is it that the

neo-Zapatista movement and the Other Campaign are today the only viable, civilized, and peaceful alternative in the face of the impending large-scale social revolt in Mexico in the rapidly approaching *historical* year of 2010?

These are clearly vast and complex questions. To respond to them adequately and fully, a *Universal History of Neo-Zapatismo* would need to be written, and this essential and undoubtedly urgent project would have to be started right away. In fact, the text the reader now holds in their hands seeks to be a first step in that specific direction by trying to offer some important leads for responding to the questions above. It does so also by attempting to recuperate some of the central lessons of neo-Zapatismo for the struggles being fought now by the antisystemic and anti-capitalist movements of Latin America and the world. We will mention only two of these lessons as an example.

There is no doubt that one of the central problems all Latin American antisystemic movements have confronted in the paths they have traveled over the last 15 years has been the problem of their practical and political attitude and conduct facing the institution of the state. The issue at hand here is the limit to which the autonomy of these movements should be defended and preserved vis-à-vis the state when the social pressure and strength of these movements is such that they can topple presidents and governments, paralyze entire countries, and veto unpopular neoliberal policies which are destructive to the social fabric and to society in general.

Given the enormous strength of the social movements and given the crisis and weakness of Latin America's governments and states, certain pressing questions naturally arise once again: should these movements "seize" the apparatus of the existing state and use it for their own ends? Is this possible? If so, is it viable, and if it is viable is it really the best path to radical social emancipation? Or should power be "seized" to a greater extent than the state uses it and then wielded against a movement's "class enemies" and the rest of society in order to impose that movement's particular project, as social movements prior to the world revolution of 1968 asserted? On the other hand, would it not be better to create counter-powers from below and to the left that would allow for the revolutionizing of state power and all political power and the installation of other governments able to "lead by obeying" and politicians guided by what the neo-Zapatistas call the Other Politics?

The difficult and sometimes even bitter experiences recently seen in various South American countries demonstrate the centrality of this important neo-Zapatista lesson. The Landless Workers Movement (MST) in Brazil, for example, supported the government of Lula da Silva for years despite that

government's obvious neoliberal and anti-popular policies and its grindingly slow (even feigned) policy of agrarian reform (which was utterly out of line with Lula's campaign promises). Far from strengthening the MST, the movement's support for Lula's government significantly compromised and weakened it, confusing many of the militants in its base, as well as its followers in general. Following the MST's split with Lula, brought on by the PT's corruption scandals in 2005, the movement once again endorsed him in the second round of the Brazilian elections of 2006. Presently, that support seems to finally (and happily) be ending and giving way to a new and important renewal of the MST's struggle.

In Bolivia, the government of Evo Morales has been extremely accommodating in its relations with capitalists and foreign companies, constantly negotiating with these elements, shamefully haggling over profit-sharing, and secretly agreeing on clauses that allow those companies to evade even moderate redistribution of profits from gas and hydrocarbons. Against the radical slogan of the Bolivian people, who from 2005 onward demanded "total nationalization without compensation," these actions give the lie to a government which upon taking power said it would "lead by obeying." This phrase turned out to be pure rhetoric, totally emptied of content and of truth.

Only a few years ago in Ecuador, the CONAIE experienced the blatant disappointment of participating in the government of Lucio Gutiérrez. Having help Gutiérrez win office, the CONAIE suffered the consequences of being coopted and losing prestige among the popular classes of Ecuador and all of Latin America. To some extent, this situation is now being repeated with the government of Rafael Correa, another lukewarm and moderate "leftist"; better said, a social democrat. Correa seeks to make certain changes in Ecuador so that everything can stay the same: in other words, his government implements some political and social reforms but maintains the disastrous dollarization of the Ecuadorian economy. In Ecuador, as in Bolivia and as with Lula, moderately progressive governments implement lukewarm social reforms and some preventative assistentialist social policies to make sure that capitalism survives, continues, and even advances.

The same is true of Argentina, where the *piquetero* movement debates among itself in a tension between a radical and total autonomy from the state and dependence and negotiation, not exempt from agreements, pacts, and sometimes even strange alliances with the state now governed by Néstor Kirchner. This internal tension in the movement has significantly weakened and dismantled it by dividing it between those who continue to accept welfare

from that lukewarm social-democratic Kirchnerist government on one hand, and, on the other, those sectors who try to promote the total and radical autonomy of the movement and its neighborhoods, breaking with the state and radicalizing its struggles, placing them on a genuinely anti-capitalist and antisystemic road.

The recent experiences of the governments of Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Argentina allow us to form a clear idea of what a government led by Andrés Manuel López Obrador might have looked like in Mexico had it not been for the colossal and scandalous electoral fraud of July 2006. Despite the ongoing intensification of the crisis in Mexico and the imminent arrival of the *historical* Mexican 2010, López Obrador and his ever-scarcer followers maintain and still cherish the project of a "Lula-style" government as their horizon toward the chronological year of 2012.

It is clear, then, that for the Latin American antisystemic movements we have referenced—the movements of Ecuadorian and Bolivian indigenous peoples, Argentinian *piqueteros*, and the Brazilian MST—many of the profound lessons of neo-Zapatismo in regard to the issue of relations with and attitudes toward the state and political power may be highly useful and recuperable. Since their movement's beginnings, the neo-Zapatistas have agreed that they do not want to seize the power of the existing state but to *revolutionize the relations of existing power from below* and revolutionize the very forms of exercising power, as well as the existence of that power. This, however, is not equal to the naïve and ridiculous proposal of "ignoring power," or wanting to "change the world without taking power": power is there, and it represses, betrays, and wages low-intensity warfare. The point, then, is not to ignore power but to confront it (even to negotiate and dialogue with it, when necessary) *without ever losing autonomy*. Neo-Zapatismo's autonomy is born out of the movement's counter-power, out of its force as an autonomous, genuinely antisystemic and anti-capitalist social movement, but also out of the participation of its radical and rebellious support bases and out of its history; its tradition of struggle over the last 20 years. Neo-Zapatismo's autonomy also comes from its *longue durée* rebel heritage and origins, developed over the whole 20th century, the last two centuries, and the 500 years of capitalism's existence, as well as from its unique project of modernity (first a modernity of resistance, now an alternative modernity) and from the contemporary force and relevance of these truly *longue durée* projects.

Consequently, rethinking relations with the existing state—as well as with dominant political power and with the economic, social, and cultural powers

that still prevail—using the essential lessons derived from the experience of political autonomy, from the specific character and nature of neo-Zapatismo, and from the project of overall autonomy of the indigenous rebels of Chiapas may be quite useful for contemporary genuinely anti-capitalist movements. This can apply to the rebuilt indigenous communities in Ecuador, the most radical of Bolivia's indigenous movements, the truly autonomous sectors of the Argentinian *piqueteros*, and the elements of the Brazilian landless workers able to see beyond Lula and short-term arrangements with the Brazilian state.

A second important lesson relates to the current situation of the worldwide alter-globalization movement, as well as of the World Social Forum. This lesson has to do with the problem of groups, sectors, classes, individuals, and collectives who often have different struggles, interests, and identities, are animated by totally distinct worldviews, and carry the weight of divergent practices, histories, and traditions: the lesson here deals with how to take all of these groups and coordinate them to carry out concrete and transformative action.

Today, it is clear that the World Social Forum has become bogged down (among other decisive problems) in this very point. This is firstly because of its refusal to define concrete lines of action; this refusal is one of the foundational mistakes of the Forum, and it has carried this mistake with it for its entire existence. The stagnation of the Forum is also, and perhaps more profoundly, due to its inability to find common ground for an eventual World Program of Antisystemic and Anti-Capitalist Struggle that could manage to unite all the abovementioned heterogenous groups. The serious problems faced by the World Social Forum have caused its iterations to increasingly become a mere global platform for voicing complaints, a simple worldwide gathering of activists who exchange points of view and experiences but do not go beyond either denunciation or reporting and recognizing other experiences. While these functions are important and interesting, they are not enough to effectively confront global capitalism from below and to the left.

This has allowed the World Social Forum to be infiltrated and even dominated by openly pro-capitalist NGOs that wash their guilt away by carrying out actions of mere social assistentialism. These NGOs seek only to reform capitalism so that it can function well (or "better," according to them) but in no way intend to wipe it from the face of the earth along with all its miseries, injustices, and inequalities. This explains why recent iterations of the WSF have seen the organizing of other Alternative Forums which consider themselves to be far to the left of the official Forum.

In the context of the impasse and even crisis of alter-globalization and the World Social Forum, the Other Campaign, promoted by the neo-Zapatistas, becomes highly significant. This initiative seeks to build a vast national movement in Mexico comprised of different groups, classes, individuals, and collectives. At the same time as it respects and integrates these groups' particular identities, struggles, histories, and demands, the Other Campaign attempts to unify them around its two fundamental concepts. The first of these is a recognition of each party's 'subalternity' and their corresponding victimization by some specific oppression, exploitation, pillage, or discrimination inflicted on them by the common enemy; i.e. the system of global capitalism. The second concept is the Other Campaign's anti-capitalist vocation: its will to abolish the condition of subalternity and confront that condition's real cause, destroying the capitalist system and replacing it with another, radically different social system that is free, just, egalitarian, and democratic.

Thus, facing the World Social Forum's generic slogan of "another world is possible" (which many NGOs and activists take to mean "another, still capitalist, but perhaps a little less unjust, a slightly less exploitative, a bit less unequal and discriminatory world, is possible"), the neo-Zapatistas raise the slogan of struggling for "a world where many worlds fit." The world they describe is one ruled by plurality, respect for the other, equality for all, non-asymmetrical relations, multicultural dialogue, the recognition of difference, and real fraternity. This world is necessarily and by definition a non-capitalist world and a world without exploitation, injustice, inequality, or discrimination of any kind.

The World Social Forum and alter-globalization have much to learn from studying the Other Campaign, which could show them the path towards replicating the campaign's experience on a global scale. They would need to call together all of the planet's genuinely anti-capitalist forces, groups, classes, collectives, and individuals to hear their words and learn from their experiences of struggle in order to create a global network of active anti-capitalist rebellions. This is what the Other Campaign did for all of 2006. From there, alter-globalization could define its specific identity and begin to dialogue between all parties to establish a World Program of Struggle that could synthesize the movement's universal demands, as well as serve to mobilize millions across the planet against the unjust and absurd system of global capitalism. This is what the Other Campaign is doing now on the national scale in Mexico. Its activities will soon be complemented on the world scale by the Second Intergalactic Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism and are

currently complemented by the ongoing Sixth International, both of which are promoted by the neo-Zapatistas.

A World Program of Struggle could be raised as a banner by the genuinely anti-capitalist elements of the alter-globalization movement and by the World Social Forums, not to beautify capitalism and make it more bearable for subalterns or to compassionately reform it and restrain its worst effects but to wipe global capitalism from the face of the earth and to build a non-capitalist, radically free, egalitarian, just, and democratic world. In line with the new and truly autonomous worlds now dawning in certain *piquetero* neighborhoods in Argentina, MST settlements in Brazil, radical indigenous communities in Ecuador and Bolivia, and doubtless in all of the territories well governed by the neo-Zapatista Councils of Good Government, the world of the World Program of Struggle must be an Other World, a "world where many worlds fit."

In this way, gazing with optimism out toward the immediate and near future and betting that the genuine anti-capitalist and antisystemic movements of Latin America and the world will assimilate and deepen these profound lessons of the neo-Zapatista movement, enriching them with their own lessons and experiences, we can echo Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos in repeating that no matter the immediate results of the struggle and no matter what setbacks may lie ahead in the years to come, in the medium term, "we're going to win. There's no doubt about that."

* * *

Mexico City, May 7, 2007.

Appendix 1

BUILDING COUNTER-POWER FROM BELOW AND TO THE LEFT (OR, HOW TO CHANGE THE WORLD BY REVOLUTIONIZING POWER FROM BELOW POWER)

"We must build a new political culture. This new political culture can come from a *new way of seeing power*. The point is not to take power but to *revolutionize its relationship* with those who wield it and those who endure it."[1]
Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, Invitation to the Intercontinental Gathering for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism, May 1996.

Changing the World by Revolutionizing Power

The Other Campaign is extending across all of Mexico, beginning to gain strength and put down roots among our country's various subaltern groups, classes, and segments. A vast social movement of clear national dimensions is being formed. At the same time, the entire Mexican political class is sinking into a large-scale crisis of legitimacy and social credibility. It is appropriate now to carefully and attentively discuss a series of crucial issues that the Other Campaign will have to confront in practice in the near future.

1 Italics ours.

As it advances in building a National Program of Struggle and consolidating the network of subaltern social subjects that comprise the body of this new anti-capitalist social movement of the Mexican nation—a movement aimed at radical social transformation whose first steps are the construction of a new social contract and a new constitution—the Other Campaign must sooner or later run into a series of crucial problems and questions. Among these, the question of the campaign's attitude and position toward the problem of power is especially important.

This is true not only in the context of the much debated and vulgarized issue of "taking power" but more broadly and precisely in the context of the specific power of the Mexican state. Likewise, the problem of power has a special significance in the context of Mexico's political parties and organizations and the country's social organizations and movements, i.e., in the context of the different but always interconnected levels of *state* and *political* power and of certain important expressions of *social* power.

Instead of the false and oversimplifying idea that what the neo-Zapatistas (and now the Other Campaign) want is to "change the world without taking power," the task is in fact a serious and methodical investigation of the differences, content, and interrelations between power's various levels. Also necessary is a focus on what popular and subaltern *counter-power* is and could be and an explanation of the ways in which it is nurtured by contemporary antisystemic and anti-capitalist social movements, alongside an examination of how these problems are now connected with the dignified and growing Other Campaign.

Instead of repeating that simplifying and mistaken slogan, then, it may be useful to examine these different forms and levels of power and counter-power in detail while also attempting to more carefully understand the "new way of seeing power" which the neo-Zapatistas have now practiced and defended for many years. We must also delve into the meaning and central implications the "revolution of the relation of power" has for those who exercise it and live in it: this revolution is contained in its basic defense of leading by obeying and its demand for an Other Politics which is radically different from the form of politics which is dominant today.

Returning to the 'Power' of the Classics

Following the various 20th-century experiences of attempts to build socialist societies and worlds that resulted in the recent crisis of so-called "actually existing socialism," the critique of what Immanuel Wallerstein calls the "two-step" strategy became popularized and widely disseminated. This was the strategy that the majority of the world's antisystemic movements followed prior to the World Cultural Revolution of 1968: the plan was to "take state power" in order to later use control of the state apparatus or state power to "change the world."

In light of the attempts to build socialism prior to 1968, this critique of the gradualist strategy is essentially correct, but it does not imply a renunciation of the objective of taking state power: rather, it rejects subordinating the whole of the antisystemic social movement to the sole objective of conquering state power. The critique of the two-step strategy redefines the importance, place, moment, and specific character of anti-capitalist movements based on their true, deep objective: to radically do away with the capitalist social system and replace it with a new, non-capitalist society. The true objective of these movements, in other words, is to replace the current world with a new and *other* world that is just, fraternal, democratic, and free.

In the same post-1968 climate in which the critique of the two-step strategy was formulated, Michel Foucault reminded us that power and the relations of power were not exclusive to the spaces tied to the existence and action of states or even to the broader world of politics and the political. Instead, power and the relations of power are present across the social fabric, reproducing themselves as micro-powers present in practically all areas of human relations.

However, the micro-powers and forms of power to which Foucault alludes are not the same as the various forms of political or state power. Rather, Foucault alludes above all to the different varieties of social power, though this distinction has not prevented an unrecognized intermixing of social, political, and state power when the question of taking power is debated. In other words, when the objective of taking power or the rejection of this objective are discussed, it is often unclear if the question at hand is the seizure of state machinery as it currently exists with the intention of using it for different ends or if we are discussing the conquest of the *political space* that the state apparatus currently occupies in order to displace the old state and reappropriate the functions it formerly fulfilled (perhaps in a different way and under a different logic). Does taking power mean a total revolution in the whole realm

of politics which would completely alter the prevailing bad form of "managing public affairs" (i.e., a total revolution in the sphere of politics)? Or would that seizure of power instead be a kind of delocalization and deconcentration of power across the whole of the social fabric? In the latter case, we can imagine a kind of fragmentation and removal of state power and even political power from the social spaces of the family, factory, neighborhood, community, territory, and any other possible space of the human-social.

Without our realizing it, all of these dimensions often become mixed up when we debate the subject of whether or not to take power. For this reason, we think it appropriate to return to some concepts from the classics, particularly to the lessons of Marx himself. But this is not to impede us from thinking about the new or to paralyze our heuristic capacity within any rigid orthodoxy; instead, this return is intended to give us better tools for addressing the complex lessons of the new Latin American social movements, including, for example, the dignified and significant neo-Zapatista movement and the current movement of the Other Campaign.

Marx was clear in defining social power as the most general form of power, as a form of power that springs directly from the simple interconnection and basic metabolism between human beings. Through the simple fact of interacting with each other and gathering to carry out objectives, through simple cooperation and joint activity, human beings generate certain social force, a specific social power that will always be greater than the sum of its parts or the individual powers of different human subjects working collaboratively.

This social power is born out of gathering, association, or cooperation between human beings. It therefore finds expression in multiple forms and in all areas of social life: in the family and in couple or parent-child relationships, in the factory, in the classroom, in jails, and in hospitals. Social power is present in all kinds of spaces and human social, cultural, generational, and legal relationships. Naturally, it is also found within the sphere of politics.

This social power theorized by Michel Foucault, ubiquitous and omnipresent in all societies across human history, is always the real generative source of all possible political power and consequently of all state power. It is this social magma of strength and general capacity which makes cities spring up and fields bloom and creates the paintings of Filippo Lippi, the drawings of M.C. Escher, and the works of Mozart and Vivaldi. It is this many-faced social power that at some point in history became protocolized, institutionalized, and reconfigured to develop the human world of politics and the political, as well as political power and (later, in other dimensions) state power itself.

Consequently, in order to challenge established political power and the power of the ruling state, we must necessarily turn to society and the totality of social life, mobilizing different forms of social power as specific points of support for the struggle against the state and political forms of the power that rules today. This conclusion is evident in the long history of all antisystemic social movements: in organizing different groups, sectors, and social classes, these movements clearly configure forms of a *dissident* social power which from different social spaces is capable of challenging and sometimes even successfully overthrowing the dominant states and political powers of these movements' times. An antisystemic social movement that acts, mobilizes, and protests is always an expression of social power which struggles against the reigning political and state power. For this reason, the resources and possibilities of a social movement struggling against the dominant social system lie both in the sphere of culture (including the ideological, symbolic, and intellectual struggle in all its forms) and in social confrontation on all possible fronts, including economic and general material struggle, as well as directly political combat.

This explains why the Other Campaign and the social movements of Latin America and the world deploy on all these fronts of struggle, fighting against racial, social, generational, ethnic, and cultural discrimination, as well as against economic exploitation, social inequality, political despotism, cultural poverty, oppression, dispossession, humiliation, and social exclusion in all their forms.

For the same reason, it is the entire range of these struggles that constitutes the points of social support from which political power and the state are questioned and brought into crisis. The complete range of social struggle also represents the site which sees challenges to the bourgeois social system's domination and hegemony over not only politics but social life, economy, culture, and civilization in general.

This then explains how the outdated equation of the two-step strategy is beginning to change. The gradualist program of first taking power and only then changing the world is starting to be replaced by the new strategy of changing the world immediately, here, now, and everywhere, confronting the forms of capitalist social power in every space they occupy across the fabric of society in order to ubiquitously nurture the kernels and spaces of a new world. All of this must happen at the same time as we support each other in the new spaces we snatch from capitalism inch by inch, not in order to seize the state and political power which currently exist but to revolutionize these, subvert

and dismantle capitalism, and build another, radically different mode of political relations and a totally different form of managing the collective affairs of the social community.

In observing the history and practice of the new Latin American social movements—including Mexican neo-Zapatismo, Brazil's Landless Workers Movement (MST), the *piqueteros* of Argentina, and the indigenous communities of Bolivia and Ecuador—it is clear that these movements have created and are constantly recreating different forms of social counter-power. These forms are local, territorial, symbolic, and spatial as well as social, cultural, economic, and political. At the same time as they prefigure a new and other world that is still possible, these forms of social counter-power are clear platforms for everyday struggle against the political powers and states now dominant in these movements' respective societies.

Because if challenges to dominant state and/or political powers are made by returning to the sphere of the social and from the points of support and the platforms that represent particular forms of that social power, it is then clear that this challenge obliges those points of support and forms of social power to transform into clear social counter-powers. In other words, they must become new forms of social power that, in opposing the power of the state and hegemonic political power, constitute and consolidate themselves as real powers—alternative, contrary, and fundamentally different to the old political and state power.

This, however, should not be understood to mean that counter-power should obey the same logic that power does. The truth is precisely the opposite: to be a real alternative and a real counter-power to hegemonic state and political powers, counter-power must be guided by another logic, dynamic, and perspective radically different to those of the dominant powers. In the case of the societies which exist across the world today, their logic, dynamic, and perspective must now and forever be clearly anti-capitalist and positioned from below and to the left.

It is precisely this possible construction of an alternative social counter-power that allows for a differentiation between the different social movements currently developing within the world's capitalist societies. Within the vast range of these social movements, many are simply the direct expression of the discontent, weariness, and insubordination created by the everyday relations and practices of exploitation, despotism, discrimination, dispossession, inequality, humiliation, and exclusion that characterize contemporary capitalism. These are the most reactive and defensive movements. But alongside

these are genuinely antisystemic and anti-capitalist social movements, with a more permanent and offensive character, that represent genuine alternatives to the existing social order.

Particular movements, such as a protest against an instance of electoral fraud, or some variants of feminist, ecological, or student movements, etc. are often of a conjunctural, fleeting, limited, or highly localized and specific character, rapidly dissolving when their leaders lose heart and act to moderate popular protest, or when a party or organization's gender quotas are met, or when questions concerning the ecological impact of a particular government project are answered, or when price subsidies for university transportation are maintained, etc.

Truly anti-capitalist and antisystemic movements, on the other hand, are only consolidated as such if they *transcend* this conjunctural, ephemeral, limited character and inscribe themselves within the logic of generating a true social counter-power which is alternative to the state, political, and social powers that currently dominant. Social counter-power can therefore only be generated from within the heart of society itself and the whole of the vast fabric of society. It can only be created, in other words, "from below and to the left," from the broad set of *subaltern* classes, sectors, and social groups and within the horizon of a radical social transformation and the total emancipation of those same subaltern social actors.

On the Omnipotent Weakness of the State and Political Power

While social power is multifaceted and ubiquitous (as well as being the natural space and among the central contents of antisystemic social movements), political power is always derived from and dependent on social power and is therefore much more enclosed and specified in its possible forms. This is true despite the fact that political power has for millennia monopolized the functions of the political domination, control, and order of societies.

Another idea that runs through many of Marx's texts is the concept that political society is nothing more than the "official expression" of civil society and is therefore only a derivative, deformed, and ossified form of plural civil society. This brings Marx to insist on the idea that the whole realm of politics is not and can never be a self-explaining totality. In other words, the end goal of politics cannot be politics itself. Politics exists to manage economic,

social, and cultural problems, but not political ones. Political power does not exist for political power—for itself—or for merely political ends, but rather for ends that are *external* to politics, for *extra-political* ends. That is, politics exists to consolidate a social order, or to reproduce a cultural hegemony, or to legitimize a particular economic structure or organization. And if the ends of politics are always extra-political or external to politics itself and the idea that politics exists only to reproduce itself is a delirium, it is from here that we get the unhinged, even literarily emblematic figure of those who seek political power for power's sake, creating a perversion utterly devoid of sense.

We are thus reminded that the 'political' is nothing but a derivative form of the social and that political power is consequently a mere derivative variant of social power. Butif political power finds in itself neither the conditions of its own explanation or the premises of its self-reproduction, then all the forms, structures, relations, and apparatuses that take on life within political power make sense only to the degree that they are supported by particular social forces, or given economic classes and economic, or specific cultural processes and groups.

For this reason, the profound crisis today experienced by the whole of the Mexican political class (variants of which are being repeated across Latin America and the world) is due in part to the fact that this class no longer represents anyone but itself. It has lost any significant connection to social movements, to real social forces, and even to the different sectors, groups, and classes of Mexican society.

If, then, when we speak of "taking power" this phrase means the above-mentioned political power, we must remember that political power is not reduceable to the state. Although the state is, of course, one of its constituent elements, political power is also comprised of different political parties and organizations, both those that occupy dominant positions as well as the so-called opposition. Taking power would therefore mean conquering not only the state but also these likewise-political parties and organizations.

But beyond the frequent confusion between state and political power, the issue is that the presently dominant political power (which is what dominates the existing state) in Mexico and in every country is dominant precisely because it has the support of the social classes and groups which are dominant on the economic level but also on the social and cultural levels. These dominant classes and groups are able to exert their control because they are the owners of the money, the factories, and the businesses, and in their hands are

the mechanisms of control, social domination, and the legitimation of the dominant ideology and culture.

Their global social control is expressed in the sphere of politics as their control of the state apparatus, and this control can only be dismantled with the counterweight of social power. This social power must confront not only the domination of the hegemonic classes on all levels of the social fabric where it is deployed, but must also represent a social force so massive that it is able to successfully challenge and defeat the state power which is currently dominant. In recent years, this fact has been demonstrated by the peoples of Bolivia, Ecuador, and Argentina, whose social movements have managed to peacefully overthrow various presidents simply by overwhelmingly asserting their rejection of these rulers' unpopular policies. In other words, these social movements win by showing their clear status as figures of social counter-power.

If the objective is merely to take the power of the state without changing the world, that is possible through elections, or by gaining control of a political party, or by establishing a new party that briefly mobilizes voters. In other words, if the objective is simply to take state power, this could be done by operating within the narrow framework of the sphere of politics and by establishing only weak and passing connections with the rest of the social fabric. But if the goal is to radically change the world, this is only possible by exiting the limited space of political power and expelling the domination of the existing state from all of society's spaces and all forms of social power, disputing the state's hegemony on all fronts of social reality and creating a social counter-power so massive and ubiquitous that it will allow for a radical modification of all forms of political power and the relationships that power establishes between those who wield it and those who endure it.

This kind of process is summed up in the profound oxymoron advanced by the neo-Zapatistas that asserts that those who lead must "lead by obeying." In other words, those who wield the political and state power of command must do so while obeying the people, respecting their demands, monitoring the fulfillment of popular interests, and constantly submitting to the will of the vast subaltern social classes and groups.

As stated by the slogan found at the very entrance of all Zapatista Caracols, this new and truly popular counter-power is guided by the principle that "here the people command and the government obeys." This completely *revolutionizes* the relation of state and political power to those who wield it and those who still live under it.

In reuniting the functions of command and obedience and in resituating the function of command in the vast pyramid of the 'governed' instead of their 'governors,' the relations of state and political power are revolutionized. It is thus no longer possible to continue discussing the old traditional politics which human beings have known since the time of Aristotle: all that can be discussed now is an Other Politics, totally divergent from the political activity that societies developed over 2,500 years and that is now dying before our very eyes.

From the reunification and inversion of the functions of command and obedience, this death of traditional politics and the birth of the Other Politics also radically alters the very essence of what the state, state power, and political power are and might be, as well as the sphere of human politics as it has existed until now. This total modification thus explains the reason that the neo-Zapatistas have insisted that the point for them is not simply to take power, but to radically revolutionize it. For the neo-Zapatistas, the point is to remove the existing state and to set up in its place an Other Government that leads by obeying, and, in the space currently occupied by political parties and organizations, to establish very other mass social organizations guided by the logic of an Other Politics totally different to contemporary politics.

Not by coincidence, there is a direct connection here with the experiences of the Paris Commune, the Russian soviets, the workers' councils of Italy, and the Chinese Cultural Revolution, among other examples. These are clear historical examples of generating popular counter-power, and despite their divergent results, they repeatedly display lessons that exemplify that the point is not simply to seize state power and use it for different ends or even to seize political power to wield it for the benefit of the people. The lessons of these experiences show that the point is to radically revolutionize the state apparatus and political structures and relations, destroying all of these and replacing them with a new form of administering the collective problems of communities and a new way of managing public affairs in general.

For this reason, as Marx clearly stated, the point is not for the working class to "lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes" but to *destroy* that machinery. This implies, for example, the army and police being replaced by the armed people and the old bureaucracy disappearing and being replaced by regular citizens. At the same time, the salaries of officials are reduced to the average wage of a worker (or, as in the case of the neo-Zapatista Councils of Good Government, are simply done away with) and all holders of public office become directly responsible to their constituents and immediately revocable at any time, in addition to being constantly rotating.

In this way, more than seizing the power of the state, the point is to destroy the state and to replace it with a rational apparatus for managing a community's collective affairs. The nature of this apparatus means that it can hardly retain the old name of 'state.' The same happens in the sphere of politics. More than taking political power, the point is to radically revolutionize the way that politics is understood and wielded. This means, for example, demystifying (as the Paris Commune, soviets, and neo-Zapatista Councils of Good Government did) the absurd idea that politics is a complex activity reserved for a handful of highly qualified individuals, usually members of the dominant elite, in order to assume the simple reality that politics is a basic, simple activity that can be carried out by an ordinary citizen.

Likewise, it becomes necessary to transcend the idea of politics as being reserved for certain specific times (like election season) and privileged places (like parliaments or presidential palaces) and come to understand politics as a daily affair present in all human spaces, from the home to the classroom to the street, city, fields, and the university, among many others. It is also necessary to overcome the dominant instrumentalist understanding of politics in which the ends justify the means and principles are sacrificed to egotistical interests and material benefits. Politics must instead be understood as an activity in which the means matter just as much as the ends and in which ethical criteria must go before any other, respecting principles, memory, and ancestors. The only compensation for it must be the satisfaction of duty fulfilled. This is therefore another politics, another way of seeing and wielding power that can no longer go under the old name of 'politics' and has very little to do with the activity called politics that was invented in ancient Greece and is now in terminal decline.

This other politics is no longer based on outdated formal, delegative, so-called representative democracy—with its complicated vision of executive, legislative, and judicial powers, and its fetishism of the sacrosanct principle of 'majorities' and 'minorities'—but rather on a real, direct, and participative democracy. In this latter form of democracy, plenary assemblies make the fundamental decisions and 'delegates' are constantly rotating, directly responsible, and permanently revocable at any moment. Their action is guided by the principle of leading by obeying and simplifies the administration of all common affairs under a logic that, far from mechanically imposing the will of the 'majority' (even if this majority is as slight as 51%), attempts to build broad and reasoned consensus. At the same time, this logic incorporates the perspectives of so-called 'minorities' in a permanent dialogical relationship.

Thus, creating popular counter-power does not mean seizing state power or political power, but neither is it equal to forgetting the state or ignoring its existence or the threat that it in many senses represents. Neither does creating popular counter-power mean forgetting the role of the world of politics and the permanent risks it implies—such as cooptation, neutralization, instrumentalization, even destruction—for social movements, both antisystemic and in general. Rather, under the logic explained above, to build popular counter-power is to advance in the creation of a potent antisystemic social movement that, embodying a growing social power that is increasingly present across the entire social fabric, can destroy the old state and do away with the old politics and political class tied to that state in order to install a government that leads by obeying and that practices an Other Politics.

From Below and to the Left

If the point is to gradually create popular and subaltern counter-power it is clear that this counter-power cannot flow from the peak of the social pyramid, from those above, i.e., from those who dominate, exploit, and humiliate others, living at the expense of others' work and efforts.

This assertion is supported by the historical experience of many 20th-century social movements that managed to take state power, only to later be perverted by and subsumed into the dominant logic of capitalism. Political and state power possess powerful mechanisms of perversion and seduction that constantly deform the initiatives and triumphs achieved by those below: by a society's subaltern classes and sectors.

Accordingly, if popular counter-power seeks to avoid becoming deformed by occupying the spaces previously occupied by the state and the political class, it must be radical in its approach to its work and always loyal to its origins and original bases of support. In other words, popular counter-power must advance radically in destroying the old state and completely revolutionizing the old politics at the same time as it advances steadfastly as a social movement of those below and to the left. This means that instead of subordinating the social movement to the logic of the old politics and the old state, the goal now is to make the logic of the movement's social power prevail in all circumstances. This is the social logic of popular counter-power: it is on this basis that the new space of politics and the state are restructured and that power and its relations are revolutionized—as are its practices, functions, meaning,

nature, and very essence—from the "below and to the left" perspective characteristic of society's subaltern sectors and classes.

This is the logic of those below, of the subalterns, and it must also be a left-wing logic, in the sense referred to above. It cannot be content with a single protest against injustice or to carry out only defensive and reactive action against oppression: it must offensively and actively advance toward the constitution of popular counter-power and the creation of another world—alternative and non-capitalist—that we can set against the current capitalist social system, now in its terminal crisis and stage of total chaos.

This is the double aspect of the necessarily anti-capitalist logic of popular counter-power. While on one hand it clearly situates itself on the point of view of those below—the vast subaltern sectors and classes—on the other hand it necessarily inscribes itself within perspective of the Left. The latter approach always looks to the "bad side" of things and of history in order to find in them not only the root and source of their outdatedness but also and above all to find the seed which from the *negative side* of the processes and realities we examine grows slowly underground before one day bursting into view as a new and different future, qualitatively distinct from our actual present.

This has clearly been reflected in the 13 years of the EZLN's public life, as well as in the first year of the intense and fruitful activity of the Other Campaign. It makes itself present as well in the most advanced and genuinely antisystemic social movements of contemporary Latin America.

Is the point, then, to "change the world without taking power?" Not at all. Rather, the point is to "change the world by revolutionizing power." For this purpose, we must be able to distinguish between state power, political power, and social power. It is precisely from certain spaces of this social power, from radically antisystemic and anti-capitalist social movements, that we will destroy the power of the state instead of seizing it and suppress political power instead of taking it. It is from these movements that we will establish a radically new form of governance, based on the logic of leading by obeying, and a radically new way of doing politics—a very Other Politics.

There is no doubt that a future exists that does not belong to those who today exploit, dominate, dispossess, and humiliate. By generating counter-powers from below and to the left, we can bet that that future will finally be ours. Or, better said, not ours: that future will belong to everyone.

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Appendix 2

THE ZAPATISTA GAZE: LOOKING (TO AND FROM) BELOW AND TO THE LEFT

> "Z—ZAPATISTA. Heriberto stares at the dark-skinned gaze of a photo of General Emiliano Zapata. He gazes at it and at himself in those eyes that reproach, protest, demand."
> Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, "Abecedario para Escarabajos" (Alphabet for Beetles), 1996.

The Gaze That Sees Farther

More than 26 years after its birth and 16 years since its healthy public irruption, no one now doubts the worldwide relevance or the universal significance of Mexican neo-Zapatismo. Despite military and paramilitary harassment (which have intensified greatly over the last three years with the criminal support of the Mexican state) and beyond the complicit or self-serving silence of the mass media and part of the Mexican intelligentsia, neo-Zapatismo continues to be an obligatory point of reference and a source of lessons for the vast array of the planet's anti-capitalist and antisystemic struggles. This holds true for the World Social Forum, indigenous struggles across Latin America, and the various radical social movements fighting today in Europe, Africa, the United States, and Asia.

Among many other reasons, the universal value and significance of the neo-Zapatista experience is linked to the fact that the uprising of January 1, 1994, was precisely the movement that inaugurated the *new global cycle* of anti-capitalist protest following the defeat of 1989.[1] Moving through the different

1 This thesis has been repeatedly asserted by Immanuel Wallerstein; cf. several of the essays included in his book *Historia y dilemas de los movimientos antisistémicos*, Contrahistorias,

seasons represented by the First Intergalactic Gathering for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism (1996), the Seattle protests of 1999 and subsequent protests in Genoa, Prague, Barcelona, etc., and the various iterations of the World Social Forum, this cycle continues today, in these difficult but encouraging first days of 2010.

In addition to igniting this ongoing cycle of antisystemic struggles, neo-Zapatismo has functioned over the past 15 years as a source of inspiration and lessons for many of the world's anti-capitalist and antisystemic movements. The lessons of Zapatista autonomy are debated by Argentina's *piquetero* movements; the implications of the neo-Zapatista defense of Mother Earth are discussed by the global network of the Vía Campesina; ways are sought of reinventing and adapting the neo-Zapatista "Enough!" to the current conditions of France, Greece, Germany, and the United States; parallels are sought between the current liberation struggle of the Kurdish people and the dignified struggle of the neo-Zapatistas.

When the universal implications of leading by obeying are debated in France, for example; when the validity of the pedagogical experience of the neo-Zapatista schools is debated by the indigenous movement of Colombia in the Cauca region; when the novelty, depth, and freshness of the movement's speeches dazzle in Japan; when the experience of the Other Campaign is compared with that of the World Social Forum or with the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement's Popular Project for Contemporary Brazil; in all these cases, the planetary echoes of the neo-Zapatista movement continue to grow and multiply. This was recently affirmed at the three Gatherings of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World, held between the end of 2006 and the beginning of 2008, and at the First World Festival of Dignified Rage, held at the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009.[2]

Mexico, See also Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Chiapas, Planeta Tierra*, Contrahistorias, 6th ed., Mexico, 2010.

2 Regarding the diverse and ubiquitous planetary echoes of Mexican neo-Zapatismo, whose profound social and historical raisons d'être have not yet been adequately explained by contemporary social science, it should be remembered that even in 1996, Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos was asking "What is it that is happening in the mountains of the Mexican southeast that finds an echo and mirror in the streets of Europe, the slums of Asia, the fields of the Americas, the towns of Africa, and the houses of Oceania?" in his text "Un sueño soñado en los cinco continentes", collected in *Crónicas Intergalácticas: Primer Encuentro Intercontinental por la Humanidad y contra el Neoliberalismo*, EZLN, Mexico, 1996. This question has yet to be fully answered. See also Subcomandante Marcos, *El sueño zapatista (entrevista con Yvon Le Bot)*, Plaza y Janés, Barcelona, 1997; Hermann Bellinghausen,

Neo-Zapatismo's growing and multifaceted impact, tied to the richness and universality of its central lessons, therefore obliges truly critical intellectuals and social scientists to more carefully analyze not only the movement's various complex practices but also its concrete experiences, central theoretical assertions, and different analytical proposals. Among these are the peculiarity and implications of the particular neo-Zapatista "gaze." It is notable that, beginning with the initiation of neo-Zapatismo's third stage[3] in June 2005 with the publication of the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle, the neo-Zapatista thesis on the importance of our *gaze*—the relevance, in other words, of consciously assessing *where* we want to look to as well as *from where* and the ways *in which* we look—takes on strength.

This triple question has on a first level been responded to by neo-Zapatismo with the affirmation that what is needed is to *look below and to the left*, setting this Zapatista gaze against the gaze of power, the gaze which corresponds to the dominant ideology and the reproduction of the capitalist social system. The moment in which this insistence on always looking to and from below gained strength was precisely the moment in which the dignified indigenous neo-Zapatista movement decided to ally with the vast gamut of Mexico's subaltern classes, groups, and sectors (in other words, with the whole vast universe of "those below") to form the national movement of the Other Campaign. Likewise, the moment in which neo-Zapatismo and the nascent Other Campaign declared themselves to be openly and radically

"Revuelta zapatista, ocho años", in *La Jornada*, December 31, 2001; Raúl Zibechi, "Los impactos del zapatismo en América Latina", in *La fogata digital*, http://www.lafogata.org/zibechi, 2003, and "El zapatismo y América Latina: La Otra y nosotros", in *Contrahistorias* 6, Mexico, 2006; Sergio Rodríguez Lascano, "La Sexta: 'la razón y la ira'", in *Rebeldía* 33, July 2005, Guiomar Rovira, *Zapatistas sin fronteras*, Ediciones Era, Mexico, 2009; and Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "Planeta Tierra: los movimientos antisistémicos hoy", in *Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, *1*(16), Quilmes, Argentina, 2009.

3 We refer to *three* stages in the history of neo-Zapatismo in keeping with the spirit proposed by the Zapatista compañeros themselves when, celebrating their movement's tenth and twentieth anniversaries in 2004, they referenced two stages: the stage of Fire (November 1983 to January 1, 1994) and the stage of the Word (January 1994–2004 and shortly afterwards). Later, in the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle, they explicitly announced the transition to a new stage. It is clear that the Sixth Declaration closes the second stage and inaugurates a third stage which gives meaning to the ongoing project of the Other Campaign. On this point, cf. "Sexta Declaración de la Selva Lacandona", in *La Jornada*, June 29 and 30 and July 1, 2005. See also Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas "Una aproximación a La Otra Campaña (entrevista)", in *Contrahistorias* 7, Mexico, 2006.

anti-capitalist and antisystemic saw the strengthening of the demand to look not only to and from below but to and from the left.[4]

Evidently, this gazing below and to the left has a profound double meaning. It means looking to the depths of society but also seeing those depths from within the depths themselves, from the perspective of the victims. Likewise, it means to direct our attention to the left—to conflict, rebellion, and Hegel's "bad side of history"—with a left-wing approach, a perspective that is always critical, emancipatory, and liberating.

As clearly shown by the social history of the 20th century, it is not enough to look downward, to take subaltern classes, social movements, or expressed, exploited, and discriminated groups as mere 'objects' of study. While it is evident that we must always look *to* below—look carefully at the problems, oppressions, conditions, life, desires, exploitation, and dreams of those below—we must not observe from the disdainful and self-satisfied position of the powerful or from the half-guilty and/or compassionate perspective of the middle classes. Instead, we must see from the point of view of the victims of history themselves,[5] from below and from the horizon of self-perception of the subaltern classes.

This means seeing exploitation as an unjust advantage, seeing power and the rich as ferocious enemies, seeing oppression and discrimination as affronts, and seeing the dominant ideology and culture as conscious deceptions and open lies. It means seeing the world and problems of those below and seeing the 'below' itself through the eyes of history's subalterns. But though it is necessary to look below and from the perspective of the victims, this is not enough to fill out all the dimensions of the neo-Zapatista gaze. This gaze to

4 For this reason, Subcomandante Marcos notes that looking below and to the left "is not the same thing as looking from above or from the same level," latter adding that "he who looks to below from the same level and does so resisting does so to recognize and to recognize himself" and that "this gaze should not end here, for that recognition and identification must organize to convert the resistance struggle into a struggle for transformation," in his essay "Durito y una de miradas y herencias", in *Rebeldía* 37, November 2005.

5 The point of view of the victims is addressed by authors such as Walter Benjamin in his *Tesis sobre la historia y otros fragmentos*, Contrahistorias, Mexico, 2005; Edward Palmer Thompson, in the collection of his essays compiled in *Costumbres en común*, Crítica, Barcelona, 1995; and Carlo Ginzburg, in *El queso y los gusanos*, Muchnik, Barcelona, 1981, among others. On these theses of social history and the double significance of looking *to* and *from* below, see also Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Antimanual del mal historiador*, Ed. Contrahistorias, 13th ed., Mexico, 2008, and several of the essays included in *Retratos para la historia*, Contrahistorias, Mexico, 2006.

and from below is not indiscriminate: it consciously concentrates on looking 'to' the left side and 'from' the left side of that same below. This left side is nothing other than the bad side of Hegelian history, the negative side of reality: the side of history which is disruptive, conflicted, revelatory, dialectical, and finally transformative.

In looking to below, the neo-Zapatista gaze seeks not harmony but conflict; not achievements and triumphs but the ruins and debris those triumphs leave behind; not terse and ordered memory but repressed, suffocated, silenced counter-memories; not linear, peaceful, smiling history but the unstable and rough counter-history that appears when we brush history against the grain. This gaze *to* the left brings out the contradictions and eternal conflict in things and processes, as the Frankfurt School taught us.[6] Alongside the sweet apple we bite into, this gaze shows us the worm always necessarily present within that apple; it takes a work of art that gives us ecstasy and shows it to be a documentation of the barbarity that work comes out of and rests upon; it shows us the wonderful invention of cinema as a complicated but inescapable method of annihilating the developments of great theater.

This gaze to the left must also be a gaze *from* the left: a gaze that allows for the blooming of the negativity that is always present in human events, phenomena, and processes in order to evince and consciously strengthen their transformative dimension, emancipatory meaning, and liberating, revolutionary logic.

It is not enough to show the hidden conflict and bad side of society and history if we are not simultaneously capable of locating, within that contradiction and negativity, the seeds of a future which is not only different but better. For this reason, when the perspective of the victims is taken up from the left side of the below, it becomes the perspective of the *rebel* victims, of the oppressed who struggle and liberate themselves, of the exploited who reclaim their means of production and do away with the basis of their own exploitation. It becomes the perspective of history's subalterns, forever finding multiple ways to smash the various forms of their subalternity.

For this reason, the neo-Zapatista gaze organizes itself in order to "transform the resistance struggle into a struggle for transformation," and for this reason the meaning of popular counter-memory is to keep alive and active the memories that nurture that resistance and desire for transformation. Counter-history is a hammer of the oppressed, not only against dull and empty official

6 On these contributions of the Frankfurt School, see *Contrahistorias* 9, Mexico, 2007.

academic history but also and above all against the real history of domination and insults inflicted by the dominant classes against the dominated subalterns of the social below. For the same reason, Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos can summarize the "teaching to look" that is the "complicated pedagogy" of Elias Contreras (the EZLN's "Investigation Commission") in its ability to understand not only the "victims of the system" but its understanding of these as "victims who rebel" against the capitalist system itself.[7]

Using this four-part definition, this gaze to and from below and to and from the left can be nothing other than a radically critical, anti-capitalist, and antisystemic gaze. From this fourfold determination, the Zapatista gaze begins by locating, for example, capitalist exploitation (looking below), later assessing it as a recurring injustice in which a person who works a great deal lives badly, and another who does not work at all lives very well (looking below). This, in the present conditions of enormous technological development which could reduce everyone's work to a minimum, is a senseless and obvious contradiction (looking to the left)—in evincing firstly the irrationality of the artificial scarcity which capitalism reproduces and secondly the obstructed but already existing potential for the quasi-abolition of human labor through the automatization of labor processes)—that cries out for the abolition of exploitation and its substitution by a society free from the yoke of work (looking from the left).

This profoundly anti-capitalist and antisystemic sense of the neo-Zapatista gaze links it to all traditions of genuinely critical social thought which, from Marx until our own times, mark the entire development of the social sciences over the last 150 years. These critical traditions also allow us to delve somewhat into the implications of the neo-Zapatista way of seeing.

The Gaze That Illuminates What Is Missing, What Is Incomplete

The neo-Zapatista gaze is defined by *what* it sees, by looking to the social below and its hidden, conflictive, left side. It is likewise defined by the place *from which* it sees, from the social below which is the perspective of social and historical victims who are also rebellious and unbowed. In its emphasis on

7 These affirmations are found in Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, "Una certeza, dos dudas y una carta inconclusa", in *Rebeldía* 43, June 2006, pp. 69 and 70. See also Sergio Rodríguez Lascano, "¿Otra teoría? Sí, abajo y a la izquierda", in *Rebeldía* 41, April 2006.

discovering the future in the now, in making bloom the emancipatory and liberatory elements of those victims' practices of resistance and transformation, the neo-Zapatista gaze also defined by its particular *mode of seeing*, by the *way in which it observes*.

That neo-Zapatista way of seeing is and must necessarily be *critical*: it is skeptical toward what exists, vigilant toward what it receives and inherits, and keeps its distance from what appears obvious, natural, and supposedly rational. It takes this attitude because the social reality in which we live is a reality that was *built by human beings* over long historical processes and is a reality that today continues to be capitalist, classist, racist, patriarchal, discriminatory, and fundamentally prehistoric.[8] Our reality is therefore one which expresses all of these characteristics in the vast collection of its discourses, its language, its various forms of practical materialization, its everyday manifestations, and the whole spectrum of its various incarnations.

For this reason, as demonstrated by all traditions of critical social thought from Marx to E. P. Thompson and Immanuel Wallerstein, the critical and distanced neo-Zapatista gaze can only affirm itself if it ventures to unlearn what it has learned, to unthink its most basic concepts and categories, to always apply the process of 'estrangement' when analyzing phenomena and processes. Only in this way can it leave behind the usual path of thought and remake it in a very *other* manner, with other paths, another logic and other, new, not-yet-invented terms and conceptual tools; with new and very other mechanisms for thinking about and seeing reality.

In Foucauldian terms, the neo-Zapatista gaze, which entwines with and clearly extends the tradition inaugurated by Marx of genuinely critical ways of seeing and thinking, is nothing other than a first step on the path of the necessary construction of a new and very other non-capitalist, non-classist,

8 We use "prehistoric" in the precise sense in which Marx used it to discuss all human societies divided into social classes: as parts of a long prehistory of humanity, as part of a "Kingdom of Necessity" within history, remembering happily that capitalism is the *final* historical stage of that long human prehistory. On this subject, cf. Karl Marx, *El Capital*, 8 vols., Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1975–81, and *Elementos fundamentales para la crítica de la economía política: Grundrisse*, 3 vols., Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1971–76. On some major implications of this thesis which place contemporary social movements in the position of being not only anti-capitalist but also antisystemic, cf. Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "La Digna Rabia: tan anticapitalista como también radicalmente antisistémica", in *Contrahistorias* 13, Mexico, 2009.

and non-prehistoric episteme.[9] The neo-Zapatista gaze thus sees (as explained by Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos) as if through an "inverted periscope": instead of seeing the outside world from the depths of the sea, the neo-Zapatista gaze looks to the depths of reality from the surface (and from beyond the surface), looking "backwards" and against the grain of the gaze of power, of the gaze derived from and corresponding to the hegemonic and dominant ideology.

Moreover, instead of concentrating on a single point, looking only 'up close' or 'from a distance,' the neo-Zapatista gaze is able to look from near and far alternately and in combination. In other words, it is capable of looking simultaneously at the different historical times concentrated in each historical moment and circumstance and of sifting through their different densities and relevances in order to critically explain a given present. As Subcomandante Marcos affirmed with a phrase that recalls Braudel's historical times, "many times glance out through the gaze. And this gaze has a color, and it shines brown."[10] This complex gaze addresses the different historical times and can therefore see from 'close up' and 'far away' at the same time, simultaneously dreaming and struggling, without becoming bogged down in the now or losing the concrete path that will take us to the tomorrow for which we are now fighting. "The night will come in which we begin to walk through it to reach the day. If we see it only from close up, we'll just stay there. If we see it only from far away, we'll trip and lose the path […] When you dream you have to look at the star up above, but when you struggle you have to see the hand that the star shines on. That's what living is. A continuous raising and lowering of the gaze."[11]

This dense and manifold gaze also explains, for example, the constant use of oxymorons in neo-Zapatista discourse. Facing the increasingly flagrant

9 Regarding this concept of the episteme, cf. Michel Foucault, *Las palabras y las cosas*, Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1968. We believe that the immense richness of the entirety of Foucault's work lies precisely in its inexhaustible capacity for *critically dissolving* the false logic and supposed "naturalness" of many of our most common concepts and categories, including those of madness, justice, science, power, government, and sexuality, among many others. On this point, cf. Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "Michel Foucault en el espejo de Clío", in *Retratos para la historia*, op. cit.

10 Marcos uses the word *moreno*, referencing the brown skin of indigenous peoples. – Trans.

11 For the two quotes included in this paragraph, cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, "Abecedario para Escarabajos", in *Rebeldía* 2, Mexico, 2002, p. 8, and "Las políticas y las bolsas (las nuestras y las de ellos)" in *Crónicas Intergalácticas: Primer Encuentro Intercontinental por la Humanidad y contra el Neoliberalismo*, op. cit.

and pathetic irrationality that characterizes dominant thought and the gaze of power in their unsustainable hopes of hiding the capitalist system's transformation into its present destructive chaos, the only possible alternative is the challenging affirmation of paradoxical thought, of thinking using oxymorons. To understand these oxymorons, we are obliged to explicitly recognize the unspoken assumptions of our most basic categories; we are compelled to examine them critically under a new, totally different light.

One of these oxymorons is the idea of an army of shadows that fights to reach the light that will kill those same shadows—in other words, an army that fights to negate itself, to create a world in which armies do not and cannot exist. Another is a "tender, unchained rage" born not out of anger and negation but out of love for others and a profound affirmation of life. There is also "dignified rage": far from wanting to destroy everything, the central objective of this rage is to build roads and bridges toward a new and different world which is neither capitalist nor prehistoric.

The neo-Zapatista gaze also affirms other ways of seeing which are radically incompatible with the capitalist and prehistoric gaze. These anti-capitalist, antisystemic ways of seeing sink their roots down to features derived from the indigenous identity of the neo-Zapatista movement as well as many of the primary lessons of left-wing and critical thought derived from Marx. As is well known, upon fusing in the now-famous mountains of the Mexican southeast, these features and lessons gave rise to the dignified indigenous neo-Zapatista movement, and with it these characteristics of the neo-Zapatista gaze. For example, the conscious choice to try to see the world not from the 'I' but from the 'we,' thus recreating a modern version of ancient communitarian structures. This new structure reaffirms the predominance of the collective over the individuals who comprise it in order to strike at the roots of the outrageous excesses resulting from the egotistical and possessive individualism of the capitalist world.

Another neo-Zapatista way of seeing is their conception of nature as Mother Earth, as the source of all human life. This idea not only questions the understanding of land and nature as commodities but also critiques the instrumentalized and degraded conception of land as something that can be converted into the 'property' of human beings; this conception is itself the result of an understanding of humans as being absolutely external to nature. Another Zapatista way of seeing is the idea of politics as being tied to ethics and structured around the principle of leading by obeying. This idea completely shatters the contemporary understanding of politics as separate from

and emptied of the ethical, the social, and the historical—an understanding that cynically affirms that the ends justify the means. This contemporary idea of politics also believes itself to be a highly complex and sophisticated activity in which the few—the elites, the professionals—hold the monopoly on a despotic leadership and the many—the subalterns, the masses of citizens—are humiliatingly obliged to obey.

Moreover, we also find the recuperation of popular wisdom and knowledge through clues (of which Old Antonio and Elías Contreras are the custodians). This knowledge openly dismantles the false hierarchies of scholarly, bookish, and academic knowledge as 'superior' to popular and indication-based knowledge born out of the direct experience and acute observation of reality sifted out over the millennia.

This profound questioning reaches the level of a radical and absolute challenge when the neo-Zapatistas affirm that we think with the heart and feel with the brain, a statement that throws into question our age-old division between reason and emotion, between thinking and feeling. In this way, the neo-Zapatistas totally invalidate the poet who, when he expresses the heartbreak typical of the capitalist world affirms that "what reason says, feeling does not understand, since what the heart speaks, thought cannot grasp."[12]

On the basis of using oxymorons, paradoxical thinking, and decentralized anti-capitalist and antisystemic forms of addressing problems, the neo-Zapatista way of thinking permits even the redefinition of existing terms, renewing the current meanings of important ideas that have been emptied of their content, such as democracy, freedom, and justice, among others.

Once again, through their own practices and concrete experiences of struggle, the neo-Zapatistas recall that the original meaning of the word democracy is that which corresponds to its direct etymological roots in Greek: government of the people. This is not government over the people or against the people, but neither is it government 'for,' 'in the name of,' or 'in representation of' the people: democracy is the *direct, unmediated government of the people themselves*. Given that the people are the immense majority of any human group, democracy, in its genuine original sense, can only be the self-government of the people over themselves.

12 On the examples listed in the last four paragraphs, cf. Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Mandar obedeciendo: Las lecciones políticas del neozapatismo mexicano*, Contrahistorias, 5th ed., Mexico, 2010, and "Los movimientos antisistémicos de América Latina y su lucha por la tierra en el siglo XXI", in *Contrahistorias* 13, Mexico, 2009.

Far from the delegative, derivative, representative formal democracy that has supplanted it, popular self-government rests upon forms of *direct democracy*, the central predominance of the general assembly, and the construction of organs of government that lead by obeying. This is the kind of democracy that exists right now in the Councils of Good Government and Caracols of the neo-Zapatista communities of Chiapas. It is no coincidence that this radical and anti-capitalist redefinition of democracy, stemming from the neo-Zapatista gaze, is repeated across all the principal antisystemic movements of Latin America (with, of course, the specificities particular to each place).[13]

The neo-Zapatista gaze also, for example, allows us to shatter the lie represented by the idea of justice which is defended by the gaze of the powerful. The bourgeois conception of justice sees justice as a group of rules and norms that apply equally to each member of a society—a neutral and impartial mechanism that distributes 'prizes' and 'punishments' (i.e., protection and sanctions) to citizens according to their individual behavior, which is either 'good' or 'bad,' correct or incorrect. But this illusory idea of justice forgets the fact that, though we are supposedly all 'equal before the law,' there exists a handful of people who are 'more equal than others,' so to speak. It is not the same to be able to pay for a lawyer with expert knowledge of the law as it is to be defended by a bored public defender who feels no commitment to his clients. It is not the same to have ties to and power over judges, prosecutors, witnesses—even over complainants—as it is to stand alone and unprotected before the judicial apparatus.

And all of this without taking into consideration *who* it is that establishes the codes that divide bad from good in bourgeois law, which was created to defend the rich and their private property, to strengthen their state, and to reproduce the entirety of their capitalist social system. Moreover, bourgeois law was created to openly criminalize any form of rebellion, protest, or radical and open struggle against capitalism itself.

In this context, the neo-Zapatista understanding of justice presents a shining light. This concept radically proposes to transcend the limited idea of applying an equal razor to unequal men, an idea Marx criticized in affirming that to be just, "right, instead of being equal, would have to be unequal." The neo-Zapatistas propose a more intelligent, 'just,' and advanced justice based

13 On this particular point, cf. Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *América Latina en la encrucijada*, Contrahistorias, 7th ed., Mexico, 2009, particularly Appendix 2, "La nueva democracia de los nuevos movimientos antisistémicos de América Latina", pp. 159–88.

on the principle that every person should be given "what they deserve, and every person deserves what the mirror gives back to him: he himself." This implies that we should be good to the good, just to the just, solidary to the solidary, and fraternal to the fraternal. But this logic also means that the bad must reap shame and sadness and that the unjust must receive indifference and isolation. This intelligent application of neo-Zapatista justice is embodied in the way that the Zapatistas acted in the People's Public Trial (Juicio Público Popular) against Absalón Castellanos, a notoriously repressive farm owner in Chiapas who they took as a prisoner of war in the first days of 1994. After publicly putting Castellanos on trial, the Zapatistas freed him, sentencing him only to public shame and to live the rest out the rest of his life bearing the denunciation and recognition by all of his unjust and shameful actions.[14]

The neo-Zapatista gaze—which looks to and from below and the left critically, from a distance, and against the grain—also allows us to understand some of the positions taken and important choices made by neo-Zapatismo itself.

Now We Can See the Horizon![15]

Neo-Zapatismo chooses to look below and to the left in the sense described above, and this choice has various distinct implications, some of which should be examined in detail. For example, the decision to opt for the social below means revaluing and newly vindicating the central and fundamental social role of the very base of the social pyramid, of the subalterns themselves, thus distancing neo-Zapatismo from vanguardism or substitutionism or the supplanting of the bases of the anti-capitalist social movement that neo-Zapatismo seeks to build through the major initiative of the Other Campaign.

As the *compañeros* affirm, if it is the exploited and oppressed themselves who are going to risk themselves—their personal safety, employment, family,

14 On the neo-Zapatista idea of justice, cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, "Luchamos, lucharemos, venceremos", *Rebeldía* 43, June 2006, as well as "La historia de las palabras", found in story X in *Relatos del Viejo Antonio*, CIACH, Mexico, 1999. We believe that it is not by coincidence that this neo-Zapatista posture coincides closely with the thesis Marx develops in his *Crítica del Programa de Gotha*, Ediciones en Lenguas Extranjeras, Beijing, 1978, as well as those developed by Michel Foucault in *Vigilar y castigar*, Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1993, and Edward Palmer Thompson in "El imperio de la ley", in *Thompson: Obra esencial*, Crítica, Barcelona, 2002.

15 This is the first line of the anthem of the EZLN. – Trans.

even their own lives—to fight for the radical transformation of society, then it must be the oppressed and exploited who make the movement's fundamental decisions. It is they and only they who must decide upon the movement's strategies, tactics, program of struggle, forms of organization, and forms of action and struggle in general. This is the 'restoration,' so to speak, of the organization's and movement's bases to the leading role of the movement. In addition to being one of the many forms of expression of the death of politics we are witnessing today (a death that means that the 'political' is emptied of content and gradually reabsorbed by the social[16]), this restoration also implies multiple redefinitions of the possible role of 'vanguards' within movements, of the structure of organizations themselves, of the relationship between a movement's 'leaders' and its 'bases', and of the possible role of intellectuals within movements. It also implies a redefining of the movement's times and modes of action, of the way its program is assembled, of its tactics and strategies, and even its posture towards other social movements and the different actors of its own society or other societies.

If we are to recuperate within the movement the exercise of direct democracy—of the central role of the universal assembly and of leading by obeying—then we must completely eliminate the idea of a vanguard that embodies the 'conscience' of the movement. We must leave behind the belief that a group of all-knowing and illuminated individuals can formulate a critical analysis of reality, a program, tactics, and a strategy, and then later hand these down to the base of the organization or to a mass movement. Today, it is the base itself that analyzes its struggle, failures, and achievements; it is the base that reflects on and draws the lessons of its experiences in general terms and defines the priority of its central demands and objectives. In this way, from below and to the left, the base itself defines its National Program of Struggle.[17]

In this way, the role of the vanguard is no longer that of a group that directs the entire movement, but of one that walks ahead to explore the terrain and report back to the movement: this was precisely what the Sixth Commission did during the first stage of the Other Campaign. This happens within a structure that, in lacking the old hierarchy between a party's central committee and its bases—between leaders who held all decision-making power and bases

16 Regarding this thesis on the death of politics, cf. Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "La otra política de La Otra Campaña", *Contrahistorias* 6, Mexico, 2006.

17 On this ongoing process of building this National Program of Struggle from below and to the left, cf. *Contrahistorias* 10, Mexico, 2008.

who merely executed their leaders' decisions—can now be a much more horizontal and decentralized organization that is also less hierarchical.

This reality likewise redefines the role of intellectuals within the movement. With the recognition that basic decisions are to be made by the entire collective and with the reevaluation of popular knowledge and the moral economy of the masses—as well as the lessons and knowledge that stem from direct experience and an attentive observation of reality—intellectuals cease to be 'custodians' of knowledge. The intellectual is transformed into a comrade who simply puts their intellectual tools at the disposal of the movement's self-analysis and overall theoretical work. As the neo-Zapatista *compañeros* have asserted, their "theory" is their practice itself. Among many other possible meanings, this means that knowledge and theory spring from multiple sources, all equally legitimate and necessary; this theory (which must necessarily be at the center of any movement) comes out of reflection on the movement's own practice carried out by *all* of its members, close observation of reality (which is no one's exclusive province), and the specific contribution of the movement's intellectuals.

Furthermore, if the movement's central role is now held neither by a vanguard nor a central committee nor leaders, intellectuals, or theorists, but by the social below in all its vastness, then it is the below itself that now defines the times and methods of its own concrete action. It is the social below that defines its own calendar within the bounds set by current conditions: for neo-Zapatismo, this means the particular conditions set by the historical (not chronological) year 2010 and by the growth of its own organization and of the Other Campaign instead of by the empty electoral calendar set by those above or by the cyclical political crises and useless conflicts which stem from the corrupt realpolitik of Mexico's entire political class.

The social below resituates the old central objective of taking power (which it does *not* reject) within a broader perspective. This perspective is that of radically changing the contemporary capitalist world for another, non-capitalist, non-prehistoric world. 'Taking power' is thus resituated as one more intermediate objective of the movement's overall strategy. More than 'taking power,' this strategy fights to revolutionize the very relations and foundations of power *from below*, just as we can see embodied in the praxis of the Councils of Good Government, which are now more than six years old. In this way, more than taking power (and, again, true to the logic of looking to and from below and to the left), the neo-Zapatista gaze proposes to build counter-powers from below and to the left that will foment the autonomy, self-organization,

and self-emancipation of each one of the movement's component collectives and groups.

This, finally, also explains neo-Zapatismo's attitude toward some of the processes Latin America is now undergoing. What matters to the neo-Zapatista gaze is not Hugo Chávez's personality, or Evo Morales's biography, or Rafael Correa's whims and family squabbles, or the vacillations of Lula, or Kirchner, or Lugo, or Mujica, or anyone else. What matters to the neo-Zapatista gaze is the maturation and possible futures of the masses of Venezuela, the Pachacutik indigenous movement and El Alto commune of Bolivia, the Ecuadorian CONAIE, the Brazilian MST, the *piqueteros* of Argentina, and the subaltern groups and classes of Paraguay and Uruguay. In the words of Subcomandante Marcos, "where others see characters, leaders, and heroes, we see whole peoples fulfilling the roles of teachers across distance, time, geography, and mode."[18] This thesis, it should be said, can today be applied to the movement of the Mexican Electricians Union (SME) by viewing that movement not through its leader—the lukewarm social democrat Martín Esparzo, a man willing to make deals and arrangements with those above—but from below. The SME movement can be seen through the lens of the tenacious resistance and radical protest of the thousands of recently fired electricians who reject their dismissal by the unjust government of Mexico.

These are some of the central implications of the neo-Zapatista gaze. This gaze, according to Subcomandante Marcos, is the primary inheritance a Zapatista leaves behind: "What does a Zapatista leave as a legacy to those who follow him? A gaze, and, with any luck, the sense of duty that gaze implies […]"[19] We take up that gaze happily in order to keep following the Trail of a very other non-capitalist world that does not belong to human prehistory. We are convinced that through that neo-Zapatista gaze, "we can see the horizon" of that new and very other world in which many worlds will fit.

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18 For this quote, cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, "Dos políticas y una ética", *Rebeldía* 53, June 2007, p. 7. On the referred-to theses regarding Latin America, cf. Subcomandante Marcos, "De redentores e irredentos", in *Rebeldía* 54, July 2007, as well as his interview with Sergio Rodríguez Lazcano, "El elemento extra: la organización", in *Rebeldía* 42, May 2006. See also Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *América Latina en la encrucijada*, op. cit.

19 Cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, "Durito y una de miradas y herencias", *Rebeldía* 37, November 2005, p. 3.

Appendix 3

THE NEW STAGE OF MEXICAN NEO-ZAPATISMO

> "[A]s if we, the exploited, don't know what change we want […] So, indigenous and non-indigenous brothers and sisters who are poor, join the struggle, organize yourselves, lead yourselves, do not let yourselves be led, or keep careful watch over those you choose to lead you, make sure they do the things that you have decided and you will see that things begin taking shape like they have for us the Zapatistas." Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, "THEM AND US VI. The Gaze Part 6: WE ARE HE", February 14, 2013.

There is no doubt that the series of communiques released by the EZLN between December 21, 2012, and March 14, 2013 inaugurated a new stage in the life and activity of neo-Zapatismo. This new fundamental stage is only comparable in its magnitude (situating it within the whole history of neo-Zapatismo) to the public irruption of the movement on New Year's Day, 1994, and to the stage inaugurated in June 2005 with the launch of the major initiative of the Other Campaign.

If we address neo-Zapatista's history as a whole—from November 1983[1] until now—it is clear that this history is divisible into four stages. The first

1 In locating neo-Zapatismo's origins in November 1983 we explicitly accept that the movement was only born out of the complex fusion which occurred at the end of 1983 between left-wing militants belonging to the "generation of dignity"—the offspring of the movement of 1968 in Mexico—and the dignified and rebellious indigenous movement of Chiapas, the inheritor of centuries of struggle which *restricted* itself significantly following the National Indigenous Congress held in San Cristóbal de Las Casas in 1974. As such, the antecedents of the fusion of 1983 constitute only the 'prehistory' of neo-Zapatismo, as without that fusion its constituent parts—on one hand, the Forces of National Liberation (FLN), founded in 1969, and on the other hand the militant indigenous movements of Chiapas—would not, on their own, have achieved the universal reach and deep, lasting impact neo-Zapatismo has had over the last 20 years. On neo-Zapatismo's 'prehistory' and

is the underground stage (November 1983–January 1994), the initial stage in which a vast and potent indigenous social movement was assembled and preparations were made for an armed insurrection. This was followed by a radical swerve toward an open civil struggle in alliance with Mexican and international civil society (January 1994–June 2005). Later came the third stage, the first attempt to organize a nationwide anti-capitalist and antisystemic movement separate from the Mexican political class and from illusory electoral spaces (June 2005–November 2012). Since December 2012, the movement has been in its fourth and newest stage, which aims to promote, multiply, organize, and coordinate an endless number of struggles and experiences of building autonomy for thousands of collectives in Mexico and across the world. In uniting and organizing themselves as movements, these collectives will be able to overthrow their bad governments and to overcome their exploiters and dominators, beginning to build new worlds from below and to the left: worlds without exploitation, pillage, or repression, but also without the exclusion and asymmetries always present in the 'above' and the 'below.' These new worlds will be ones "where many worlds fit."

Neo-Zapatismo's fourth stage leads us to wonder about this stage's central continuities with and ruptures from the preceding third stage, as well as with the whole trajectory of the rebel indigenous movement which became public in January 1994. This dialectic of continuity and rupture not only allows us to more precisely recognize the current profiles of neo-Zapatismo but also let us grasp the meaning of its new proposals and initiatives, as well as the new role it has begun to play and will continue to play in Mexico, Latin America, and the world.

The fourth stage of neo-Zapatismo maintains and recreates both the radically anti-capitalist and antisystemic calling it has affirmed since its beginnings and its openness and outreach to the subaltern classes, groups, and sectors of Mexican and world society. It originally referred to these elements as "civil society," then as "the people of Mexico" and the "peoples of the world," and now as "the ones from below," national and international. This stage

its first, underground stage (which is still the least known of the four), cf. the selection of materials included in *Contrahistorias* 20, 2013, in particular Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "Raíces, orígenes e inicios del neozapatismo mexicano", and Yvon Le Bot, *Subcomandante Marcos: El Sueño Zapatista*, Plaza y Janes, Barcelona, 1997. On neo-Zapatismo's planetary reach and profound impact, cf. Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "El significado del neozapatismo mexicano dentro de los movimientos antisistémicos actuales", in *Contrahistorias* 22, 2014.

constantly searches, in a permanent dialogue with those Mexican and international subalterns, for the concrete paths that will allow for radical change in Mexico and the world through intelligent strategies which produce as little bloodshed as possible in the face of imminent large-scale social upheaval anticipated in Mexico and in the face of the national crises, anti-capitalist social movements, and social revolts which in recent years have grown more and more present across the social fabric of the whole world.

Likewise, the fourth stage reiterates neo-Zapatismo's position since its beginnings: a refusal to attempt to be a 'vanguard,' in the classic pre-1968 sense of the word. In other words, neo-Zapatismo rejects imposing its own project of struggle, program, strategy, tactics, or worldview on other national and international subalterns. It refuses to homogenize the movement or hegemonize it from above in order to guide it to the promised land of a non-capitalist, non-classist, non-prehistoric world.

These important continuities of the fourth stage of neo-Zapatismo with its previous stages interweave with continuities of certain elements of the movement's third stage which are still present in this new period. Reaffirmed is the proposal to promote and consolidate a vast national antisystemic movement to confront the authoritarian, neoliberal, corrupt government of the recycled PRI, a movement that will fight to substitute that government with one that will lead by obeying. At the same time, this movement must participate as much as possible within the broader struggle against the devastating force of global capitalism.

Still present is the effort to clearly mark the border between 'them' and 'us': this is the attempt to precisely clarify who the groups, collectives, sectors, and social classes are who will execute radical social change and who the enemies of this change are. In neo-Zapatista terms, this is the effort to discover who to struggle with, how to struggle, and when and where to affirm and deploy general fronts of struggle, as well as to identify those who these struggles will be affirmed against.

The stage of neo-Zapatismo that began at the end of 2012 also reasserts the search for and attempt to embody the construction of another way of doing politics that completely distances itself from the degraded forms in which political classes across the planet (including Mexico's) carry out this activity, making it synonymous with corruption, nepotism, the abandonment of one's principles, and the shameful pursuit of power for power's sake. Instead, the neo-Zapatistas affirm "another way of doing politics" based on ethics, social life, history, and memory, with a true calling of public service. This new form

of politics is about searching only for the "satisfaction of duty fulfilled"—a very other politics, based on the principle of leading by obeying.[2]

Alongside these clear continuities that carry into neo-Zapatismo's current stage from the previous third stage and all other preceding stages, there are also important discontinuities. Together, these discontinuities constitute the novelty and originality of the fourth stage now underway; a novelty we will now analyze in greater detail.

* * *

If we want to better understand the novelty of neo-Zapatismo's fourth stage, it is useful to reread and recall some of the ideas contained in two of the major texts of its third stage: the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle (2005) and *Las Seis Preguntas sobre la Identidad Colectiva de La Otra Campaña* (The Six Questions on the Collective Identity of the Other Campaign, 2006). In these texts, several crucial definitions were posed and answered regarding not only neo-Zapatismo but also the vast anti-capitalist and antisystemic national movement that the Other Campaign was trying to create.

On some occasions these definitions remained only as open questions to be answered in the future, while on others they were answered in the documents referenced above. They include the definition of neo-Zapatismo's essential identity (with the open question of the identity of the Other Campaign), the neo-Zapatista analysis of Mexico and the world in 2005 and 2006, the general objectives of the new national movement underway, the self-assumed tasks these objectives implied, the methods and concrete paths to fulfill these tasks and objectives, and the (still not conclusively answered) questions on how, when, where, and with who to struggle.

It was on the basis of these definitions and open questions that the Other Campaign operated from 2006 until 2012.[3] In general terms, we can say that this campaign represented an enormous success: in less than two years,

2 On this 'other way of doing politics,' cf. Sergio Rodríguez Lascano, "La forma zapatista de hacer política. (Entrevista)", in *Viento Sur* 83, 2005, and Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "La Otra Política de la Otra Campaña", in *Contrahistorias* 6, 2006; *Mandar Obedeciendo: Las lecciones políticas del neozapatismo mexicano*, Contrahistorias, 11th ed., Mexico, 2015, and *Antimanual del Buen Rebelde*, Contrahistorias, 6th ed., Mexico, 2015.

3 On what the important initiative of the Other Campaign was and meant, cf. the materials included in *Contrahistorias* 6, 2006, in particular Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "Ir a contracorriente: el sentido de La Otra Campaña", included therein.

it was able to build a unified network of antisystemic rebellions with more than 15,000 members and a presence in Mexico's 32 states and territories.[4] Furthermore, this network included our country's most advanced, lucid, and significant antisystemic movements.

The enormous success of the Other Campaign so frightened Mexico's dominant classes and the Mexican state that it provoked a terrible increase in militarization and paramilitarization across the whole state of Chiapas and the establishment of a generalized state of harassment against Zapatista communities. These communities were subjected to a high-intensity war (not low-intensity, as otherwise claimed) which in October 2007 forced the Sixth Commission to withdraw to Chiapas and caused the project of building a national network of antisystemic rebellions and the creation of a National Program of Struggle and National Plan of struggle to be suspended for several years.[5]

In this way, the fourth stage of neo-Zapatismo is the product of both the critical assessment of the initiatives advanced in the seven years of the movement's third stage and the end of that forced withdrawal and temporary suspension of the process of building an antisystemic movement of subalterns in Mexico. Consequently, neo-Zapatismo's fourth stage represents a new way of recovering and continuing to develop the definitions established in the third stage while taking up different questions left open in that stage in order to answer them now. But under the same logic, it is also a new and distinct stage that incorporates original elements in order to enrich and revitalize a gestating national antisystemic movement. Likewise, this new stage revitalizes the growing popular rebellions which continue multiplying enormously in old and new spaces across Mexico and Latin America with each passing day.

* * *

If we review the communiques published by the neo-Zapatistas since December 2012 and the various initiatives the *compañeros* have proposed

4 It should be noted that 15,000 members does not mean 15,000 individuals: one of those 15,000 members is the EZLN, which has hundreds of thousands of bases of support across all of Chiapas. Other members include the National Indigenous Congress, which comprises tens of thousands of indigenous rebels across the country, as well as hundreds of thousands of the most varied movements, collectives, groups, and individuals.

5 Regarding the National Program of Struggle, we recommend that the reader consult the materials contained in the dossier on the subject in *Contrahistorias* 10, 2008.

and implemented in the same period, we see that both of these elements are focused around four core issues. These four pillars, linked to many other general problems, define the context in which the vast indigenous rebel movement of the Sixth acts, as well as some new contours of neo-Zapatismo itself.

The first pillar encompasses several important public positions, such as those taken in regard to the PRI's return to federal power, the cowardly murder of *compañero* Galeano, and the tragic and unjust disappearance of 43 students from the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers' College. These positions are intended to make a clear and critical analysis of the social and political juncture that Mexico faces with the disastrous return of the PRI to power: in addition to continuing the criminal legacy of Felipe Calderón, the PRI government has intensified state violence and the criminalization of the social protest created by its inept management of the economic crisis and its inefficient social and political leadership.

The second pillar is oriented toward defining the clear border between 'them'—the small group that oppresses, exploits, excludes, dispossesses, and dominates—and the 'we,' the vast social pyramid of those of us who are victims of that exploitation and oppression. This point includes meetings with the National Indigenous Congress (CNI) and the participants of the First World Festival of Resistance and Rebellion Against Capitalism. This second group of initiatives, deployed within a logic of bringing together various rebellions, also tries to identify the mechanisms and concrete forms by which 'their' domination is organized. Likewise, these initiatives attempt to discover the ways in which 'we' suffer and endure, but also the ways by which we sabotage, mock, and resist all of 'their' structures of repression and control.

A third body of texts and initiatives—a third pillar—includes the 2013 communique on "The Gaze" and the Little Zapatista School, but also the shocking 'symbolic' death of Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos and some of the gatherings of December 2014 and January 2015. This pillar is centered around the issue of how all those who form part of the collective rebel 'we' should relate to each other: how we should organize and how we can combat and confront 'them' and the global capitalist system, our foremost enemy, which 'they' represent, serve, and will defend to the death.

The fourth and final pillar is the overwhelming demonstration of neo-Zapatismo's immense achievements in its complex and now decades-long process of building integral global autonomy; in other words, the process by which neo-Zapatismo builds true collective freedom and revolutionizes, from below and to the left, power, economy, politics, the social role of women, culture,

and art—among many other social dimensions—through the persistent art of struggle, resistance, and rebellion.[6] This fourth pillar is evident in several initiatives of the last years, including the astonishing marches and peaceful occupations of five municipal seats on December 21, 2012, the organization and execution of the Little Zapatista School, and the First World Festival of Resistance and Rebellion Against Capitalism.

If we wish to better understand the central features which characterize the new stage of neo-Zapatismo, it is useful to begin by identifying some of the elements which represent the backdrop against which the features of this fourth and latest stage in the history of neo-Zapatismo will be defined. Above all, these elements show us two fundamental realities: firstly, the still enormous and even growing international and national relevance of neo-Zapatismo in the present moment, and secondly the terrible consequences of the PRI's ill-fated return to power and its clear aggravation of Mexico's global crisis.

Thus, in spite of the intense but fruitless political campaign conducted by the Mexican government, the dominant mass media, and the renegade intellectuals in the pocket of the social 'above,' neo-Zapatismo is today more alive and more relevant than ever before.[7] It has grown enormously in numbers and has made a great deal of progress in quantitative terms as well. This is something that thousands of people were able to directly confirm at the three editions of the Little Zapatista School in 2013 and 2014, at the homage to *compañero* Galeano in 2014, and at the First World Festival of Resistance and Rebellion Against Capitalism during the closing days of 2014 and the first days of 2015. Here, from the inside, participants witnessed and shared in the rich processes of building autonomy, developing resistance, and vastly improving material and spiritual conditions. These processes involve the hundreds of thousands of indigenous rebels who form neo-Zapatismo's support bases.

6 For the content and implications of this concept of integral global autonomy, cf. the then-Lieutenant Colonel Insurgente Moisés, January 3, 2007, "Palabras del Teniente Coronel Insurgente Moisés", in *Contrahistorias* 8, 2007, and Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Mandar Obedeciendo: Las lecciones políticas del neozapatismo mexicano*, op. cit.

7 For this reason, beyond the typical highs and lows of global and national attention to neo-Zapatismo (attention that switches on and off according to the development of various Mexican and global junctures), the neo-Zapatista movement continues to be, in structural and tendential terms, an inescapable and inspiring point of reference for all the planet's true antisystemic movements, as well as one of the most advanced and significant members of the global family of antisystemic and anti-capitalist struggle and protest. On this fundamental point, cf. Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Movimientos Antisistémicos*, Prohistoria, 2nd ed., Rosario, 2012, as well as *Antimanual del Buen Rebelde*, op. cit.

The relevance and even increased internal strength and cohesion of neo-Zapatismo allow the *compañeros* to affirm that they are still here and that they have not surrendered, sold out, or given up. This fact was made evident when they resumed their link with the National Indigenous Congress and with the vast "rebel social below" composed of the adherents to the national and international movement of the Sixth in the spirit of defining, building, and strengthening a new project. As the Zapatistas insist, this is a project not of resignation, war, or destruction, but one of struggle and open social resistance.

While neo-Zapatismo and the Sixth are alive and active (as well as enormously inventive) in Mexico and the world, the PRI, once again in federal power, finds itself in an increasingly critical and unsustainable situation. The PRI is tearing itself apart from the inside: entangled in corruption scandals and exposed for outrageous and illegal use of public funds, it faces a profound social delegitimization. Still under strong internal and external pressure surrounding the brutal case of the 43 students from Ayotzinapa, the new PRI government demonstrates that, more and more, its only support comes from its brutal monopoly on armed coercion, physical violence, and the direct and unmediated exercise of power.

For this reason, the Zapatistas have characterized the return of the old PRI to the presidency as the return of a nefarious group whose central contemporary figures have not only been responsible for massacres and repression such as those of Atenco and Acteal but are also accused of being allies of the Zetas cartel and of being inveterate drunks, thieves, authoritarians, bunglers, and merciless repressors. Thus, rather than speaking of a "new" PRI or of a different stage of the PRI in power, we must understand this return as the return of the old PRI, now more authoritarian, more repressive, more bogged down in internal crisis, and more isolated from Mexican society. The PRI therefore enjoys less support in the search for a modicum of social consensus, however fragile this consensus may be. Consequently, it is sustained much more by the direct force of the army and police: in other words, by physical domination, direct repression, and general intimidation. This is accompanied by the threat—and sometimes actual use—of direct physical force against all national subalterns who oppose or rebel against the old PRI, now recycled on the basis of its worst elements. This has become more than evident (among other possible examples) in the clumsy and even shameful management of the case of the Ayotzinapa students.

* * *

Against this backdrop, we believe it is now possible to address the fundamental issue of the main features and new general profiles presented by the fourth stage of Mexican neo-Zapatismo, which runs from December 2012 to the present. As a whole, these profiles and features allow us to understand the new project that the dignified indigenous movement of the Mexican southeast now intends to promote.

The first major feature is defined by a change which, while nuanced, is fundamental. From 1994 to 2005, despite its declared intentions, neo-Zapatismo developed its action and presence primarily in the state of Chiapas. From 2006 to 2012, that presence and action was instead predominantly affirmed on the national scale in Mexico (albeit with ups and downs) through the national network of rebellions that was the Other Campaign. Now, since 2013, that action has developed not only throughout Mexico (where it will continue to be affirmed) but also, in a more relevant manner than in the past, on the planetary scale. For this reason, Subcomandante Marcos has stated that "from now on we will walk […] on the coast of Chiapas or that of New Zealand […] our territory for our work is now clearly delimited: the planet called 'Earth.'"[8]

This change presents not the invention of a previously nonexistent feature but the *deepening* of a trait that, though present since 1994, was not as central in the two previous stages of neo-Zapatismo. As the Zapatistas have explained, although they always presented their struggle as one that was not exclusively Chiapan or even exclusively Mexican but rather *universal*, the reality is that from 1994 to 2005 that struggle was concentrated above all in the territory of Chiapas. This reality made it so that one of the explicit objectives of the Other Campaign would be the extension of the Zapatista struggle to all of Mexico.

The Zapatistas have affirmed their generous slogan of "everything for everyone; for us, nothing!" since 1994 and have always explicitly stated the universal character of their demands, struggle, and movement. In 1996, for example, they organized the First Intergalactic Gathering for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism, and in 2009 they held the First World Festival of Dignified Rage. Despite all this, however, in practice the principal theater of Zapatista action has been Chiapas (between 1994 and 2005) and all of Mexico (from 2006 to 2012).[9] In the present day, without abandoning their

8 This affirmation is found in the communiqué "THEM AND US. V. THE SIXTH.", published in January 2013.

9 To recall how this universal character has been present and recognized in the activity of neo-Zapatismo since 1994, it is worth consulting the communiqué of May 28, 1994, which includes the beautiful Old Antonio story "Los arroyos cuando bajan" and the postscript

potent presence in Chiapas or their essential work throughout Mexico, the *compañeros* have begun to give greater importance to projecting their presence around the world. This approach was made evident, for example, at the First World Festival of Resistance and Rebellion Against Capitalism in December 2014 and January 2014.

This increased attention to the international dimension reaffirms and reminds us of the thesis that, although it is up to Mexicans to change Mexico, to Turks to change Turkey, to Frenchmen to change France, to Argentinians to change Argentina, etc., the general objective of all antisystemic rebels is to defeat absurd and increasingly irrational and destructive global capitalism. That objective will not be complete until capitalism is wiped from the face of the earth. Given the current stage of capitalism's terminal crisis, this objective seems to draw closer with every passing day.

Greater emphasis on international action in this new stage has naturally led to a refinement of the central demands of neo-Zapatismo and of the Sixth more broadly. In the 1994-2005 stage the struggle veered (against the intentions of the neo-Zapatistas themselves) toward centering *indigenous* demands (which, for example, were the only demands agreed upon in the San Andrés Accords, and after the betrayal of the Mexican government, became the movement's foremost demands). From 2006 to 2012, the 11, then 13 original demands of neo-Zapatismo once again emerged as the movement's central demands. Now, these thirteen demands undisputedly remain the movement's principal demands but now become further qualified by connecting more explicitly and organically with the demands and struggles of antisystemic movements across the planet.

This change, moreover, has been taking place for some time in an almost spontaneous way. If we examine the central demands of the popular revolts of 2011, we can easily see how the *indignados* of Spain, the peoples of the Arab world, the Occupy movement, and the students of Chile have all fought for democracy or education or work or health or freedom or housing or culture,

that says that Marcos is "gay in San Francisco, Black in South Africa, Asian in Europe," etc.; in other words, that neo-Zapatismo embodies the excluded and discriminated across the planet (cf. *EZLN: Documentos y Comunicados*, Vol. I, Ediciones Era, Mexico, 1994, p. 243). See also Subcomandante Marcos's speeches at the First Intercontinental Gathering for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism, 'Unas palabras sobre nuestro pensamiento' (Some words on our thinking) and 'Un sueño soñado en los cinco continentes' (A dream dreamt on the five continents), as well as "¿Qué tan grande es el mundo?", February 17, 2006, available at enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx.

or for many of these demands in conjunction. It is no coincidence that these demands are all part of the thirteen current demands of neo-Zapatismo.[10]

And while it is clear that, for example, the struggle for freedom does not mean the same thing in Tunisia as it does in Spain or mean the same thing in Spain as it does in the United States, and that the struggle for education is different in Chile than it is in Colombia or Greece, it is highly significant that the most recent antisystemic movements or mobilizations worldwide have struggled for different freedoms, for different understandings of democracy, and for different ways of conceiving of the popular right to education, health, or culture, among many others.

A second major change in the transition to the new stage, derived directly from the first change, deals with the "rhythm and speed of the pace" at which those of us who now proudly form part of the Sixth will have to march. For if the ultimate objective of the Sixth is to change the world and not just the government or party in power, and not just in Mexico or Latin America but across the world, then this task implies a greater temporal scope than that which was envisioned by the Other Campaign.

In 2005 and 2006, when the Other Campaign was launched, drawing on the experience of neo-Zapatismo itself (which took a decade to take shape as a vast and powerful anti-capitalist and antisystemic indigenous movement), the *compañeros* asserted that it might take 10, 15, or 20 years for the Other Campaign to organize itself and achieve its goals of completely transforming Mexico and setting up a government that would lead by obeying, making our country into a world where everyone would be equal. This would be a world where there would be no rich or poor, above or below, or integrated or excluded; a world without exploitation, pillage, disdain, or repression; a genuine "world where many worlds fit."

Now, although the objectives relating to Mexico are carried forward, they have expanded in order to cover a planetary scale. This expansion implies a more organic acceptance of the idea that the task of the millions of *compañeros* worldwide who, like us, fight to change the world and the wipe the global capitalist system, class society, and what Marx called "human prehistory" off the face of the earth, will not be complete until anti-capitalist and antisystemic movements have triumphed in every nation in the world.

10 On the closeness of the Zapatista demands to the demands presented by the popular revolts of 2011 across the world, cf. the collection of essays included in *Contrahistorias* 18, particularly Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "Las revueltas populares de 2011 en perspectiva histórica", as well as *Antimanual del Buen Rebelde*, op. cit.

Accordingly, the Zapatistas now reiterate that "the Sixth's gait is of long strides": in our opinion, this means that the process of changing the world may not take 10 or 20 years but indeed one, two, or even three generations. Likewise, however, this process may take less time, given the terminal crisis of capitalism we are living through and its increasingly terrible effects, which seem to have been unleashed and made more and more evident with the global economic crisis of 2008.[11]

A third change, or better stated a deepening and radicalization of an already outlined and recognized feature, involves the position of neo-Zapatismo (and now the Sixth) in regard to Mexico's political parties, political class, elections, and political-electoral movements. From 1994 to 2005, neo-Zapatismo underwent a major shift: though it initially believed that there was a truly progressive segment of the Mexican political class that could be enlisted for anti-capitalist and antisystemic struggle, the movement was clearly disappointed by this class. This disappointment was consummated with the shameful posture of the *entire* political class, without exception, to the March of the Color of the Earth in 2001. The Zapatistas concluded that the political class had become so corrupted and coopted by the system that no alliance or joint project was possible with any of its parties, segments, groups, or even specific tendencies.

This conclusion meant that, after 2005 and 2006, the Other Campaign (named precisely to distance itself from the presidential campaign of 2006) would divest radically from the Mexican political class. The Other Campaign explained that its work, goals, and project were on a radically different path that sought not only a change in who would hold the office of President of Mexico or a change in the party in power, but a total change of the entire capitalist social system in Mexico and the whole world.

So, while the radical break from the Mexican political class and the explicit rejection of the electoral road in Mexico are both maintained, these theses are radicalized and deepened when, for example, the fifth communiqué of the "Them and Us" series, "V. - The Sixth," forcefully states that "we

11 On the terminal crisis of capitalism, which both accelerates the chaos of capitalism, making it increasingly unpredictable, irrational, and destructive, and (fortunately) multiplies the sources of rebellion, the desire for change, and the search for other radically different forms of social organization, cf. Immanuel Wallerstein, *Después del Liberalismo*, Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1996, and *La Crisis Estructural del Capitalismo*, Contrahistorias, 2nd ed., Mexico, 2005, and Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Para comprender el Mundo Actual*, Instituto Politécnico Nacional, Mexico, 2010, and *Movimientos Antisistémicos*, op. cit.

understand that there are those who think that it is possible to transform things from above without becoming one more of those above. Hopefully the coming consecutive disappointments do not turn them into that which they fight against." This thesis, deeper and more radical than the idea advanced from 2006 to 2012, demonstrates all of its importance and implications when we extend it to events recently experienced in several Latin American countries in which popular, progressive, and left-wing social movements have brought various presidents to power. Once situated in these central governmental and state positions, these presidents have always ended up becoming "one more of those above." In other words, they have rejected changing the world from the perspective of those below—from a genuinely anti-capitalist and antisystemic perspective—and have instead devoted themselves to mending and reproducing moribund capitalism in their countries, cushioning the worst effects of savage neoliberalism with reformist social policies and neo-Keynesian economic policies, as well as populist and lukewarm social-democratic political and social policies.

These "progressive" Latin American governments, in the words of Subcomandante Marcos, "do with the left hand what other openly right-wing governments do with the right hand," demonstrating the wishful belief that it is possible to radically change the world from above and not from below and to the left.[12]

The deepening of the neo-Zapatista break from political classes and their elections demonstrates the limits of the supposedly "progressive" governments of Lula and later Dilma Rousseff, Nestor and Cristina Kirchner, Chávez and later Nicolás Maduro, Evo Morales, and Rafael Correa, among others. Likewise, the Zapatistas clearly reject the PRD and MORENA in Mexico, stating emphatically that "they do not need us to fail" and "we do not need them to survive."

The fourth change that defines the contours of the new stage of neo-Zapatismo relates to the question of the form of organization that the Sixth will adopt. In this regard, communiqués published in early 2013, as well as various initiatives from 2014 to 2015, supply an answer to one of the six

12 On neo-Zapatismo's positions toward the "progressive" governments of Latin America, cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, "De redentores e irredentos", July 16, 2007, available at *Enlace Zapatista*, the interview published as *Corte de Caja*, Alterno & Búnker, Mexico, 2008, and the interview "El elemento extra: la organización", in *Rebeledía* 42, May 2006. More generally, see Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *América Latina en la Encrucijada*, Contrahistorias, 7th ed., Mexico, 2009, and *Antimanual del Buen Rebelde*, op. cit.

questions the *compañeros* of the Other Campaign posed as to the internal organizational structure of the collective 'we' of that campaign. Now, in the fourth and newest stage, the answer is that this structure will be highly broad, flexible, and respectful of the 'ways,' times, places, and manners of each of the movement's individual or collective members. Furthermore, this structure will be based on two central principles: (1) the refusal to *homogenize* the movement's various components and (2) the refusal to *hegemonize* its adherents from any "central governing body, […] centralized command, or […] boss, be it individual or a particular group."[13]

This, then, would almost appear to be the antithesis of the old party organizations of the Left, with their strict militancy, their hierarchical and tightly coordinated organization, their vertical and rigidly enforced structure, and their explicit aim to impose on all their members a *single* idea, a single understanding of the world, struggle, tasks, strategy, and tactics which would result in a homogenous and identical conduct among all members, as well as a single attitude, a single form of understanding action, and a homogenous path toward radical social change.

At the opposite end of the spectrum are the neo-Zapatistas, who seek to recognize, accept, celebrate, and even strengthen the immense diversity of the individual and collective members who now form part of the Sixth. For difference and diversity are not organizational weaknesses: on the contrary, they are among an organization's virtues and greatest strengths. And if Marx taught us that wealth is diversity, the Sixth now invites all of us to affirm, cultivate, and defend our particular and always different "ways," "times," "spaces," and our own forms of resisting, struggling, proposing initiatives, and implementing them in practice in our own "geographies and calendars" on the basis of the agreements of struggle and action that the Sixth will build and come to consensus on.

For if the heterogeneity of those who struggle and rebel must be preserved, this is due to the fact that capitalism, class society, and the still-active legacy of human prehistory which we endure today can only be overcome if they are questioned, attacked, and defeated on all possible fronts of struggle. Since

13 These quotes are found in the communiqué "Them and Us, Part V.—The Sixth.", op. cit. This communiqué also states that "For the EZLN, to be in the Sixth does not require affiliation, membership fee, registration list, original and/or copy of an official ID, or account statement; one does not have to be judge, or jury, or defendant, or executioner. There are no flags." Here, we see the highly flexible character of the new form of organization proposed by neo-Zapatismo.

capitalism managed to shape itself historically as a global project of an entire human civilization, then the struggle against capitalism cannot be reduced merely to the economic sphere or to the areas of politics, social life, or culture. The struggle against capitalism must also include the spaces of the family, the everyday, art, belief, feelings, anthropology, psychology, personality, and a long etcetera that we could go on enumerating.

In this way, the diversity and heterogeneity of the collectives, movements, and individuals that compose the Sixth is born out of the ubiquity of capitalist oppression and domination. It is for this reason that this diversity and heterogeneity must be respected and strengthened: out of them and their expression of rebellion bloom the thousands of confrontations, millions of combats, and various forms of fighting and overcoming global capitalism in every dimension of its existence across the planet, fighting as in the celebrated Chinese tale where the enemy dies by bleeding out from thousands of little cuts and wounds.

Furthermore, in addition to its defense of heterogeneity and diversity, the new form of organization consciously seeks not to hegemonize any of its members. It promotes their autonomy, their ability to make decisions for themselves, their specific identities, and their particular histories and previous configurations. For if it is clear that freedom cannot be achieved through mechanisms that reproduce slavery, then the new form of organization cannot be based on the principle that certain people propose and others listen, that some decide and others obey, that some direct and others are directed, that a handful are active and the majority remain passive.[14]

People win autonomy and build it by affirming it in practice. In relation to organization, this means that no one can impose themselves upon others—it means that everyone decides what is essential and everyone organizes to put it in practice. This immediately recalls the assemblies of the neo-Zapatista peoples and these assemblies' intelligent method of functioning via

14 To make more evidente the radically horizontal character of this proposed form of new organization, the *compañeros* even opted for the 'symbolic' death of Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, which not only dismantles and radically critiques any possible 'cult of personality' but also affirms and again endorses the essential primacy of the collective "we" over individuality, in addition to vindicating the central role of the "we" within the organization, movement, and struggle in general. On the symbolic death of Subcomandante Marcos, cf. his speech "Between Light and Shadow", May 25, 2014, ezln.org.mxn, and Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "La muerte (simbólica) del Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos y el nosotros colectivo neozapatista", in *Contrahistorias* 24, 2015.

the principle of direct and assembly-based democracy. Not by coincidence, this form of democracy excludes the principle of the hegemony of a group, leader, or minority over an organization's majority or over others at all. At the same time, this form of democracy establishes and supports the rich and complex mechanism of leading by obeying which is so central in the political life and everyday social life of the neo-Zapatista peoples. Accordingly, the Zapatistas reiterate that they do not seek "to unite under a single leadership, be it Zapatista or any other." Neither do they seek to enlist, coopt, direct, or subordinate any of the members of the Sixth (or, for that matter, anyone in general).

In the same way that the neo-Zapatistas refuse to hegemonize the different adherents of the Sixth, they also refuse to reproduce within the Sixth the hegemony of the few over the majority. This explains why the Zapatistas say that there are no leaders within their movement, or otherwise that all the bases of neo-Zapatismo are its leaders, since it is they who, through the direct democracy of their assemblies and the principle of leading by obeying, decide on the direction, actions, and fundamental positions of the entire movement.[15]

And if the new form of organization that neo-Zapatismo proposes for the Sixth is so flexible and at the same time so intelligent that it refuses to homogenize or hegemonize its members, then its fundamental unity—which will derive neither from forced incorporation into a single identity or conduct, nor in any single way of thinking or being, nor from the subordination of all parts to a governing center—will therefore be a unity of action. This is a unity that, from the diversity and real equality of all its parts, will be built in practice by

15 On this fundamental inversion in which all bases are leaders or every person is a leader and leaders have therefore ceased to exist, see the February 2013 communiqué "Them and Us. VI.—The Gaze 3. Some Other Gazes.", available at the *Enlace Zapatista* site, and statements by Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés regarding neo-Zapatismo's August 2014 meeting with the National Indigenous Congress, where those who came together and resolved on how to approach the future with their own movements and their destinies in general were not "representatives or leaders, but [the] bases of our peoples, nations, and tribes," and regarding the World Festival of Resistance and Rebellion Against Capitalism (2014 and 2015), when he stated that it should be "our bases who run this exchange; let them be the ones who have the floor, who talk and explain our struggles […] We have seen that it is best that the bases speak." These statements can be found in "Editorial 3. Beyond the Exchange", at *Enlace Zapatista*. On the relations between global autonomy, direct democracy, and the complex principle of leading by obeying, see *Mandar Obedeciendo: Las lecciones políticas del neozapatismo mexicano*, op. cit.

carrying out coordinated actions which are previously agreed upon by all parties but are implemented in practice according to the ways, times, places, and concrete and always-specific conditions of each one of the participants in this agreement of unity in action (or for action).

This unity in action is established based on the commitments freely assumed by the Sixth's various adherents and later on the fulfillment of these commitments in practice. As neo-Zapatismo has previously demonstrated, this unity can function on a national or even international scale to confront and stop the shameful repressive actions of local or national governments (as happened in 1997 and 1998 with the Acteal massacre), win the release of political prisoners (as happened with prisoners of Atenco unjustly jailed in 2006), or prevent a major attack (such as the one planned against the Council of Good Government of La Realidad in 2014). Tomorrow, this unity will be able to overthrow bad governments and local, state, and federal authorities (as has already happened in countries like Ecuador, Bolivia, and Argentina) and establish (as has not yet happened in those countries) good governments who will truly lead by obeying.

A fifth major change that characterizes the fourth stage of neo-Zapatismo concerns the definition of a new global strategy in relation to the movement's relationship with the other members of the Sixth. Drawing on the seven-year experience of the Other Campaign and remaining true to the principle of not homogenizing or hegemonizing the struggles of the Sixth's adherents, this new strategy arrives at the thesis that no one must fight anyone else's struggle and that no one will come miraculously as a *deus ex machina* to liberate any of their comrades in struggle. In other words, neo-Zapatismo is not and does not seek to be a "savior" or "redeemer" to its comrades or the world. Likewise, neo-Zapatismo rejects out of hand the idea that its task is to fight the struggles or achieve the objectives that in fact belong to anyone else; in other words, to any of the groups, classes, or social sectors that make up the rainbow of the Sixth.[16]

16 In this regard, the conversation between the supermarket worker in her "orange apron" and her partner described in one of the neo-Zapatista communiqués of 2013 is highly expressive and instructive: "Well, then, tell me, are these Zapatistas going to save us?" "No my plebian, they're not going to save us. That, among other things, we're going to have to do ourselves." "So what then?" "Well, they're going to teach us." "And what are they going to teach us?" "That's we're not alone" [*sic*], in "THEM AND US. VI.—The Gaze 2.", available at the *Enlace Zapatista* site, op. cit. This posture on the part of the *compañeros* recalls Rodolfo Walsh's insightful novel *A Dark Day of Justice*, which criticizes precisely the idea of making our freedom (or salvation, or emancipation, or achieving our goals) on

This is why the neo-Zapatistas are so insistent that they are no one's vanguard and that their role (if they indeed have a special role) is rather that of catalysts or initiators of initiatives that must later be directly appropriated by the groups, classes, collectives, etc. that share and endorse them, reaching agreements, establishing and fulfilling commitments, and finally assuming the consequences of these commitments. Because autonomy and the strength needed for struggle can never be achieved if someone else fights our battles, defends our cause, achieves our objectives, and wins our freedoms on our behalf (even if that someone else is a comrade).

In a certain sense, this new neo-Zapatista strategy is no more than a new way of recuperating Marx's old thesis that "the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves." Accordingly, the emancipation of women must be won by women, the emancipation of indigenous peoples must be won by indigenous peoples, and the objectives, methods, geographies, and calendars of struggle of young people must be defined by young people. These groups themselves must wage the struggles necessary to conquer and assert their own rights, their own identity, and their own specific objectives.

The neo-Zapatistas' new strategy is that each social collective must fight its own battles (as they also insist that any merely individual rebellion must necessarily and unhappily end up being a sterile rebellion) and that here there are no saviors or heaven-sent heroes who emancipate anyone else. Neo-Zapatismo's relationship to the other members of the Sixth is therefore not one in which the neo-Zapatistas supplant these others in their struggles, direct them, decide for them, or lead them to a promised paradise. Instead neo-Zapatismo tries firstly to motivate and rouse others to reproduce (always in their own particular way) its own experience of organization and struggle, of building autonomy, and of forging singular paths toward achieving the common goal and general horizon of freedom. Secondly, neo-Zapatismo works to lavish on these others the fraternal solidarity between comrades in struggle who confront a common enemy from different trenches and who pursue the same objective of the absolute end of global capitalism.

In other words, neo-Zapatismo tries to teach others about its own experience as a rebel indigenous movement in Chiapas at the end of the (chronological) 20th century in the sense that it was a movement that organized

the arrival of a providential leader, mythic hero, or any other external being who is not we ourselves.

and grew stronger slowly but steadily until it was able to successfully confront several Mexican governments led by different political parties, which it challenged and overcame, managing not only to survive but to build—in its specific geographies and calendars of the Mexican southeast and on the current eve of a new Mexican Revolution—its own global autonomy: its own new non-capitalist, non-classist worlds, without exploitation, pillage, disdain, or repression.[17]

Following a kind of pedagogy of teaching by example, the neo-Zapatistas try to demonstrate how it is possible—despite the appalling conditions that capitalism has developed against the indigenous populations of Mexico and the aggressive policies of the Mexican state against their dignified movement—to successfully create a conscious and powerful social-political organization that is organically unified with a broad, committed, and vigilant mass movement and that later confronts the government, the rich, and the dominant powers while building in plain sight the seeds of a new world. These new worlds still exist today on a small scale, and in them are blooming global autonomy, freedom, direct democracy, leading by obeying, and self-government, but also new forms of economy, education, pedagogy, art, commerce, culture, gender relations, forms of communication, health, communitarian structures, and civilizational forms in general.

And if the neo-Zapatistas lay out their experience for everyone to see, it is to serve as a mirror for the other members of the Sixth, provoking us to learn about their experience and immense achievements, question our own situation, and analyze what action we should take about it in our own places and times and specific conditions in order to generate our own rebellions, powerful and conscious forms of collective organizations, and combative mass movement, as well as our own specific struggles against the rich and powerful and later our own paths in the construction of autonomy, democracy, self-government, self-management, and freedom in general.

This was clearly one of the important meanings of the Little Zapatista School, where thousands of members of the Sixth and other attendees from Mexico and around the world were able to directly experience the general

17 On the current situation in Mexico—i.e., on the eve of a social upheaval comparable only to the 1810 War of Independence or the Mexican Revolution of 1910—see Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Contrahistoria de la Revolución Mexicana*, Universidad Michoacana, 2nd ed., Morelia, 2011, in particular Chapter 4, "El pasado y el presente explican el futuro: México en las vísperas de una nueva Revolución Mexicana" (The Past and Present Explain the Future: Mexico on the Eve of a New Mexican Revolution).

lessons of the neo-Zapatista 'example' in order to later 'replicate' or 'reproduce' it with their own variants, specificities, and necessary peculiarities, in their "own calendars and geographies" and according to their "own ways" (in other words, according to their own forms, spaces, and contexts of life, resistance, and struggle.[18] The profound experience of the Little Zapatista School remains open-ended and has been affirmed at meetings with the National Indigenous Congress and at the First World Festival of Resistance and Rebellion Against Capitalism.

Finally, a sixth feature that characterizes the newest stage of neo-Zapatismo is that which answers the one of the six questions posed in 2006 by the Other Campaign, specifically the fifth question, which dealt with who was convened and who was not, in order to know who was a potential ally in our struggles and who was an enemy (or at least separate from our rebellions).

Here, neo-Zapatismo's response is highly innovative and perceptive in setting the four criteria that must be fulfilled by those to whom the Sixth directs its words, actions, and initiatives. These criteria are: (1) being the direct *victims* of the functioning of the capitalist social system; (2) of being *excluded* from the 'normal functioning' of capitalism, today in its terminal crisis; (3) being part of the social 'below,' i.e., part of the strata of society oppressed by the social 'above'; and 4.) being among those who clearly say "Enough!" to the attacks, exclusion, and humiliation they suffer and become rebels who fight within their national social contexts.

This triple (and sometimes four-part) definition of the social subjects the Sixth attempts to incorporate into its struggle includes both the sectors, groups, and classes who were the pillars of antisystemic movements prior to the world revolution of 1968 and new groups, identities, and conditions which are the products of capitalism's most recent processes, developed in the last 40 years of its stage of terminal crisis.

In this way, neo-Zapatismo and the Sixth's call is directed firstly to the principal victims of the everyday, "normal" functioning of the capitalist social system. These victims are victims insofar as they endure the foremost effects of what the neo-Zapatistas call the "four wheels" of capitalism. These are the four processes that have allowed it to affirm itself, grow, function, and maintain itself despite its essentially irrational nature, which sacrifices humans in

18 On the important experience of the Little Zapatista School and its primary lessons, see Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "La 'Escuelita Neozapatista': vivir desde adentro la lucha por la autonomía", in *Contrahistorias* 21, Mexico, 2013.

the face of commodity-things and which submits real production, concrete consumption, and the entire economy of the use-value and its logic to the automatic, abstract, empty, and senseless valorization of unlimited value.

The four wheels of capitalism are: (1) economic exploitation, (2) dispossession in all its forms, (3) disdain and its various discriminatory incarnations, and (4) the repression of all those who resist or rebel against capitalism's devastating effects. These four wheels firstly define the economic exploitation of the working class, the central pillar of the antisystemic movements of the last two centuries and an always-fundamental part of any head-on and decisive struggle against capitalism. They also, however, define peasants, salaried workers, large segments of the middle class, and all those who—in a thousand ways and via the most subtitle, intricate, and indirect paths—feed capitalism's insatiable hunger for surplus value which is today (as it has been for centuries) the real blood that runs through the veins of sinister and incumbent capital.[19]

Alongside these victims of capitalist economic exploitation stand the victims of the dispossession which capitalism has executed since its birth five centuries ago. These include the European peasants of the 15th and 16th centuries, dispossessed of their communal and individual lands, and contemporary indigenous people, dispossessed of their forests, waters, and the wealth of their subsoils. Also included in this group are entire countries which are stripped of their resources through contemporary wars, as well as a large part of the world's populations, who are dispossessed of the little savings they have through the creation and manipulation of sophisticated financial mechanisms and documents by the increasingly predatory system of international finance and banking. We might also mention, for example, the working classes and subaltern groups across the planet who in recent years have been stripped by savage neoliberalism of the social rights they have acquired and the hard-won achievements of the welfare state.

19 Naturally, the author who remains indispensable and more valid than ever for understanding the essence of capitalist economic exploitation (with its structuring centrality for the social in general and the various consequences of this) is Karl Marx. It is no coincidence that more and more adherents of the Sixth in Mexico and the world constantly return to the reading, analysis, and discussion of several fundamental Marxist texts, including *Capital*, the *Grundrisse*, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, and *Theories of Surplus Value*, among others. On this healthy and much-needed recovery of Marx's *Critique of Political Economy*, see Bolívar Echeverría, *El discurso crítico de Marx*, Ediciones Era, 1986, and Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *El problema del fetichismo en El Capital*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico, 1984.

A third group of victims are the victims of disdain, i.e., of all the forms of discrimination which capitalism inherits from the past and recycles and refunctionalizes for its own benefit and everyday functioning, as well as of the forms of discrimination that capitalism itself invents. While neo-Zapatismo and the Sixth find in the cultivation and defense of diversity one of their fundamental treasures (and therefore refuse to homogenize their own movement), capitalism instead finds one of its central pillars in rejecting and disdaining difference. Capitalism rejects that which departs from or does not entirely meet dominant molds and thus discriminates for the simple fact that a person is old, Black, indigenous, poor, or weak, or is a worker, a peasant, a woman, a homosexual, or is too sensitive, or too strange, or is rebellious, heretical, or dysfunctional, or any item on an endless list of symptoms of that condition of simply being *different*.

A fourth group of the victims of capitalism's everyday functioning are those caught under its fourth wheel: repression. Just as old as exploitation, dispossession, and discrimination are rebellion, insubordination, protest, and opposition. Thus, anyone who resists capitalism and its processes of extortion, robbery, and humiliation will suffer the thousand mechanisms of repression: these people are the fourth kind of victim of the despicable capitalist world-system.

On the other hand, and as a second defining criteria of those who have been convened by the Sixth and by neo-Zapatismo, stand those *excluded* by the capitalist social system. These are, in other words, those groups who have been openly expelled from capitalism's 'normal' functioning or have otherwise been directly marginalized by recent changes in and internal restructurings of capitalism. Also among the excluded are those groups that, for whatever reason, the capitalist system has decided to leave outside of its dynamic of evolution and expansion.

The fact of enduring daily exploitation, continual dispossession, repeated discrimination, or repression at the hands of capitalism means that a group is still a constituent part of this system, however humiliated or oppressed they may be. To be decreed and treated as an 'inessential,' 'forgettable,' or even 'suppressible' group, however, means that a given group directly suffers *exclusion*. These are the groups that Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos once referred to as capitalism's "Bags of Forgetting."[20].

20 On this characterization and its foremost consequences, cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, "Unas palabras sobre nuestro pensamiento", op. cit. It is no coincidence that, in the face of these "Bags of Forgetting," the neo-Zapatistas have always asserted their

These groups, excluded from the 'normal' functioning of capitalism, have in the last 40 years multiplied and diversified enormously as a result of capitalism's entry into its terminal crisis. For while capitalism functioned in (more or less) a situation of equilibrium during its five century-long life, the groups that make up the sector of the excluded were relatively small and scarce groups within dominated and exploited societies. But as capitalism begins to collapse and its central structures cease to function properly, one of the many expressions of this structural crisis is the expulsion, margination, and increasing reproduction of these "Bags of Forgetting" represented by ever-larger groups, sectors, populations, and communities who are directly excluded from the "normal" functioning of the system as a whole.

For this reason, it is endlessly interesting that those groups who are *newly excluded* from the system have been a central part of the protagonists who have built several of the most important antisystemic movements of the last three or four decades. Today, the world's most important rebellions include the unemployed of Argentina, the Landless Workers of Brazil, and those we might call the Rights-less, Citizenship-less, and Legal Existence-less: the indigenous peoples of Mexico, Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, etc. Other major rebellions are those of the undocumented in France and across Europe (as well as in the United States, where many undocumented people are Mexicans), the unemployed in Spain (most of whom are young people), the 'Democracy-less' of the Arab countries, the 'Quality Education-less' of Chile, the 'Freedom-less' of the United States, the 'Equal Treatment-less' of the English, French, and Belgian Slums, and the 'Voiceless' or 'Worthless' of Greece, among many other examples.

This set of groups, social sectors, and human communities suffer exclusion by global capitalism. Their social exclusion sometimes overlaps with their condition as victims of the system: they are alternately victims or excluded, or combine exclusion in one dimension of their social being with victimization in another, or suffer only of these conditions. These groups represent central

celebrated slogan of fighting for "a world where many worlds fit." On the fact that part of the global impact of the neo-Zapatista movement is due to the fact that the movement has taken up the universal struggle against the various forms of social exclusion, cf. Immanuel Wallerstein, "Marcos, Mandela, y Gandhi", in *Historia y dilemas de los movimientos antisistémicos*, Contrahistorias, Mexico, 2008, and Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "El significado del neozapatismo mexicano dentro de los movimientos antisistémicos actuales", in *Contrahistorias* 22, op. cit.

element of those convened by the Sixth and by neo-Zapatismo in the fourth stage of its historical existence.

But—and here lies one of the political, scientific, and sociological innovations of the *compañeros* in their inventive characterization of contemporary global capitalism—the abovementioned social groups are only called upon by virtue of being part of the social 'below.' Being part of this below is not at all identical to being excluded or a victim. Instead, the *compañeros* define the below based on the fundamental difference between the haves and the have-nots. They do so with an understanding of 'having' which is not merely the possession of material goods or riches but is rather the social possession of the few who benefit from holding the monopoly on the usufruct of (for example) a position on the social ladder, a given status, a material good, a socially-assigned attribute, a specific privilege, or some exclusive function in the face of the many who have none of these things.

This means that the division between society's above and below is not equal to relations of exploitation, dispossession, discrimination, or repression. Neither, however, is it equal to the relations of exclusion described here—it is a *new* partition of society. This division derives from the establishment of a minority that holds wealth, military power, political power, the condition of being "normal," social hierarchy, a family name, intangible heritage, knowledge-power, cultural domination, mastery of correct language, or a hegemonic social position in opposition to the vast majority that has none of these things, that is dispossessed of these various monopolies on social privilege in its many forms.[21]

This clear division between the social above and below shows us how the framework of determining the identities of contemporary social subjects becomes more complex: one may be discriminated against by being a woman, but at the same time, a woman of the social above can enjoy certain privileges

21 It is worth stressing that the neo-Zapatistas are very much conscious of the novel and inventive character of the framework of a social division between 'above' and 'below': in the January 2013 communiqué "Them and Us, Part V.—The Sixth.", they state that "The Zapatistas know that this great line we have drawn across the world geography is not a conventional understanding. We know that this model of 'above' and 'below' bothers, irritates, and disturbs some." Later on, they add that "Perhaps there will be another opportunity to explain more of our thinking on this." We believe that this proposed division between society's above and below not only enriches the characterization of contemporary global capitalism's essential features but also represents a rich challenge to modern sociological and political theory. All truly critical social scientists must seriously take up and deepen this challenge.

derived from her position at the top of the social pyramid. Alternately, one may be truly exploited as a peasant and at the same time operate as a corrupt peasant 'strongman' who sells himself and acts as an accomplice to those above. One may affirm that they are a leftist and even claim to defend and represent those below and in fact be part of the political Left of the social above. In other words, one may be a member of the official and institutional Mexican Left, well-behaved, genteel, utterly servile to existing power, and a conscious accomplice (through shameful "Pacts for Mexico") to the rampant and terrible progressive destruction of our country.

In this way, this difference between above and below seems to point (beyond capitalism's four wheels and beyond its growing processes of social exclusion) toward the difference between the minorities who illegitimately enjoy the multiple forms of power's existence and the great majorities excluded from these powers, whether they be economic, political, symbolic, religious, or cultural power, military power, knowledge-power, bio-power, disciplinary power, or the power of regulation and control, etc. Obviously, this situation establishes the urgent need to create ever-greater counter-powers from below and to the left. These powers must be aimed not at someday replacing the powers which reign today but instead and more radically at completely destroying the conditions which make possible the creation of the various oppressive and asymmetrical forms of power, i.e., at destroying the division between above and below. For this reason, the neo-Zapatistas say that they are "talking about destroying the social relations that make it possible for someone to be above *at the cost* of someone else being below" (italics ours).[22]

If one of the central pillars of the division between above and below is the existence and manifold deployment of the different antithetical and diverging forms of social power, it is therefore logical that one of the essential paths for destroying those forms from below and to the left, thus destroying the division between the social above and below, is the affirmation and broadest possible expansion of neo-Zapatista radical global autonomy.

22 For this quote, see again "Them and Us, Part V.—The Sixth." If our hypothesis (that the division between the social above and below is linked in an important way to the existence and reproduction of the various forms of power) is true, then a major author we should seriously and systematically reread and reclaim in regard to this topic is Michel Foucault, who produced a wealth of thought on this fundamental problem. In this regard, cf. Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "Generando el contrapoder desde abajo y a la izquierda (o de cómo cambiar el mundo, revolucionando desde abajo el poder)", in *Contrahistorias* 8, Mexico, 2007.

This autonomy is not merely legal (the autonomy to govern oneself according to one's own laws) or cultural (the autonomy to assert one's identity, culture, worldview, or customary law): it is true radical global autonomy, a community's autonomy to decide what kind of lifestyle and relations it wants to build in absolutely all aspects of social life. This is thus economic, cultural, political, social, and general civilizational autonomy which is necessarily incompatible with the existence and reproduction of all currently dominant powers.[23] For if the antithesis of economic power is economic autonomy and the antithesis of political, social, or cultural power is political, social, or cultural autonomy, then the affirmation of global autonomy (as the neo-Zapatistas understand it) is identical to the subversion and complete dismantling of the social conditions that enable the existence of the various powers which currently dominate, and, by extension, enable the existence of the social above and below.

In this way, the call of neo-Zapatismo and the Sixth goes out to the victims of capitalism and those excluded by this system who also form part of the vast social below. But it convenes these elements only insofar as, in addition to being victims, excluded, and part of the social below, they understand themselves to be genuinely *rebellious* subjects in the face of capitalism. In other words, these elements are convened insofar as they are subjects who, facing capitalism's exploitation, dispossession, discrimination, repression, exclusion, and marginalization of them from the many monopolies on forms of social power, have cried their own specific "Enough!" and begun to believe that things could be "another way" and need not be as they are now.

For the fourth criteria that must be met by those now called on to join the Sixth is that of being unsatisfied and unhappy with the capitalist system and of being unwilling to endure this system passively, without doing anything about it. If since its third stage, the stage of the Other Campaign, neo-Zapatismo has been defined as a vast *anti-capitalist* social movement, in this fourth stage this explicitly anti-capitalist and antisystemic position is reaffirmed, becoming one of the several important conditions that a group or individual must fulfill to join the vast and flexible but also well-defined and precise emerging movement of the Sixth.

For if the source of all our ills lies in the capitalist social system and if all the objectives for which we fight—autonomy, freedom, self-government,

23 On neo-Zapatista global autonomy, see again Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Mandar Obedeciendo: Las lecciones políticas del neozapatismo mexicano*, op. cit.

direct democracy, justice, and self-determination—are the very antithesis of capitalism, then only by being truly rebellious, radical, anti-capitalist, and antisystemic can we achieve our goals and completely remedy our current problems.

Briefly outlined, these are some of the defining features of the new stage of neo-Zapatismo that began in December 2012 and continues into the present. As the *compañeros* point out, this new stage will not only not be easier than the ones that preceded it but will indeed be more difficult, more complex, and likely longer and more arduous. But it will also, without a doubt, be a stage that is firmer, better defined, more convinced, and above all stronger inasmuch as it is supported and imbued with the conviction that "one, ten, a hundred, a thousand times; always, we will always win." Or, as the wise Mapuche *compañeros* would put it: Marichiweu!

* * *

Appendix 4

THE LITTLE ZAPATISTA SCHOOL: LIVING THE STRUGGLE FOR AUTONOMY FROM WITHIN

"Don't you know?
They're talkin' about a revolution […]
Poor people are gonna rise up
And take what's theirs […]
And finally the tables are starting to turn
Talking about a revolution…"

Tracy Chapman, "Talkin' Bout a Revolution", 1988.

On the Way to School

The recent experience of the Little Zapatista School (Escuelita Neozapatista), held in August 2013 in the Chiapas territories under the control of this dignified Mexican indigenous movement, has been striking. It constitutes an experience that, in addition to being profound in the personal and emotional senses, is loaded with fundamental theoretical, political, and moral lessons. The five days of the first course, entitled "Freedom According to the Zapatistas," saw a multiplication of the many lessons transmitted to this initiative's 1,700 participants by each student's Votán (Guardian) and by the neo-Zapatista peoples and communities themselves.

At first glance, the Little Zapatista School presents itself as a new version of the three Gatherings of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World held in 2006 and 2007, now radicalized and carried to their logical conclusions. In other words, the Little School is an effort to illustrate and demonstrate the most profound essence of the multiple concrete forms and

dimensions by which the neo-Zapatista peoples build true autonomy every day. In the First, Second, and Third Gatherings of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World, however, these processes of illustration and demonstration were one-directional—running from the Zapatistas to their audience—and took the spoken word as their primary (even exclusive) vehicle. At the Little School, in contrast, illustrating the struggle for autonomy became a much more complex and multi-dimensional process that was dialogical, participatory, and directly experiential in that it transmitted the *lived experience* of the struggle for autonomy. The Little School shared this experience directly with the support bases, debated it with Votánes in the largest possible Gatherings and Assemblies, and examined it from its deepest interior and its most essential everyday manifestations.[1]

The major step forward that the Little School represents in terms of the three Gatherings of 2006 and 2007 is that it *directly integrated* its 1,700 participants (albeit for the brief span of a week) into the complex everyday process of building the neo-Zapatista movement itself. In doing so, the Little School also integrated these participants into neo-Zapatismo's current antisystemic struggle against and resistance to Mexican, Latin American, and global capitalism. This temporary integration aimed to do more than just educate individuals about neo-Zapatismo from within its innermost elements: it consciously and explicitly inserted itself into the *new global strategy* that neo-Zapatismo has put forward for the social movements, collectives, and individuals who are truly committed to the radical anti-capitalist and antisystemic struggle in Mexico and across the world. This new strategy was put forward following the movement's astonishing public reemergence on December 21, 2012, within the series of communiques that led up to the Little School during 2013.[2]

1 In this vein, Subcomandante Marcos had already written that "According to the Zapatistas, the place of teaching and learning—school—is the collective. That is, the community. And the teachers and students are those who make up the collective. All of them. So there is no teacher, but rather a collective that teaches, that demonstrates, that trains, and in it and with it—a person who learns and, at the same time, teaches." This statement is found in the communique "VOTÁN II. The Guardians.", July 30, 2013, at *Enlace Zapatista*: http://www.ezln.org.mx.

2 On this new stage of neo-Zapatismo and the Little Zapatista School's role within it, cf. all the communiques written by the *compañeros* on the subject published at *Enlace Zapatista*, cited above. The majority of these texts are also included in printed form in the book *La fuerza del Silencio: 21-12-12*, Eón, Mexico, June 2013. See also Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "La nueva etapa del neozapatismo mexicano", in *Contrahistorias* 21, Mexico, 2013.

Among its many elements, neo-Zapatismo's new global strategy includes a clear posture of refusal to supplant its *compañeros* and fraternal social movements. This is a refusal, in other words, to take the place of those *compañeros* in struggles that belong to them. Instead of attempting to achieve goals meant for others, the new neo-Zapatista strategy takes up Marx's thesis that the "emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself." Today, this means that each class, collective, and movement must fight its own battles, define its specific agenda of struggle and its objectives, and confront—on its own geography and in its own calendar—the enemy common to everyone and the cause of our woes: the system of global and Mexican capitalism.

For this reason, one of the many goals of the Little School was to function as a mirror that would question each of its participants as to how they carried out (and could carry out in the future) the shared and singular antisystemic and anti-capitalist struggle for autonomy, self-management, self-government, and freedom—a struggle that is also necessarily opposed to exploitation, pillage, repression, exclusion, and the many unjust asymmetries of the 'above' and 'below.'

In demonstrating and having participants experience (not in speeches or theory but in daily life) the autonomy and freedom which the *compañeros* are building today in their new, non-capitalist, non-classist worlds, the Little School radically and directly asked each of its students how we could build these new worlds in our own spaces and times with the autonomy we saw, felt, and admired in the second week of August 2013. This explains Subcomandante Marcos' affirmation that the Little School's "final exam" would be proctored by a mirror and its only question would be: "What is freedom according to you and yours?[3]

In this way, one of the central objectives of the Little School is to channel the global strategy set out for the new stage of neo-Zapatista struggle. In practice, it applies a kind of interpellative and dialogical pedagogy based on the direct and experiential incorporation of each student into the case that one seeks to transmit or show or 'teach.' This pedagogy is based on an example that involves and incorporates the 'student' within the experience that the 'educator' wishes to transmit, and its primary result is the question of how that student will be able to 'reproduce' the lessons of that example that they not

3 Cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, "VOTÁN II. The Guardians.", July 30, 2013, op. cit.

only 'studied' but experienced, shared, and even built themselves in practice by their own direct actions.

Because if theory is born out of practice and knowledge in general fundamentally springs from direct experience, then the best way to do something is by doing it: the best way to learn to struggle is by struggling, and the best way to learn what freedom and autonomy are is to live and exercise them directly and in practice. This is one of the profound and radical meanings of the exceptional experience of the Little Zapatista School.

* * *

In participating in the Little School and involving themselves in the innovative pedagogy of transmitting a case by experiencing and building it directly, the school's hundreds of participants were able to witness the enormous strength and vitality today enjoyed by the neo-Zapatista movement. Without being asked to do so, and through only the simple "exchange" of this process of creating autonomy and freedom, the comrades also showed us the profound honesty, radical realism, and calm self-critical certainty that characterize them, in the context of the various tasks and endeavors that stem from this process of struggle for autonomy.

In conversations with Votánes and support bases, in collective meetings, and in the four Notebooks and two videos distributed as supporting material for this first course, "Freedom According to the Zapatistas," participants were astonished by the clarity and honesty neo-Zapatismo showed them in discussing both its enormous achievements and its mistakes and the problems it has been unable to resolve. The movement openly recognizes the obstacles it has not yet managed to overcome, as well as its weak points.

Displaying a realism that is radically faithful to the difficult and complex situation they face, the Zapatistas neither hide nor conceal anything. They explain and deal with the facts as they are, without embellishment or self-satisfied bias. In this way, they reveal both their virtues and their defects; the positive sides of their practice and their everyday struggle, as well as the negative or bad sides of the same. They do so with a clear and implacable sense of self-criticism which, far from denying or minimizing their limits, exposes them and makes them evident in order to face them head on and effectively overcome them in practice.

Far from reflecting any weakness on the part of the movement, neo-Zapatismo's unembellished demonstration of its problems speaks to its great

strength and vitality. Only a truly solid movement, well-constructed and deeply rooted in the lives, hearts, and minds of its hundreds of thousands of members and millions of followers can be capable of openly and untroubledly discussing its past and current mistakes, its failures, the gaps it has not yet filled, and the problems and difficulties it has not yet solved, as was done at the Little School.

This astonishing exercise of truthful, calm, and open self-criticism leads the Zapatistas to openly show what they still do not know, what they have not been able to overcome, and what they have yet to do. Because, as they themselves have repeatedly taught us, "what's missing is yet to come." This, however, does not prevent us from recognizing all that they have already achieved, all the immense progress made, and all the lessons and teachings contained in their difficult and complex, but also very rich and heuristic experience of more than 20 years on the road to freedom and autonomy. Let us examine, then, only a few of these lessons and teachings that became evident to the hundreds of participants of the first iteration of the Little Zapatista School.

Hurrying to Get There

> "They wanted to change our ideas, making us believe that it's them who are wise, who are good, who are the most advanced in language, imposing their education on us […]"
> Compañera Ana, MAREZ El Trabajo, in the "Resistencia Autónoma" Notebook, August 2013.

The central lessons of the Little School are many and diverse, and the present and future task of those who participated in this experience is to reflect upon, theorize, and gradually explain the essential lessons that the neo-Zapatista *compañeros* imparted to the individuals, groups, collectives, and movements pursuing antisystemic struggles in Mexico and across the world. For this reason, and in line with this great effort (which should be a collective one), we wish here to note only some first traces or elements of only some of these central lessons.

A first possible lesson, proceeding from the fact that this was an initiative that was explicitly announced as a "Little School", has to do with one of the axes or nuclei that compose and define the main function of schools in contemporary society. This is the general process of transmitting a body of

knowledge and the resulting hierarchy, value, and function assigned to that specific knowledge. But, given that this is a "little" school—a school that is very different from the official modern bourgeois school predominant today across the world—it is logical that this school should revolutionize our usual notions of what a school is. Likewise, it makes sense that the Little Zapatista School should redefine our understandings of who teachers and students are, of pedagogy itself and of pedagogical methods, of the content of the "teaching-learning" process, and even of the physical places, schedules, recesses, evaluation methods, and results of this very other Little School.

Neo-Zapatismo is a direct heir of the World Cultural Revolution of 1968 and of all the lessons that revolution bequeathed us concerning the radical critique of capitalist schooling. As such, the Zapatistas have already incorporated in their own schools both the critique of the disciplinary structure which classifies and homogenizes the behavior of students as well as an overcoming of the profound separation between school and real life. Zapatista schools also incorporate a critique of the ridiculous idea that teachers are the sole repository of knowledge facing their students' total ignorance. Furthermore, they dismantle the supposed neutrality, objectivity, and ideological clear-sightedness of the knowledge transmitted and reproduced within contemporary educational institutions.[4]

The Little School (directed now not toward Zapatista children and young people but toward the 1,700 invitees who attended it in August 2013) naturally departs from the implicit incorporation of all of these critiques and overcomings that neo-Zapatismo inherits from the World Cultural Revolution of 1968, but also adds new elements that should be examined in detail. Among these elements is the fact that the establishment of the specific 'teacher'/'student' composition of the Little School radically subverts the bourgeois hierarchy now dominant in the body of existing knowledge in societies across the world. While the Zapatistas affirm that the true teacher is the collective, the entire community—which during the Little School included the school's own invited students—this does not do away with the fact that one of the central functions of the indigenous Votánes was to teach students from outside the

4 Regarding the foremost effects of the World Revolution of 1968 on the structures of modern knowledge and on capitalist schooling, cf. Immanuel Wallerstein, *Abrir las ciencias sociales*, Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1996, and Michel Foucault, *Vigilar y castigar*, Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1993. On the basic features of everyday neo-Zapatista education cf. Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Mandar obedeciendo: Las lecciones políticas del neozapatismo mexicano*, Contrahistorias, 5th ed., Mexico, 2010.

community about the process of Zapatista autonomy in all its dimensions. Neither does it do away with the fact that during the week of the Little School, every student had come to learn what "Freedom According to the Zapatistas" was and how it was constructed.

The "teachers" (or instructors, or guides) were the neo-Zapatista support bases: the hundreds of thousands of dignified indigenous rebels of the Mexican south-east. The students, on the other hand, were members of civil society (including university professors and researchers as well as undergraduate and postgraduate students) and political activists and militants from a broad range of movements who had solid political educations. In practice, this implied a profound revolution of the habitual and accepted hierarchy of knowledges within contemporary capitalist society. This revolution updated and deepened the critique of this hierarchy made since 1968 which is present in all the great cultural theorists of the last 40 or 50 years, carrying this critique to its logical consequences.

This bourgeois-capitalist hierarchy of knowledge forgets that the most fundamental form of knowledge is that which is born directly out of experience. It forgets, therefore, that the basic knowledge that makes possible any other form of knowledge is deep popular knowledge. This popular knowledge is necessarily the source of other knowledges, including scholarly, bookish, indirect knowledge, which is a derivative and second-rate knowledge but is the knowledge which is learned, taught, and transmitted in schools and universities across the world.[5] The bourgeois period of history in which we live has

5 For this reason, Friedrich Engels was able to concisely affirm that "if society has a technical need, it serves as a greater spur to the progress of science than do ten universities" in his January 25, 1894 letter to H. Starkenburg, compiled in Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *Correspondencia completa de C. Marx-F. Engels*, Editor Rojo, Vol. II, Bogotá, 1973. For the same reason, writers such as Mikhail Bakhtin, Carlo Ginzburg, Edward P. Thompson, and Bolívar Echeverría have demonstrated the fundamental primacy of popular culture over hegemonic cultures and the essential link between popular knowledge and the world of direct experience. This connection explains the fact that Rabelais's great literature owes its originality to having been enriched by the carnivalesque culture of the people, the fact that refined theater was born out of popular theater, and the fact that great literature was born out of anonymous popular literature. It also explains the fact that dominant and patrician culture feeds upon and builds itself by 'stealing' the motifs of popular and plebeian culture. It furthermore explains that any possible 'definition of culture' must necessarily stem from the immediate practical process of the relationship between humans and nature and between humans and the practical circumstances that surround them. For these texts, cf. Mikhail Bakhtin, *La cultura popular en la Edad Media y en el Renacimiento: El contexto de François Rabelais*, Alianza Editorial, Madrid, 1989; Carlo Ginzburg, *El queso y*

attempted to falsely anoint this scholarly knowledge as the only true form of knowledge, when not merely the primary, superior, or most important form of knowledge which structures and defines all other forms of human knowledge.

This absurd hierarchy of knowledge, critiqued by the World Revolution of 1968 and by the abovementioned cultural theorists, is directly subverted and practically transcended by the Little Zapatista School. In modifying the expected roles of the rebel indigenous support bases and the academics and political activists, making the former the latter's 'teachers,' the Little School not only restored the primacy of popular knowledge over scholarly and bookish knowledge but resituated this derivative, indirect knowledge born out of reading and traditional schools and universities back in its rightful, secondary place.

This, though, does not happen under a logic that seeks to replace the previous hierarchy with a new one, now inverted, where popular culture or knowledge will dominate scholarly knowledge, or where a hierarchy where indigenous culture will dominate mestizo or Ladino culture. The point is to eliminate the hierarchical relationships between different knowledges and cultures and replace them with an open, dialogical, horizontal understanding of those knowledges. For this reason, and in contrast to the "evangelist syndrome" criticized by Subcomandante Marcos for assuming "as evident that Ladino or mestizo culture is superior to indigenous culture in its breadth and depth of knowledge," "when an indigenous person comes across a different culture, away from his territory, he tends spontaneously to try to understand it, not to seek to establish a dominator/dominated relationship."[6]

Far from looking down on the scholarly forms of knowledge that flood schools and universities across the world, the Little School resituates them in their proper place and tries to assimilate them by recuperating the parts of them that can be useful and productive for the liberating, autonomist struggle and for the more general process of the worldwide struggle for emancipation.

While the indigenous support bases "taught" the meaning of autonomy and freedom to those professors, doctors, students, militants, and curious young people from around the world, they insisted that their knowledge on

los gusanos, Muchnik Editores, Barcelona, 1991; Edward Palmer Thompson, *Costumbres en común*, Crítica, Barcelona, 1995; and Bolívar Echeverría, *Definición de la cultura*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico, 2010.

6 Subcomandante Marcos develops these theses in "Tercer viento: un digno y rabioso color de la Tierra", delivered on January 3, 2009, at the First Global Festival of Dignified Rage, available at *Enlace Zapatista*, op. cit.

autonomy, self-government, and self-management had not been learned from books or been taken from any written manual or anti-manual. The knowledge they shared was the concrete and carefully analyzed result of their own experience of direct struggle, of their decades-long 'practical' efforts and combats developed through the process of building autonomy.

In this way, a second possible lesson from this first course of the Little Zapatista School, directly connected with the first, is that of radically redefining the role and function of intellectuals in general and specifically within the world's anti-capitalist and antisystemic social movements. In reestablishing in practice the true relationship between different forms of knowledge—reminding us that knowledge is born of practice, that direct experience is the foundational form of knowledge, and that book-knowledge is a secondary form of knowledge derived from direct experience—the Little School redefines the roles that 'intellectuals' (i.e., the bearers of that dependent, scholarly knowledge) can play in contemporary antisystemic movements.

The new role of the intellectual thus impedes and annuls the possibility of them being the 'guides' or lucid and enlightened 'conscience' of these movements. For if book-knowledge is indeed derived from experiential knowledge, from deep popular knowledge, then book-knowledge cannot seek to guide or dominate popular knowledge or dictate its path as intellectuals (even left-wing intellectuals) once sought to do, especially prior to 1968. This, however, does not mean that the knowledge of intellectuals cannot be important, useful, and productive for contemporary antisystemic movements: it can be, and it can even be fundamental in specific circumstances, but only with the acceptance that that knowledge can never be the essential or central knowledge for the general structuring and global definition of the destinies or action of these social movements.[7]

7 This in no way implies that the neo-Zapatistas hold any sort of anti-intellectual attitude. On the contrary, they greatly respect and value the work of "intellectuals from below" and the "other intellectuals," who they refer to as the movement's "big heads." This respect was shown once again at the Little School of August 2013. But while they recognize and respect these intellectuals from below, it is clear that the Zapatistas do not ask them for direction or light or 'conscience': they simply ask these intellectuals to integrate modestly into the movement and accompany it fraternally and in simple solidarity, to learn about it from below and to horizontally supply it with the intellectual tools and knowledge at their disposal, as well as with new elements for the movement's collective self-reflection. In other words, the Zapatistas ask intellectuals to humbly put their knowledge at the service of the common cause and, in doing so, to contribute "from their environment and in their own way" to the great collective labor of reflection and analysis that is the task of

The radically different role of intellectuals within antisystemic movements which is materialized so concretely in the Little School was prefigured by the revolution of 1968. In addition to radically altering all of the world's anti-capitalist movements, 1968 shattered the false hierarchy and anointing of intellectuals within protest movements. This dethroning of the 'philosopher-king' was clearly perceived and theorized by Michel Foucault in his day and has gradually been taken up over the last 40 years by all of the world's new antisystemic movements, including neo-Zapatismo.[8]

Thus, if intellectuals are no longer and cannot be either the 'conscience' that comes from outside the movement or the 'carriers' and 'exclusive generators' of theory within the movement, then we can better understand Subcomandante Marcos's repeated statement that for the Zapatistas, their "theory is their own practice." Neo-Zapatismo's deep, rich political knowledge and knowledge in general essentially comes neither from books nor classrooms but from its own political practice, from its direct experience of struggle over almost three decades, and from its tenacious and successful concrete efforts to build its own autonomy and birth new, non-capitalist worlds today flowering and prospering across Chiapas.

Today, in contrast to the world of 100 years ago in which Lenin wrote his keen and brilliant *What Is to be Done?*, it is clear that the conscience of a movement no longer needs to come from 'outside.' Instead, this conscience must be developed on the basis of the direct experience of struggle (a thesis which Lenin himself emphatically and wisely affirmed) and must be consolidated and built on the basis of the movement's own collective self-reflection. 'Other intellectuals from below' can contribute modestly to this self-reflection to the degree to which they are willing to fraternally and horizontally accompany these movements.

absolutely all of the movement's members and not merely a restricted group of its 'intellectuals.' On this point, it is worth rereading Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos "¿Otra Teoría?", in *Contrahistorias* 6, Mexico, 2006.

8 On this new role of the intellectual theorized by Michel Foucault, cf. (to mention only one example) his interview "El Intelectual y los Poderes", in *El Poder, una Bestia Magnífica*, Siglo XXI, Buenos Aires, 2012. On the other hand, for the effects of 1968 on that radical redefinition of the world's antisystemic movements, we take the liberty of referring the reader to our own books: Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Antimanual del Buen Rebelde*, Contrahistorias, Mexico, 2013, and *Movimientos Antisistémicos*, Prohistoria, 2nd ed., Rosario, 2012.

With Books Under Their Arm

> "For us, this is freedom: to exercise the right to construct our own destiny, with no one that rules over us and tells us what to do or not do."
> Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, "*VOTÁN II. The Guardians*.", July 30, 2013.

A third general lesson from the Little School has to do with the general content 'taught' to its 'students' over the course of a week. This content seems to deal, per the name given to the course by the *compañeros*, with the subject of "Freedom According to the Zapatistas." But it is also clear that a central part of the Little School's content dealt with the issues listed in the titles of the four notebooks that served as the course's printed supporting materials: "Autonomous Government" (I and II), "Participation of Women in Autonomous Government," and "Autonomous Resistance." Taking this into account and on the basis of presentations delivered to the group that worked in San Cristóbal de Las Casas and the fruitful discussions of the Little School's 'students' with their Votánes (Guardians), it is clear that the central issue discussed throughout this course was none other than the complex daily construction of neo-Zapatista autonomy.

So, if this course was about "Freedom" and the central axis upon which its lessons revolved was the subject of autonomy, this means that for neo-Zapatismo, freedom and autonomy are practically identical (or at least so similar that their essential content overlaps to the degree that they can be treated almost as synonyms). This is quite logical when we remember that "freedom" has been one of the (first 9, then 11, and finally 13) neo-Zapatista slogans, whereas "autonomy" has never been one of these slogans. In light of neo-Zapatismo's last ten years and of the Little School, autonomy would seem to be included in the current demands of the Zapatista movement.

The question is resolved when we remember Subcomandante Marcos's statement in a recent text that "the indigenous Zapatista definition of freedom [is]: to govern and govern ourselves in accord with our ways, in our geography and our calendar." A few lines later, he adds that "For us, this is freedom: to exercise the right to construct our own destiny, with no one that rules over us and tells us what to do or not do."[9] This makes it clear that in the neo-Zapatista worldview, freedom and autonomy are identical concepts: to be free

9 These affirmations are found in Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, "VOTÁN II. The Guardians.", July 30, 2013, op. cit.

means the ability to autonomously decide the destiny that one wishes to build. To be free means to autonomously govern oneself according to their own ways, times, and specific circumstances.

It is thus no coincidence that the definition of freedom put forward by Subcomandante Marcos essentially coincides with the definition of autonomy given some years ago by then-Lieutenant Colonel Insurgente Moisés that autonomy "means that what we want to put together is a life, a society, that it will be we ourselves who propel it, we ourselves who build it."[10]

This broad, encompassing, global idea of what freedom and autonomy mean for the neo-Zapatistas was demonstrated, debated, and lived every day at the Little School. It naturally transcends the limited and literal *juridical* idea of autonomy as well as its slightly broader *political* definition but also the *anthropological* concept of autonomy, which is primarily cultural and identitarian.

The Zapatista concept of freedom-autonomy

encompasses the entire social fabric in all of its manifestations. It thus includes the ideas of self-government according to a community's own laws and of freely defining the configuration of its whole political structure. Zapatista freedom-autonomy means that people act according to their own cultural identities, historical traditions, and customary laws, but it also means that they decide on the kind of ties they want to maintain with nature or the form of economy or social relations and forms of community they live in. It means that people freely choose their own culture, art, music, and knowledge, among many other manifestations and dimensions of freedom-autonomy.

This integral global autonomy reminds us of a community's ability to define and decide upon the total form of its chosen sociality, to paraphrase Bolívar Echeverría. It is therefore as much present in the duties of the autonomous government as it is in gender relations and women's participation. It is also present in the many forms of political-ideological-economic-psychological-social-educational-cultural resistance abundantly discussed in person and in the supporting texts of the Little Zapatista School.

In being asserted as encompassing all levels of the social totality (i.e., of human society as a whole and even human civilization, through its inclusion of the human relationship with space and more generally all links of human metabolism with nature), the Zapatista definition of integral global autonomy

10 This discerning definition of autonomy is found in Lieutenant Colonel Insurgente Moises's January 3, 2007 speech published in *Contrahistorias* 8, Mexico, 2007.

not only leads us directly to a radically anti-capitalist and antisystemic understanding of autonomy and freedom but also leads us to the vital question that now concerns many of the world's antisystemic movements. This question has to do with the viability of building real autonomy if this autonomy is confined to only one or a handful of spheres of the whole of the relations that constitute the human social and civilizational totalities.

Just as participants experienced, observed, and debated over the course of a week, the Zapatistas are indeed trying to build their autonomy in all spheres of society and civilization. They are simultaneously attempting to defend Mother Earth and to build autonomous communication, defending their political self-government and building an autonomous economy. At the same time, the Zapatistas deploy their autonomous resistance against the Mexican government's high-intensity paramilitary and military war, as well as against capitalist ideology broadcast by mass media. These are only some of many forms by which the Zapatistas affirm their integral global autonomy.

The struggle for integral autonomy and overall freedom is an important lesson for antisystemic movements in Mexico and around the world; these, on their own specific paths and by their unique methods, have confirmed the judiciousness of the neo-Zapatista approach. For if autonomy is limited to being an autonomous justice and a mechanism for guaranteeing the safety of a population (as with the Community Police of Guerrero) or if it is confined to defending a community's forests or territory (as with Cherán, in Michoacán), then the Mexican state can create the spurious Armed Self-Defense Groups which have recently appeared in Guerrero to delegitimize and internally divide the promising, truly autonomous 16-year-old project of the Regional Coordination of Community Authorities—Community Police (CRAC-PC) in Guerrero. The Mexican state can also try to isolate the community of Cherán, besieging it through an alliance with the drug traffickers and loggers of Michoacan and trying to delegitimize it by deceitfully labeling it as one of the armed self-defense groups recently created in that state.[11]

For this reason, as our comrades in Guerrero and Michoacán and across Mexico have discovered in practice, true autonomy cannot easily coexist with

11 On the Experience of Guerrero's Community Police, cf. Coordinadora Regional de Autoridades Comunitarias-Policía Comunitaria, "Breve reseña y balance del sistema de seguridad y justicia comunitaria a 14 años de lucha", included in *Otras Geografías: Experiencias de autonomías indígenas en México*, Redez, Mexico, 2010. On the struggle of Cherán, cf. Salvador Campanur, "Entrevista sobre la lucha por la autonomía del pueblo de Cherán, Michoacán", included in *Contrahistorias* 21, Mexico, 2013.

these multiple forms of oppression. Likewise, it cannot survive in the medium term if it does not become the integral global autonomy today embodied by the neo-Zapatistas. For it is not easy to be autonomous only in education or politics if one simultaneously continues to receive subsidies from the bourgeois state; likewise, political or economic autonomy cannot become greatly consolidated if land and territory are still held by that state. These realities are well known to certain truly autonomous Argentinian *piquetero* movements, as well as to the Landless Workers Movement in Brazil.

This is true to the extent that even if autonomy is global and integral, if it is confined within an area that encloses it and isolates it from the rest of society, its survival is put at risk. To bloom and consolidate itself, integral global autonomy must expand across all of Mexico, Latin America, and the world. The neo-Zapatista *compañeros* have understood this point well, and it was one of the central messages of the Little Zapatista School, whose 'final exam' was the single complex question of what autonomy and freedom meant to each student and how each student struggled to achieve it, clear paths for it, and replicate it in their own places and times, recreating it in their own ways.

Thus, this rich and multifaceted concept of integral global autonomy (which has a clearly universal calling) has, within the relatively small but highly significant scale of large swathes of Chiapas, created the germinal but clearly-existing kernel of a new, non-capitalist, non-classist world. It has created the seed of a society and civilization radically different from those which are now dominant across the world.

This is a new world no longer ruled by the logics of capital accumulation and exclusionary imposition by power, the daily reproduction of social inequality, or the cultivation and promotion of hierarchies that degrade the great majority or maintain the social above and below, with their train of discrimination, exploitation, pillage, and oppression. These logics are now replaced by the highly different and antithetical logics of free cooperation, autonomy, horizontality, the promotion of community power, social equality in all its forms, the abolition of all false hierarchies, and the elimination of the social asymmetry of above and below based on fraternity, respect for others, dialogue, and the peaceful and intelligent solution of conflicts.

This new world, which prefigures the beginning of the "Realm of Freedom" Marx discussed in his own times, demonstrates practically that the world capitalist system, with all the misery, violence, inequity, and limitation it represents for humanity, has ceased to be necessary as a mode of organizing

human society and civilization. It is thus historically expired, totally expendable, and immediately able to be transcended everywhere.

Because what the 1,700 students at the Little School saw with our own eyes, felt in our own skin, heard from our Votánes and the support bases—what we experienced in their homes, cornfields, and lands, what we admired in their generous company—was a new society and civilization, neither capitalist nor classist. What we observed there, wonderstruck and enthusiastic, was how it is possible to build all of life and the world in its totality without the various forms of the social above and the pinnacle of the unjust hierarchies now existing in the still-active global capitalist system.

In this way, we were able to gain an inside understanding of an economy that functions with only workers and without bosses. This economy includes a form of agriculture with *campesinos* but without landlords and a form of commerce without rapacious and opportunistic coyotes (middlemen). This is an economy animated instead by the logic of collective and cooperative labor and by defending, caring for, and respecting "Mother Earth" or "Mother Nature."[12]

But the Little School's students also learned how a society without dominant social groups might be build, a society without privileged individuals or hierarchs occupying the highest positions of the hierarchical structures that encompass the whole fabric of society. In other words, students learned how they might build a society without dominating or dominated classes; a society with a form of the family that excludes machos and patriarchs; a society whose justice system is astute and efficient and functions without lawyers or judges; a society within a peaceful, though rebel and insurgent community that can live and prosper untroubled; a society whose police or army are not separate from the people and do not exist to periodically repress them.

This new and very other society and civilization that governs itself and functions harmoniously based on the principle of leading by obeying is a *stateless* society. It lacks corrupt politicians who seek power for its own sake and is

12 This bossless neo-Zapatista economy recalls the Argentinian experiments of the "recovered factories" after that country's 2001 crisis. On that experience, see (among other examples) the collective book *Sin Patrón: Fábricas y empresas recuperadas por sus trabajadores*, Editora Lavaca, Buenos Aires, 2007. For a more general characterization of the neo-Zapatista economy, cf. Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Mandar Obedeciendo: Las lecciones políticas del neozapatismo mexicano*, op. cit., and "Los movimientos antisistémicos de América Latina y su lucha por la tierra en el Siglo XXI", in *Movimientos Antisistémicos*, op. cit.

therefore a social community without political parties, elections, parliaments, or a bureaucracy. This state of affairs recalls the fundamental experiences of the Paris Commune of 1871 or the Soviet government during the last part of Lenin's life.[13]

This society and this civilization are diametrically opposed to contemporary capitalism and within them flowers a culture without know-it-all intellectual monarchs: this culture encompasses a novel and creative education that can function without teachers as well as a form of communication built without opinion leaders and without ideological blind spots, manipulation of information, or lies. It also encompasses a form of art that affirms itself without great artists who are supposedly lone creators and brilliant, extraordinary individuals.[14]

In summation, this is a society that has eliminated in practice all the forms of hierarchy and social privilege which have today become totally superfluous. This society has done away with the monopolistic, asymmetrical, and exclusive attribution of certain special functions to a handful of its members. In other words, it has put an end to the now-illegitimate forms of the social above and replaced them with a community of equals and of people who, despite enormous material difficulties and permanent social-political harassment (even siege and constant threats by military and paramilitary forces) are building their autonomy, self-government, and freedom on the foundation of the boundless force of their centuries-old rebellion and their unbreakable dignity.

13 In regard to these experiences and those of the Italian, German, and Hungarian workers' councils and the Chinese Cultural Revolution, it is worth revisiting the body of essays included in issues 16 and 17 of *Contrahistorias*, 2011.

14 The potent Chilean student movement of 2011 showed us, among many other things, how a school can function perfectly well—even better than currently-existing schools—*without teachers*. On this point, cf. Raúl Zibechi, "Chile: Otra educación es posible", in *Contrahistorias* 18, Mexico, 2012. On the highly posible "death" of art and the subsequent end of the idea of the "great artist" alluded to here, cf. Walter Benjamin, *La obra de arte en la época de su reproductibilidad técnica*, Itaca, Mexico, 2003, and Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "Walter Benjamin, el cine y el futuro del arte", in *Cine Cubano* 180, Havana, April–June 2011.

The Whole World Goes Out to Struggle

> "Well, we're going to win. There's no doubt about that [...] even if we lose, we win. I mean that the project of Zapatismo is so broad that even if it loses it wins." Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, *Entrevista con Manuel Vázquez Montalbán* (Interview with Manuel Vázquez Montalbán), 1999.

Finally, we believe that the Little Zapatista School imparted two fundamental lessons which it might be said were perceived by the school's students rather than explicitly or directly transmitted by the *compañeros* themselves. These two lessons became evident when students spent time with Votánes and support bases, but also when we worked to understand them when we saw them in action and when we contemplated the enthusiasm, openness, and conviction they showed in carrying out their various tasks, both those related to normal daily life and those that had to do with welcoming us, accompanying us, educating us, and incorporating us in various ways into their own concrete process of building autonomy and their specific and radical understanding of freedom.

The first lesson deals with the enormous internal diversity of the neo-Zapatista support bases. These bases are composed of several Maya ethnic groups who speak various languages and live in highly divergent geographical areas, working in different economic areas and practicing distinct historical and cultural traditions. This diversity in the Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Tojolabal, Chol, Mame, and Zoque peoples and languages is matched by a diversity in life: these peoples may live on the coast, in the jungle, in the mountains, or on the plains. Some work as farmers, others raise livestock, and still others work as foresters. Within agriculture, they cultivate coffee and corn and raise chickens, pigs, and cows. They do all of this within worldviews where, depending on location, ancient beliefs, religious precepts, or atheism may hold more or less weight. They use a varied range of clothing; they listen to dissimilar music; they prepare different foods. To different degrees, they have assimilated to or readapted urban or Western culture or cultures other than their own.

This diversity in the internal composition of neo-Zapatismo's own members thus explains why the construction of autonomy and the conquest of freedom necessarily change and adapt depending on the zones, municipalities, regions, and even towns that comprise the movement. In some areas, for example, the land recovered following January 1, 1994 was abundant, while other areas saw practically no land recovered. In combination with the

different relative demographic diversity of each area, this means that the relationship between each zone and municipality (and later each municipality and town) will be different in each case, affecting both the functioning of the assemblies as well as the ties between each organizational body, just as we are told in the four notebooks of "Freedom According to the Zapatistas."

But the lesson that we find fundamental here is that the tremendous internal diversity of the Zapatista peoples has in no way been an obstacle to assembling their powerful and radical antisystemic movement. Far from weakening the movement's action, this diversity has enriched it tremendously. Carefully observing how the *compañeros* have managed to build this rich *unity of diversity* (which is part of the indigenous essence of neo-Zapatismo), we easily understand both the celebrated slogan of fighting "for a world where many worlds fit" and the current neo-Zapatista proposal (proper to this recently-inaugurated stage) of assembling a vast national and international antisystemic movement that neither homogenizes nor hegemonizes its constituent members but instead builds *unity of action* based on concrete and freely-assumed commitments to be kept by the members of the great movement of the Sixth while respecting their specific ways, calendars, and geographies.

Without homogenizing its different ethnicities and peoples and without hegemonizing any of these over another, the neo-Zapatistas have managed to build their movement, which for 20 years has challenged power and the powerful in Mexico and the world. On the basis of this experience we can understand that if the dignified indigenous rebels of Chiapas could do it, there is no doubt that all the subaltern groups and classes of Mexico, Latin America, and the world can do it too. If, while respecting diversity and rejecting hegemonization and homogenization, it has already been possible to create the new non-capitalist worlds we experienced in August 2013, then the creation of thousands of movements similar to neo-Zapatismo is also possible, as is the consequent creation of other non-capitalist worlds governed by freedom and by integral overall autonomy.

This reality is already being developed and has materialized concretely, to different degrees and at different stages of development, in certain experiences of the radical autonomist sectors of the Argentinian *piqueteros*; in the grassroots (much more than in the leaders) of the Landless Workers Movement in Brazil; in certain indigenous communities of the Ecuadorian Amazon that form part of CONAIE; within certain tendencies of the Mapuche movement;

and in certain important groups and experiences today prospering in Bolivia, among many other examples we might mention.[15]

A second fundamental lesson of the Little School which is also relatively 'involuntary' on the part of the neo-Zapatista comrades (who, in addition to being dignified and rebellious, are quite discreet and modest) is the clear perception that neo-Zapatismo has already become, in its three decades of life, so solid, coherent, deeply-rooted, and so enormously lucid, conscious, and intelligent, that it is practically indestructible and invincible.

Because when contemplating how the conviction and consciousness characteristic of the neo-Zapatistas, together with their rebellious, dignified and unbendable will, are completely internalized and assumed by the hundreds of thousands of worthy neo-Zapatista support bases, one can look with much optimism to the future of Mexico and the world, convinced that to defeat this movement, its enemies would have to physically annihilate down to the last and most distant of its members. Moreover, besides being extraordinarily complicated and difficult and fortunately very unlikely, this annihilation would never be either certain or completely certain.

Because when we consider how the conviction and consciousness of the neo-Zapatistas—along with their dignified and unbendable rebel will—have been completely internalized by their hundreds of thousands of worthy support bases, we can look with a great deal of optimism to Mexico's future and the future of the world with the conviction that, in order to defeat it, this movement's enemies would have to physically annihilate even its last and most distant members. In addition to being extraordinary difficult (and, happily, highly unlikely), this would never be completely certain.

The Zapatista seedbed has bloomed across the planet, and today the members of the Sixth and neo-Zapatismo's sympathizers doubtlessly number in the millions. For this reason, the *compañeros* are not lying when they affirm that they are not giving up, selling out, or surrendering: they truthfully express that deep conviction from the deepest parts of their being, from the hundreds of thousands of people they now are. This was something we were able to confirm personally at the Little School. For this reason, beyond what might happen in the future—and admirable radical changes will surely happen in Mexico

15 On these many experiences, cf. Immanuel Wallerstein, "Apéndice: Chiapas y los nuevos movimientos antisistémicos de América Latina", in *Historia y dilemas de los movimientos antisistémicos*, Contrahistorias, Mexico, 2008; Raul Zibechi, *Movimientos Sociales en América Latina*, La Crujía, Buenos Aires, 2008; and Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *América Latina en la encrucijada*, Contrahistorias, Mexico, 2009.

and in many other radical geographies across the world—neo-Zapatismo has already won resoundingly. Given the wealth of teachings that it has lavished upon all the world's anti-capitalist and antisystemic movements (of which the Little Zapatista School is only the most recent lesson), given the wealth of clues, paths, and advances it has amassed in the struggle for freedom and autonomy, the neo-Zapatista movement has come to be an immense treasure, which is in itself a great victory.

For this reason and for so many others, "we're going to win. There's no doubt about that."

* * *

Mexico City, September 13, 2013.

Appendix 5

THE (SYMBOLIC) DEATH OF SUBCOMANDANTE INSURGENTE MARCOS AND THE COLLECTIVE NEO-ZAPATISTA 'WE'

"Our history […] is a collective history, a history where the 'I' does not fit […] we, men, women, Zapatista men, Zapatista women, are not meant to each be an individual […] because the word that made and makes us be what we are and be where we are is the word 'we.' And this is something that many people do not understand." Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, January 1, 2007 Speech, delivered in Oventik, Chiapas.

The Neo-Zapatista Expectation of an Unexpected Death

In the early hours of May 25, 2014, in the Chiapas neo-Zapatista Caracol of La Realidad, in a speech titled "Entre la luz y la sombra" (published in English as "Between Light and Shadow"), the celebrated spokesman of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, known across the world as Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, publicly announced his own death.

In declaring before independent and alternative media outlets that he would read his "last words […] in public before I cease to exist," Subcomandante Marcos revealed an important piece of news that was shocking and unexpected to the majority of the audience present. Immediately, this news began to disseminate across the world, everywhere provoking the same astonishment, disbelief, and uncertainty that it had across Mexico.

One of the most profound features of the capitalist society which unfortunately still prevails across the world, a society that many historians and sociologists characterize as a "society of individuals," is each person's struggle to assert themselves as an individual and reach the highest possible social heights. This feature is characteristic of life in all modern capitalist societies. In the current stage of capitalism, the terminal crisis which we are now experiencing,[1] possessive individualism, the most recalcitrant form of egotism, and extreme isolation of all 'individuals' in capitalist societies have reached such staggering heights that at first it seemed unbelievable that someone could *not* desire worldwide celebrity. It was incomprehensible that someone with the colossal (though involuntary) fame of Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos would announce their own death, and in doing so happily renounce a truly planetary level of celebrity.[2]

However, beyond the enormous global echoes and vast media impact birthed by the 'symbolic' death of Subcomandante Marcos, that death was actually a *collective decision* patiently brought to maturity by the entire neo-Zapatista movement. This decision was in line with the movement's transition to its fourth stage of development and was provoked, in the immediate sense, by the brutal paramilitary aggression of the federal government and the state government of Chiapas against the Council of Good Government (JBG) of the Caracol of La Realidad, an aggression in which the *compañero* known as Galeano was murdered.

But this was also, in a larger sense, a decision whose deepest, most *longue durée* roots stretched down to the neo-Zapatista understanding of the roles that individuals should play in the movement; the role of single individuals in terms of the collective or the neo-Zapatista 'we.' This 'we' draws both from ancient Maya worldviews and from the essential experience of the struggles

1 On the terminal crisis of present-day capitalism, cf. Immanuel Wallerstein, *Después del Liberalismo*, Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1996, and *La crisis estructural del capitalismo*, Desde Abajo, Bogotá, 2007. See also Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Para comprender el mundo actual: Una gramática de larga duración*, Instituto Politécnico Nacional, Mexico, 2010, and *Antimanual del Buen Rebelde*, Contrahistorias, Mexico, 2013, chapter 2.

2 The scope of this celebrity and fame (which were contrary to his own desires) are testified to by the fact that Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos had become the central character-symbol of the neo-Zapatista movement, comparable in dimension and historical role to figures like Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi. This itself is evident, for example, in the interesting article by Immanuel Wallerstein, "Marcos, Mandela, Gandhi", included as an appendix in Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Immanuel Wallerstein: Crítica del sistema-mundo capitalista*, LOM, Santiago de Chile, 2004.

and advances of the primary anti-capitalist movements of the last 140 years, from the Paris Commune down to our own times.

Thus, attempting to recount in greater detail the multiple reasons for the symbolic death of the spokesman and military commander of the EZLN, we think it useful to review, from a Braudelian logic, the different overlapping historical times and various causes (first immediate, then conjunctural, and finally *longue durée*) that explain the definitive disappearance of the emblematic, foundational, and symbolic character who for two decades was Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos.

Despairing Over the Extreme Authoritarianism of the "New" PRI

> "And we saw that now, the outfit, the character, the hologram, was no longer necessary. Time and time again we planned this, and time and time again we waited for the right moment […] And then Galeano arrived with his death to mark our calendar and geography […]"
> Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, "Between Light and Shadow", May 25, 2014.

With the fraudulent elections of 2012, the old and ever more exhausted Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) returned to federal power in Mexico. Inheriting and continuing the absurd and criminal "war on drugs"—in fact a selective war against certain drug trafficking groups and cartels waged in partnership with and for the benefit of other cartels—the PRI government that entered office in December 2012 continued to deploy unbridled violence across Mexico in a failed attempt to regain social control. The primary victims of this violence have been and continue to be Mexico's subaltern classes and sectors.

The governments of the PAN were those of a neoliberal, ultra-conservative, anti-culture, and anti-nationalist far right, while the pre-2000 and post-2012 PRI governments are likewise neoliberal, conservative, ambivalent toward culture, and increasingly anti-nationalist. Beyond the apparent differences between these two sides, what we have seen develop in Mexico since New Year's Day 1994 is a growing *political and social delegitimization of the Mexican state*. Seeing the mechanisms and basis of its social consensus inexorably erode, the state swings irredeemably toward the increasingly authoritarian application, both direct and indirect, of its mechanisms of repression.[3]

3 The neo-Zapatistas have deftly characterized the new PRI government since its outset, as

For this reason, the two years of Enrique Peña Nieto's government have not only seen the continuation of the indiscriminate spread of state violence (begun by Felipe Calderón) across the entire country but have continued the increasingly-severe criminalization of social protest. Nurtured by the economic, social, political, and cultural crisis that Mexico is currently enduring, this wave of protest is multiplying and extending across all of Mexico, as demonstrated at the time of writing by the extensive and increasingly strong protests in response to the forced disappearance of 43 students of the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers' College.

Under this logic, the actions already taken (as well as those planned) by the new authoritarian PRI government are progressing simultaneously on two fronts. The first, in the states of Michoacán, Tamaulipas, and Guerrero (with Jalisco, with Veracruz, Tlaxcala, etc. perhaps following tomorrow), is an effort to reorganize the alliance between the Mexican state and certain segments of drug trafficking, attacking the enemies of these allies while refining the allies themselves. The second front is the criminalization and direct repression of the massive and organized social protest movement whose current and recent primary epicenters have been the states of Chiapas, Oaxaca, Guerrero, and Mexico City. In the near future, the primary epicenter of the movement may be the entire country.

It was in this context of unbridled and failed state violence—shown again by the tragic case of 43 forcibly disappeared students from Ayotzinapa—that on May 2, 2014, paramilitary groups supported by the federal government, state government, and municipal governments of Chiapas ambushed a group of 15 unarmed neo-Zapatistas. The paramilitaries wounded 15, destroyed a clinic and a school at the Caracol of La Realidad, and murdered *compañero* Galeano, who had been a teacher at the Little Zapatista School in August and December 2013 and January 2014.

In a few short days, in response to the cowardly murder of *compañero* Galeano (whose real name was José Luis Solís López), the entire General Command of the EZLN moved to La Realidad. Furthermore, the neo-Zapatistas' meeting

seen in Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos's December 2012 text "We Don't Know You Yet?", available at *Enlace Zapatista*, enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx. A more general characterization of the situation in Mexico can be found in the collection *Intercambio epistolar sobre Ética y Política*, La Otra León, León, 2012, compiled around letters on this subject sent by Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos to Luis Villoro, as well as the responses of various authors to these letters. See also Sergio Rodríguez Lascano, *La crisis del poder y nosotr@s*, Rebeldía, Mexico, 2010.

with the National Indigenous Congress (CNI), a tribute to Luis Villoro, and the "La Ética contra el Despojo" (Ethics Against Dispossession) Seminar were all canceled. An immense outpouring of global solidarity with neo-Zapatismo followed, as did worldwide protests against the government of Enrique Peña Nieto.[4] These circumstances created the conditions that made it possible to decree the symbolic death of Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos and his immediate "rebirth," now as something totally divergent and quantitatively different: Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano.

The "rebirth" of a *compañero* fallen in battle (in this case Galeano), has been a recurring practice within the EZLN, even before New Year's Day of 1994. When one comrade in arms died, another *compañero* among the survivors could take their name as a new nickname or sobriquet, thus symbolically extending the life of the fallen *compañero*. This was in fact why the Subcomandante Insurgente was named "Marcos": years earlier, he had inherited that name from a deceased comrade. It was for this reason that in his May 24, 2014 speech in homage to Galeano, Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés declared that the neo-Zapatistas had "come to unbury Compañero Galeano […] In a little while you will see how." For the same reason, Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos affirmed in his May 25, 2014 speech "Between Light and Shadow" that the Zapatistas "think that it is necessary for one of us to die so that Galeano lives […] That is why we have decided that Marcos today ceases to exist."

But it would be a serious mistake to believe that Marcos's "death" and his "rebirth" as Galeano is a mere change of names or a simple tribute to Galeano which entails no other substantial change. Quite the contrary: the symbolic death of Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos is also a profound transformation of the social role and historical function that Marcos carried out for the EZLN's first 20 years of public life. This transformation is explained both by the beginning, in December 2012, of a radically new stage of neo-Zapatismo's historical life—its fourth stage—but also by certain deeply-rooted and *longue*

4 On the murder of *compañero* José Luis Solís López, also known as Galeano, and the reactions to this event from the EZLN and Mexico, as well as on the immense wave of global solidarity that followed, cf. the May 5 communique by the Hacia La Esperanza Council of Good Government, the texts by Subcomandante Marcos dated May 9, 13, and 25, and the "Words of the General Command of the EZLN, in the Voice of Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, in Homage to Compañero Galeano", in addition to dozens of messages of solidarity and protest from across the world received in May and June of 2014, all available at *Enlace Zapatista*.

durée elements that have characterized the neo-Zapatista project from its outset. Let us review, then, the conjunctural and medium-term reasons, as well as the *longue durée* roots, that explain the surprising but well-planned end of the EZLN's former spokesman and which give us new and more complex elements for understanding the multiple meanings of this astonishing "death."

Hopes and Expectations of the New Stage of Neo-Zapatismo

> "[W]e realized that there was already a generation […] that could listen to us and talk to us without seeking a guide or a leader, without intending to be submissive or become followers. Marcos, the character, was no longer necessary. The new phase of the Zapatista struggle was ready."
> Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, "Between Light and Shadow", May 25, 2014.

On December 21, 2012—a date which some claimed that the Maya calendar marked as the "end of the world"—the neo-Zapatistas decided to once again seize several important municipal seats of the state of Chiapas, as they had on January 1, 1994. This time, however, the seizure would be peaceful. The mobilization of more than 40,000 indigenous people in five major cities simultaneously symbolized the end of the third phase of neo-Zapatismo (the stage of The Other Campaign, begun between June 2005 and January 2006) and the beginning of the movement's fourth phase. This fourth phase, currently underway, is centered around the promotion of the movement known as the Sixth, a movement which is both Mexican and international.

It is important to highlight the details of that peaceful seizure at the end of 2012, since it clearly announced one of the most important features of the new stage of neo-Zapatismo, a feature which is tied to the subsequent 'symbolic' death of Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos. On that December 21, in those five cities, the seats of power of Chiapas municipalities, thousands of neo-Zapatista indigenous rebels patiently and methodically constructed five large wooden platforms in the central plazas of the five chosen locations. Once these structures were built, the inhabitants of these locations expected to see the Comandantes and Subcomandantes of the EZLN or important invitees mount the platforms. Instead, the people who climbed the platforms were the same thousands of indigenous people who had built them, marching across them in total silence with their left fists raised, looking out at their comrades

and at stunned local residents below. The latter, astonished and expectant, could not discern the entirety of the complex message contained within the symbolic act by which neo-Zapatismo was inaugurating its newest phase of struggle.

When the neo-Zapatistas' silent procession was over, they dismantled the platforms and departed, just as calm as they had been when they arrived. In this way and from its very outset, one of the central messages of the newest stage of neo-Zapatismo has been that within the movement, the broad indigenous and non-indigenous *bases* who comprise the movement simultaneously are and must be their own *leaders*. The bases who built the platforms, the same bases who for three decades have built and maintained their own movement, *lead themselves*. In this way, neo-Zapatismo radically and directly critiques the habitual internal division between leaders and led within left-wing organizations, as well as the 'substitutionism' which replaces bases with their leaders. In doing so, neo-Zapatismo confronts the constant process by which all protagonism is delegated by the bases to the upper echelons of leadership, as well as the process by which the functions of decision-making and even understanding the problems faced by left-wing movements or their general and specific destinies are concentrated in the hands of leadership.[5]

The profound idea of eliminating the leadership-base dichotomy of the old left-wing parties (an ideal typical of the Leninist model, which was useful and totally valid until the world revolution of 1968 but which lost validity in the post-1968 period) and putting the two on the same level by making the bases their own leaders is completely in keeping with the wise principle of leading by obeying and with the idea that "here the peoples command and the government obeys." Making bases and leadership equal, in other words, is totally in line with the structures of popular self-government that across the vast neo-Zapatista territories and through the everyday mechanisms of direct assembly democracy give rise to neo-Zapatismo's exemplary Councils of Good

5 The neo-Zapatista idea that contemporary antisystemic movements should build themselves by eliminating the pyramidal structure of bases and leadership, instead creating essentially horizontal and decentralized forms of organization, is clearly expressed in Subcomandante Marcos, "Them and Us. VI.—The Gaze 3. Some Other Gazes", February 2013, available at *Enlace Zapatista*, op. cit. This idea is also emblematically expressed in the concise phrase in which two women affirm that "here all of us [*todas y todos]* are in charge."

Government (JBGs), Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities (MAREZ), and all the political forms that spring from its rich project of autonomy.[6]

Because if in their daily lives and across their territories the hundreds of thousands of dignified indigenous neo-Zapatista rebels use their Assemblies to collectively and horizontally make decisions about the general and specific fates of their own communities, it would be illogical to renounce these everyday practices and principles of their social functioning when it came time to build the neo-Zapatista movement. Likewise, it would make no sense to shy from these practices and principles in promoting the organization and development of the vast Mexican and international movement of the Sixth.

On the doorstep of the 21st chronological century, it is increasingly clear that humanity's maturity is enough to render all kinds of hierarchies and unequal social asymmetries unnecessary. It is therefore neither logical, useful, or necessary to continue reproducing, in the heart of genuinely anti-capitalist and antisystemic movements, the old divisions between those who think and those who execute; between those who decide and those who comply; between those who theorize and those who practice; or between those who supposedly understand and those who allegedly must *learn* to understand. In other words, it is illogical to continue drawing a line between leaders, theorists, *caudillos*, messiahs, saviors, and illuminated and supposedly all-knowing intellectual-guides on one hand, and the led, practitioners, bases and followers, admirers, saved, and apprentice-learners on the other.

This was one of the many rich lessons that came out of the Little Zapatista School of 2013 and 2014. During this important experience, intellectuals and students who held master's degrees, doctorates, and post-doctoral degrees, as well as old social activists who in the past had been leaders of left-wing movements and organizations, became the 'students' and 'learners' of several thousand neo-Zapatista support bases, thus breaking in deeds the false dichotomies mentioned above. Instead, the relations inaugurated between all the *compañeros* who participated in this experience were truly horizontal and dialogic relations in which everyone learned from everyone else and in which

6 On the definition and essential content of this important slogan, "lead by obeying," and its multiple connections to direct democracy, popular self-government, and the specifically Zapatista idea of "autonomy," cf. Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Mandar obedeciendo: Las lecciones políticas del neozapatismo mexicano*, 5th ed., Contrahistorias, Mexico, 2010.

false leadership and unsustainable hierarchies of all kinds were transcended and completely dissolved by the events.[7]

The horizontal and dialogic experience of the Little Zapatista School was later reproduced in another form during the neo-Zapatista meeting with different groups of the National Indigenous Congress of Mexico (CNI) in August 2014. Here, in the words of Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, those who came together, dialogued, and decided what to do about the future of their own movements and their fate in general were not the "representatives or leaders, but […] the [community] bases of [the Zapatista] peoples, nations, and tribes." Later on, considering the World Festival of Resistance and Rebellion Against Capitalism held in December 2014 and January 2015, he reiterated this point, saying "let it be our bases who run this exchange; let them be the ones who have the floor, who talk and explain our struggles […] We have seen that it is best that the bases speak."[8]

In this way, and by clearly marking (a) the elimination, to the greatest degree possible, of the traditional distance between a movement's bases and its leadership; (b) the transformation of bases into leaders; and (c) giving those bases back the *central role within the movement as a whole*, the neo-Zapatistas radically express a clear tendency which is more or less present in all of the new antisystemic movements of Latin America and the planet. This tendency, which the neo-Zapatistas carry to its logical consequences, has manifested in the obvious fact that the leaderships of antisystemic movements are tending to become more and more rotational, provisional, collective, and ephemeral. We see this tendency, for example, in the most autonomist of the Argentinian *piquetero* movements, in the bases of the Landless Workers' Movement in Brazil (though currently not in its upper echelons), the Spanish *indignados* of 2011, and the Occupy Wall Street movement. We see it also in the Chilean student revolt of 2011, the antisystemic groups of present-day Greece, and the most radical and antisystemic segments of the Chilean Mapuche movement,

7 Regarding the rich experience of the Little Zapatista School, see its convocations and the texts that explained its character written by both Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos and Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés (who served as the dean of the school) in 2013 at *Enlace Zapatista*, op. cit. See also Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "'La Escuelita Neozapatista': vivir desde adentro la lucha por la autonomía", in *Contrahistorias* 21, Mexico, 2013.

8 For these quotes, cf. "Editorial", by Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, August 2014, included in *Rebeldía Zapatista* 3, Mexico, September 2014.

the CONAIE in Ecuador, and the Pachacutik movement in Bolivia, among many other possible examples.[9]

It is this tendency of dissolving the rigid dichotomy and hierarchy between leaders and led and of returning the central role within movements to the base of the pyramid that, when radically incorporated by neo-Zapatismo, led the movement to decree the symbolic and highly impactful death of Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos.

This radical inversion of the left-wing forms of organization typical prior to 1968 asserts that it is now the bases who discuss, explain, analyze, and decide upon the central dilemmas of their movements. Their 'leaders' or 'intellectuals,' on the other hand, now accompany and support them, implementing the bases' interpretations and decisions. It is this inversion that explains the highly original form of new organization that neo-Zapatismo proposes for the likewise-new Mexican and international movement of the Sixth.

Explicitly affirming that they are opposed to any kind of vanguardism or cult of individualism, the neo-Zapatista *compañeros* propose a form of organization which is so flexible that it appears to be almost the complete opposite of pre-1968 leftist organizations. In this way, on the basis of the fundamental and explicit principle that they want neither to homogenize nor hegemonize the movement, the neo-Zapatistas propose a highly flexible organization in which there is no affiliation, no membership with complicated requisites, no complex entry requirements, and no rigid vertical structures for admission, participation, or proposing and processing the specific initiatives of the organization's members.

Instead, the Sixth's organizational structure is based solely on publicly declaring that one wishes to voluntarily become an adherent and that on the basis of the unique skills one possesses and from the context of the activity in which one carries out their everyday action, they seriously commit to fulfilling specific commitments of actions that support the overall work of radical transformation promoted by the Sixth. Those wishing to become adherents

9 On the presence of this feature within Latin American antisystemic movements, cf. Raúl Zibechi, *Autonomías y Emancipaciones: América Latina en movimiento*, Bajo Tierra Ediciones & Sísifo Ediciones, Mexico, 2008, and *Dispersar el poder*, Taller Editorial La Casa del Mago, Guadalajara, 2006. See also Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *América Latina en la Encrucijada*, Contrahistorias, 7th ed., Mexico, 2009. In regard to global antisystemic movements, see Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Movimientos Antisistémicos: Pensar lo antisistémico en los inicios del Siglo XXI*, Prohistoria, 2nd ed., Rosario, 2012, and *Antimanual del Buen Rebelde*, op. cit.

also commit to seriously fulfilling the commitments which are defined by each adherent or collective and freely assumed by the same.

This novel and highly original form of neo-Zapatista organization is anti-vanguardist, decentralized, and horizontal. It neither homogenizes its adherent members nor hegemonizes the collectives, individuals, and organizations which comprise it. It not only accepts but energetically promotes the greatest possible freedom, initiative, independence, creativity, and margin of voluntary action among its various adherents. This form of organization therefore needs neither 'great' and 'irreplaceable' leaders nor supposedly enlightened and illustrious 'intellectual-guides' or 'philosopher-kings.' It consciously chooses to base its knowledge, decision-making and problem-solving on the movement's bases, not its "leadership." This is why neo-Zapatismo is easily able to do without the figure of Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos and even go so far as to say that the Subcomandante was a mere illusion or media trick, even a "colorful ruse" and a "hologram."

For this reason, the neo-Zapatistas can openly and challengingly affirm that "it is [their] conviction and [their] practice that in order to rebel and to struggle, neither leaders nor bosses nor messiahs nor saviors are necessary. To struggle, one only needs a sense of shame, a bit of dignity, and a lot of organization." In addition to defining one of the important facets of the new stage of neo-Zapatismo, this radical and innovative posture within the world of antisystemic movements also gives a new basis to the movement's persistent defense of promoting "a new way of doing politics."[10]

If we radically question and completely subvert the true *longue durée* political structure that for thousands of years has divided human communities and social movements into enormous groups of 'followers' and small elites of 'leaders,' we question the foundations of the human activity of politics itself. This is because the activity of politics is based precisely on the transmutation of a community's collective social power into the exclusive monopoly power of a small elite or even individual of that same community.

The expropriation of great human collectives' capacity for self-management and decision-making—the expropriation of this form of their

10 The quote in this paragraph is taken from Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos's last speech, "Between Light and Shadow", May 25, 2014, available at *Enlace Zapatista*, op. cit. On the primary features and facets that define the fourth stage of neo-Zapatismo and complement the feature discussed here (the questioning of the relationship between the movement's bases and leaders), cf. Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "La nueva etapa del neozapatismo mexicano", in *Contrahistorias* 21, Mexico, 2013.

social power—on the part of a small group or even a single individual is precisely what establishes the birth of 'politics' and political power in general. Likewise, this expropriation is what gives rise to the state and to the existence of emperors, kings, and presidents, as well as (more recently) to political parties and corrupt political classes of all stripes. For this reason, when we subvert the bases/leaders or leaders/led relationship and give back to the bases their own, previously expropriated social power (i.e., their capacities for decision-making, self-management, and self-government), what we are doing is dissolving political power into social power. In this way, we bring about the death of politics foretold by Marx more than 150 years ago. Or, as the neo-Zapatistas put it, we eliminate and transcend the corrupt old form of politics which prevails today and replace it with a "new way of doing politics."[11]

The *compañeros* refer to this new way of doing politics as "everyday politics." In this model, leaders, *caudillos*, messiahs, and intellectual-guides become superfluous and unnecessary, just as the complex and likeable character of Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos became unnecessary. For this reason, in affirming the new phase of their movement, the Zapatistas clearly affirm that "Marcos, the character, was no longer necessary" and that "the new phase of the Zapatista struggle was ready."

But Marcos's disappearance, in addition to corresponding to the new phase of neo-Zapatismo, is also decipherable through certain *longue durée* roots which from various horizons have nurtured and structured the movement since its beginnings, now three decades past. Let us examine these roots more closely.

Building the Collective Neo-Zapatista 'We'

> "The notion of a groupless individual, of a person as he or she would be if divested of all we-reference, […] was still largely below the horizon in the social praxis of the

11 Marx develops this thesis on the "death of politics" at the end of his celebrated *Poverty of Philosophy* (*Miseria de la Filosofía*, Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1979). On this new form of doing politics, it is worth rereading the *Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle*, which in Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos's words is "the boldest and most Zapatista of the initiatives" advanced by the movement up until now. See also Sergio Rodríguez Lazcano, "La forma zapatista de hacer política (Entrevista)", in *Viento Sur* 83, 2005, and Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "La Otra Política de la Otra Campaña", in *Chiapas Planeta Tierra*, Contrahistorias, 6th ed., Mexico, 2010.

> ancient world […] Consequently, there was no equivalent to the concept "individual" in ancient languages."
> Norbert Elias, "Changes in the We-I Balance", *The Society of Individuals*, 1987.

The clear primacy of the neo-Zapatista 'we' over the (egoist, solitary, arrogant, absurd) 'I' characteristic of capitalist civilization—a primacy which neo-Zapatismo openly promotes as a general proposal for the vast and growing national and international movement of the Sixth—is a primacy whose roots stretch down to the profound structures of the true historical *longue durée*.[12] This is doubly true given that the neo-Zapatista 'we' can only be understood in terms of the double origin that nourishes it and has composed it since its beginnings. This origin is on one hand the Maya worldview, read and interpreted in the key of rebellion, and on the other hand one of the most important revolutionary traditions of the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries: the councilist tradition of organizing popular power, deployed since the foundational experience of the Paris Commune and down to our own times.

As the now "deceased" Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos explained many years back, what we now know as neo-Zapatismo was born 30 years ago in the mountains of the Mexican southeast as the fruit of a massive social movement of indigenous rebels in Chiapas who had been struggling for more than 15 years following the movement of 1968 and the Indigenous Congress of 1974, held in San Cristóbal de Las Casas. The neo-Zapatistas were also the heirs of more than 500 years of permanent struggle and of the "generation of dignity"; the students, professors, and urban militants who, brought together by 1968, struggled through the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.[13]

The joining of these two groups gave rise to a complex synthesis of their worldviews (or *Weltanschauung*), which itself provided the foundation for what today is the highly original and profound neo-Zapatista worldview. One of the fundamental elements of this worldview is the idea of the neo-Zapatista

12 On this rich *longue durée* analytical perspective which is also very present in neo-Zapatismo's ways of seeing and analyzing the world, cf. Fernand Braudel, "Historia y ciencias sociales: La larga duración", in *Historia y ciencias sociales*, Alianza Editorial, Madrid, 1968, as well as Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Fernand Braudel y las ciencias humanas*, Prohistoria, Rosario, 2011, and *Ensayos Braudelianos*, Manuel Suárez Editor, Rosario, 2000.

13 On this point, Subcomandante Marcos affirms that "we are the product of the encounter between indigenous wisdom and resistance and the rebellion and bravery of the generation of resistance which with its blood lit the dark night of the Sixties, Seventies, and Eighties," in his August 25, 1995 text included in *EZLN: Documentos y Comunicados 2: 15 de agosto de 1994–29 de septiembre de 1995*, Ediciones Era, Mexico, 1995.

'we,' understood as a reality which clearly predominates over the individualist 'I' of capitalism. The neo-Zapatista 'we' synthesizes and interweaves important features of the 'we' proper to the Maya worldview—reworked in the key of rebellion over the course of five centuries within the project of a 'modernity of resistance' deployed by the Indians of Chiapas in the same timespan—with the communist and communitarian 'we,' a totally modern and Western conception of the 'we' derived from the massive struggles and experiences of creating popular counter-power developed by leftist organizations contemporary to and after Marx and Marxism. More generally, the latter 'we' stems from the deep traditions of rebellion and self-management of capitalist society's subaltern sectors which have been developed over the last 150 years.

In this way, the neo-Zapatista 'we,' which today calmly declares the symbolic death of Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, both recuperates and overcomes (*aufheben*, in the Hegelian sense) the 'we' of the rebel Maya worldview and the 'we' of the councilist tradition and of the mass culture of the last 150 years. The Maya worldview cannot be adequately understood, as many scholars of the topic have noted, except on the basis of the fact that in its positioning in relation to reality and the world, the relevant subject is not the Cartesian individual 'I'—which as an isolated monad can be sure of nothing but the hard fact that it "thinks"—but the *collective subject* designated by the word 'we.'

This is so much so the case that one of those scholars, Carlos Lenkersdorf, has proposed the possibility of "philosophizing in the Tojolabal key," which means nothing less than the radical project of *reassessing all of Western philosophy* and all of its solutions to the great philosophical problems of the present from the "we-ist" understanding of the world. This approach decenters and dislocates modern philosophy at its very point of departure—the celebrated relationship between subject and object—in order to call into question its entire scaffolding, built up over at least the last 500 years, if not longer.[14]

Marx, in his own day, also clearly recognized the predominance of the 'we' over the 'I' in the celebrated passage of the *Grundrisse* titled "Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations," asserting and richly illustrating the thesis that what we can observe at the outset of all human societies and peoples are multiple complex primary, secondary, and tertiary variants of a universal *communitarian*

14 This challenging thesis, with its various rich implications, has not yet received the attention we believe it deserves. Cf. Carlos Lenkersdorf, *Filosofar en clave tojolabal*, Miguel Ángel Porrúa, Mexico, 2002, and *Los Hombres Verdaderos*, Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1996.

structure of human social organization.[15] We thus observe a clear predominance of the community over the individual—a predominance of the communitarian 'we' over the individual 'I'—expressed in the fact that distinct individuals perceive themselves as component members of a community instead of as totally autonomous, isolated, and self-sufficient beings. They see themselves as *parts*, necessarily subordinated to and inserted within the greater totality of their own community.

Accordingly, the historical process of individualization was able to develop only slowly and arduously. It became consolidated only as the original, communitarian structures of human history began to collapse and give way to the great variety of human societies divided into social classes. In the same way that the 18th-century English encountered surviving communitarian forms in India and the Russian socialists of the 19th century inquired with Marx regarding the persistence of the *mir* (the Russian rural commune) and its possible future within an eventual socialist project, the Maya peoples of Chiapas managed to preserve the prevalence of the 'we' over the 'I' within the modernity of resistance they cultivated for five centuries after the Spanish conquest.

It was this communitarian feature of the 'we' over the 'I' which, reworked and modernized over half a millennium, they would pass down to neo-Zapatismo, marking that movement with one of its most important and consequence-laden features. One of these consequences is the fact that the neo-Zapatista worldview excludes the concept of an individual playing too great a role, therefore excluding the very idea of a powerful leader with major capacity for making decisions or intervening in collective issues. Likewise, it excludes the idea of great and indispensable leaders who must be uncritically admired, followed, and obeyed. Logically, this gives us another key for understanding why the neo-Zapatistas were able to so easily decide upon the recent death of Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos.

In the Maya worldview, the entire universe is alive, as is each and every one of its components, from rocks, mountains, and the land itself to plants, animals, and human beings. Life is therefore an all-encompassing continuum of all the universe's beings and elements. This not only ignores and relativizes

15 On this point, cf. Karl Marx, *Formas que preceden a la producción capitalista*, Pasado y Presente, Mexico, 1976, and *Los apuntes etnológicos de Karl Marx*, Pablo Iglesias & Siglo XXI España, Madrid, 1988. See also Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *El porvenir de la comuna rural rusa*, Pasado y Presente, Mexico, 1980, as well as Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "La comuna rural de tipo germánico", in *Boletín de Antropología Americana* 17, Mexico, 1988.

Western thought's division between the organic and inorganic worlds but also relativizes the rigid Western anthropocentric hierarchy that places human beings at the center and summit of the universe, along with the absurd ideas that stem from it, such as the belief that humanity is the lord and master of nature, or the peak of divine creation, or that it is distinct from and superior to animals, or that it is the absolute and highest center of the universe.[16]

In contrast to this outrageous anthropocentrism promoted and taken to its extremes by contemporary capitalist civilization, Maya peoples understand the world in a more realist manner, seeing humans as an important part of the universe but not as its highest culmination or its deepest meaning. For this reason, from the most realist understanding of the general role and relative positioning of human beings within the continuum of the universe, to Maya peoples the idea of an 'all-powerful' individual who is 'lord and master of the world' or of nature or the planet, the idea of an individual who stands above all other human beings, is inconceivable. So too, accordingly, is the idea of all-powerful and indispensable leaders.

If we reject the anthropocentric hierarchy of the Western capitalist world, what we find instead of a longing to conquer nature, the world, and other human beings is the need to ask ourselves how we can build relations of harmony between humans and the world around us. We must ask how we can build fluid, creative, positive relations instead of relations based on hierarchy and the negation of the 'other.' This is a task that Marx anticipated as one of the central challenges of future communist society.

Seeing the world as a continuum of life and not as a hierarchy is what makes it possible for Maya people to continue preserving the important idea of land and nature as Mother Earth, as the general source of life itself, with all the rich consequences this idea implies.[17] But this worldview also allows its adherents to avoid rigidly opposing reason and feeling. It allows them to

16 On this point, in his essay "He venido a contradecir: La cosmovisión de los pueblos indígenas actuales", in *Desacatos* 5, 2000, Carlos Montemayor tells us that "for those of us who belong to the Judeo-Christian tradition, the world is at our service. For the Indians of the entire continent, however, the earth is alive, is a living thing, and that condition represents various commitments for mankind, which is at the service of the world […] in the West, the greatness of destiny is individual importance; among the indigenous, their continuity as a people represents the conservation of the world."

17 On these various consequences, cf. Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "Los movimientos antisistémicos de América Latina y su lucha por la tierra en el Siglo XXI", in *Movimientos Antisistémicos: Pensar lo antisistémico en los inicios del Siglo XXI*, op. cit.

avoid falling prey to capitalism's immense anguish in the face of death, to not frame the content of the universe in terms of the human as a result of the anthropocentrism mentioned above, and to avoid desiring the subordination, obedience, and subjugation of other human beings. The understanding of life as an all-encompassing continuity allows Maya peoples to develop the concept of Buen Vivir (Living Well), the antithesis of capitalist ideas of growth, development, progress, economic advancement, etc. This concept is closer to an understanding of free and egalitarian life in community and to an approach in which major collective issues are decided by all in assemblies and in which governments lead by obeying. Buen Vivir is also related to an understanding of "action" as always more important than the "subject" that executes or "acts" it, as well as to the clear predominance of the 'we' over the 'I' and the consequent impossibility of the existence of revered and powerful "leaders" and strong individuals.[18]

These diverse and complex features of the Maya worldview have yet to be studied and reconstructed in detail. Having been reworked within the modernity of resistance that the Indians of Chiapas built over 500 years, these elements were inherited by the alternative modernity today embodied and advanced by the neo-Zapatistas, which includes the assumption of a clear predominance of the collective-communitarian 'we' over the possessive and egotistic 'I' of the contemporary capitalist world. The predominance of the neo-Zapatista 'we' in part explains the recent symbolic death of Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos and his rebirth as the qualitatively different Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano.[19]

A second important source that nourishes the construction of the neo-Zapatista 'we' and was supplied by the left-wing militants of the Mexican

18 It would be worth delving into this complex issue of how various features of the Maya worldview mentioned here, modified by the "modernity of resistance" the Maya peoples developed over 500 years, were inherited by and are present in the specific worldview of neo-Zapatismo, although we unfortunately cannot develop this problem more broadly at present. On these features, cf. Miguel Hernández Díaz, *El pensamiento maya actual en Chiapas: un grito desesperado por la aflicción*, Master's Thesis in Philosophy, UNAM, 2005, and Martín Álvarez Fabela, "La cosmovisión maya y el modo de ser-ver neozapatista", in *Contrahistorias* 18, 2012.

19 Apart from this, and to confirm that this idea was already present at the beginning of the EZLN's public life, see Subcomandante Marcos's affirmation that "'Marcos' can be anyone or no one, can be everyone and none. He does not exist, he is an unfinished invention, a model that can be built to anyone's taste" in his October 2, 1994 letter to Adolfo Gilly, included in *Discusión sobre la Historia*, Taurus, Mexico, 1995, pp. 20–21.

"generation of dignity" of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s traces its origins back to the pioneering experience of the 1871 Paris Commune. Brilliantly analyzed by Marx in *The Civil War in France*, this experience inaugurated a revolutionary tradition that passes through the Russian soviets, the workers' councils of Germany, Italy, and Hungary, and the committees of Red Guards during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. In our own times, this tradition is embodied by the neo-Zapatista Councils of Good Government, the organizing structures of the bases (though not the leaders) of the Landless Workers Movement (MST) in Brazil, and the functioning of the genuinely autonomous *piquetero* neighborhoods of Argentina, among other possible examples.

This councilist and self-managing revolutionary tradition departs from the central discovery made by the Parisian communards of 1871: the bourgeois state is *not* a neutral institution. The idea that while the state is held today by "bad" people (the bourgeoisie and corrupt politicians) but might tomorrow be seized by the "good" (proletarians and the subaltern classes) and thus undergo a radical change in its function and character is not true; just the opposite. What the Commune of 1871 discovered was that the true, core problem of what is today called "politics" is precisely that its very essence is the endless reproduction, in thousands of forms, of the division of society into a vast majority that merely observes, obeys, and submits (and perhaps votes, from time to time) and a small minority that illegitimately acts, commands, and imposes itself upon the majority.

This age-old division is based on the repeated delegation of the mass and subaltern classes' capacity for self-management and self-government to the dominant and hegemonic elites. In this context, what the Commune discovered is that it is essential to smash the state and all forms of politics itself, erecting in their place popular self-government by the many and the self-management of all by assembly. This would be done by installing a government that is permanently subject to change and new elections, that can always be held accountable, and that is always subject to revocation. This government must obey the imperative mandate of the Assemblies and be comprised of the workers themselves, as well as the mass sectors in rebellion, and pay its officials the average salary of a worker. It must replace the army and police with the people themselves, now armed. In other words, this is a government that (to use terms that are ancient but at once modern) must "lead by obeying" the people and subalterns. In practice, it must constitute the real access of the people—the workers, the mass classes—to self-managing counter-power, the real ascent of the collective 'we' of the people to the commanding heights

previously occupied by the ridiculous 'I's of the political class and the dominant classes.[20]

The radical experience of the Paris Commune, later experienced again by the Soviet power of Lenin's time and the Red Guards of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, shows us that the only truly anti-capitalist and antisystemic way to change things at their roots, in terms of this level of modern capitalist politics, is to do away with the illusion that we can change the world by switching one leader or party or tiny elite for another or by switching the contemporary corrupt political class for a "revolutionary vanguard." The only radical path toward change is to sweep aside *all* leaders, parties, and elites of all kinds and replace them with the vast majorities, the movement bases, the entire people, the immense collective 'we,' and build genuine and precise structures of popular self-government and social self-management in general. As the neo-Zapatistas themselves put it, backing the bet they have made on the growing movement of the Sixth, "the desire of the collective heart that we the EZLN are is to make big, very big, the 'we' of the forgotten, of the dispossessed, of the voiceless and faceless, of the rebel dignity of the history of below."[21]

At the same time as the vast construction of the "'we' of the forgotten" simultaneously transcends, incorporates, and overcomes (*aufhebung*) the 'we' of the indigenous Maya cosmovision, it connects to the 'we' of councilist traditions of popular self-government. But it likewise incorporates and transcends the latter traditions in the even greater broad and inclusive 'we' that covers the exploited, dispossessed, disdained, and repressed of all stripes, as well as all the excluded of the world and the members of the many social "belows" which proliferate more and more across the fabric of world capitalism, a system in terminal crisis.

As the fruit of the fusion between the Maya 'we' and the 'we' of Western councilism, the complex neo-Zapatista 'we' is now taking a new step forward. This is a step toward becoming the even broader and more encompassing collective 'we' of rebel dignity in Mexico and across the world which is now gathered in the important movement of the Sixth. It was this step forward that

20 On these different points, cf. Karl Marx, *La guerra civil en Francia*, Desde Abajo, Bogotá, 2011, as well as that book's prologue by Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "Releyendo *La guerra civil en Francia* desde la América Latina del siglo XXI". See also Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Antimanual del Buen Rebelde*, and *Mandar obedeciendo: Las lecciones políticas del neozapatismo mexicano*, both cited above.

21 For this quote, see the January 1, 2007 speech by Subcomandante Marcos read at the Caracol of Oventik in Chiapas and available at enlacezapatista.ezln.org, op. cit.

made the end of the character who for 20 years was known as Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos necessary and useful.

Taking into account (1) the immediate circumstances of the government's treacherous murder of *compañero* Galeano; (2) the affirmation and progress of the fourth and newest stage of neo-Zapatismo and the new profiles this stage seeks to promote; and (3) the clear persistence (inherited from two sources) of the neo-Zapatista 'we' over the individual 'I,' it is logical that the symbolic death of Subcomandante Marcos became not only necessary but useful to the movement as a whole and even fruitful in the medium-term of the neo-Zapatista struggle.

As the now-extinct Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos wisely said, "in the end, those who have understood will know that he who never was here does not leave; that he who never lived does not die." Emphasizing that his rebirth as Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano would be not as an individual but as a collective 'we,' he added "that's why they told me that when I was reborn, it would be as a collective." To this, we can add, simply: the 'individual' Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos is dead! Long live the collective 'we' of Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano!

Mexico City, December 26, 2014

Appendix 6

MEXICAN NEO-ZAPATISMO AND ITS IMPACT WITHIN CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL SCIENCES: SIX THESES TO DEVELOP

> "If society has a technical need, that helps science forward more than ten universities."
> Friedrich Engels, Letter to H. Starkenburg, January 25, 1894.

THESIS 1: Mexican neo-Zapatismo is a profound and genuine movement which is both *anti-capitalist* and *antisystemic*.[1] It is the direct heir of age-old ancestral popular indigenous wisdom and of the best traditions of critical social thought inaugurated by Marx. From its everyday practice and its multiple theoretical and political lessons, deployed over the last 20 years, it executes a *radical critique and an absolute dismantling of the entire system of modern capitalist forms of knowledge* which are today in utter crisis but still active. The neo-Zapatista critique is also applied to the whole of contemporary social sciences.

This critique and dismantling is executed on the basis of questioning—at its heart and foundations—the *hierarchy of knowledge* instituted five centuries ago by modern capitalism.[2] This hierarchy postulates and later materializes

1 On the differences and important connections between anti-capitalist movements and antisystemic movements, cf. Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "¿Qué son los movimientos antisistémicos?", in *Contrahistorias* 17, 2011, and *Antimanual del Buen Rebelde*, Contrahistorias, Mexico, 2013, chapter II.

2 A critical view of the genesis and history of the system of modern bourgeois forms of knowledge is outlined by Immanuel Wallerstein in *Impensar las ciencias sociales*, Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1998; *Conocer el mundo, saber el mundo*, Siglo XXI, Mexico, 2001; *Las incertidumbres del saber*, Gedisa, Barcelona, 2005; *Universalismo Europeo*, Siglo XXI, Mexico,

in deeds the absurd idea that the "primary" or "only" or "superior" or "really scientific" form of knowledge is erudite, bookish, professionalized, specialized knowledge created, reproduced, and transmitted within universities, laboratories, schools, and academic research centers and institutes. Deep popular knowledge, on the other hand, is imagined to be a non-knowledge or an imperfect, secondary, marginal, incomplete form of knowledge, when not merely seen as simple folklore, superstition, myth, animism, or falsehood.

Confronting this false and ridiculous hierarchy of modern forms of knowledge, the Zapatistas have reminded us of and demonstrated in practice (e.g., the rich recent experience of the Little Zapatista School in 2013 and 2014) a truth which, despite being unknown to the immense majority of intellectuals, is fundamental: every form of knowledge is knowledge *about reality*, and all forms of knowledge only have meaning as intellectual methods of grasping or helping to grasp reality. If we recognize the obvious truth that popular knowledge is constantly born, regenerated, and reproduced on the basis of direct experience (i.e., daily, direct, permanent experience) of reality, we must then likewise recognize that popular knowledge is not only the primordial, foundational form of knowledge and the permanent basis of all possible knowledge but is also the truly primary, indelible, essential form of knowledge for any possible human society.

The structural centrality of popular knowledge has been recognized and studied by all critical and intelligent theorists of culture—from Karl Marx to Carlo Ginzburg, passing by Mikhail Bakhtin, Edward Palmer Thompson, and Bolívar Echeverría, among others[3]—leads us to criticize and invert the bourgeois hierarchy of knowledge, returning contemporary scholarly book-knowledges (and the contemporary social sciences within them) to their real place in order to better understand the profound impact that Mexican neo-Zapatismo has had on these social sciences.

2007; and *Abrir las ciencias sociales*, Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1996. See also Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Immanuel Wallerstein: Crítica del sistema-mundo capitalista*, LOM, Santiago de Chile, 2004.

3 We will mention for example, Karl Marx, *La ideología alemana*, Pueblos Unidos, Buenos Aires, 1973; Mikhail Bakhtin, *La cultura popular en la Edad Media y en el Renacimiento*, Alianza Editorial, Mexico, 1990; Edward P. Thompson, *Costumbres en común*, Crítica, Barcelona, 1995; Bolívar Echeverría, *Definición de la cultura*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico, 2010; and Carlo Ginzburg, *El queso y los gusanos*, Muchnik, Barcelona, 1981, and *Mitos, Emblemas, Indicios*, Gedisa, Barcelona, 1994.

THESIS 2: On the basis of "unlearning" the ridiculous capitalist hierarchy of knowledge which is still dominant and of "relearning" the true relations which exist between book-knowledge and popular knowledge and between both of these forms of knowledge and reality, it is easier to understand that great steps forward in social science and its profound and more decisive mutations have never come either from its own internal dynamic or from the "genius" or "sublime" labor of intellectuals, scholars, academics, or thinkers in general. Rather, progress has always come from great social changes or transformations, be they positive or negative. These changes include social revolutions, terrible wars (always organized by the powerful), all types of social movements, major political changes, and the truly significant swerves and mutations of history.

For this reason, Marxism—which today is still the *inescapable keystone* of all possible critical social thought—is the offspring of the European revolutions of 1848 and later of the rich experience of the Paris Commune. The rich political theory of Leninism, meanwhile, is the product of the Russian Revolution, while the brilliant thought of Rosa Luxemburg is tied to the radical project of the revolution in Germany, the still-relevant contribution of Antonio Gramsci is the result of the experience of the workers' councils of Italy, and Maoism is the offspring of the Chinese Revolution in general and the Chinese Cultural Revolution in particular. What this shows us is that the great critical theories (economic, political, social, cultural, historical, etc.) that are still capable of giving us useful information for understanding the contemporary world are all the fruit or result of real social processes and changes like social revolutions (whether victorious or failed), social movements, and profound and significant popular experiences.

Therefore, if regenerative change in the social sciences and the transformation of social theories are always linked to important social changes, processes, and realities, it is logical that the public appearance of neo-Zapatismo in 1994 as the first total, organic, and radically antisystemic movement also had profound impacts on the whole landscape of the contemporary social sciences.[4]

4 It is on the basis of neo-Zapatismo's pioneering and "model" character as the first entirely antisystemic movement within the vast range of the movements that populate the geography of planet Earth that we can understand Immanuel Wallerstein's thesis of considering neo-Zapatismo to be the starting point for the still-active cycle of world protest which began in 1994. Major events in this cycle have been the Seattle, Prague, and Genoa movements, the World Social Forum, and more recently the various rebellions of 2011, among others. On this subject, cf. Immanuel Wallerstein, *Historia y dilemas de los movimientos*

THESIS 3: The real intellectual impact and influence of neo-Zapatismo across the world can be visualized as a figure comprised of various concentric circles whose total space is planet Earth and whose obvious center is located in Mexico. Clearly and profoundly in Mexico, often and intensely in Latin America, and equally and to various degrees in many other countries across the world, the neo-Zapatista irruption has reconfigured various central dimensions of social realities as a whole, and along with these it has reconfigured the social sciences of the entire world.

In doing so, in addition to accelerating the bankruptcy and collapse of all political classes; in addition to profoundly transforming the political and social agenda of the primary topics of debate; to remaking and redefining the map of the Left; to profoundly changing the correlation of forces between states and social movements; and even (accompanied by the fall of the Berlin Wall) to "closing" the brief (historical) 20th century that opened with the First World War and the Russian Revolution (and in Mexico with the Mexican Revolution of 1910); in addition to all of this, the neo-Zapatista movement has also radically redefined the entire intellectual space in which contemporary social sciences unfold.

In 1994, the social sciences were in a profound *longue durée* crisis which, beginning in 1968, had brought into question the limited bourgeois episteme of studying human social life through a parceled-up, autonomized, and ultra-specialized framework that assembled various, supposedly diverse "social sciences." By projecting the capitalist division of labor into the intellectual realm, this disciplinary framework of social sciences created the same mutilation and ultra-limitation of specialist-intellectuals of each social science in the world of culture that Marx recognized and criticized among industrial workers.

In this context of crisis, the neo-Zapatista irruption completely redefines the space of the social sciences. Firstly, it restores (in Mexico, Latin America, and the world) the central role of Marxism and critical thought in general as the indispensable and primordial horizon of theoretical analysis and the intellectual labor today impelled by the complexity of the crisis of capitalist civilization we are witnessing and especially by the urgent need to think, define,

antisistémicos, Contrahistorias, Mexico, 2008, and Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Chiapas Planeta Tierra*, 6th ed., Contrahistorias, Mexico, 2010, *Mandar obedeciendo: Las lecciones políticas del neozapatismo mexicano*, Contrahistorias, 5th ed., Mexico, 2010, and *Antimanual del Buen Rebelde*, op. cit., chapter 6.

and truly begin to build the new, non-capitalist world of the near future.[5] The years following 1989 saw a certain abandonment and rejection of Marxism and a generalized disillusionment across the Left which was accompanied by what at the time was a vast dissemination of the absurd postures of the "end of history" and the supposedly definitive triumph of capitalism. In this context, the restoration of Marxism to a central position represents a real revolution for the Left and for subaltern movements and classes across the world. For the social sciences, this restoration meant recuperating their most fundamental critical nucleus and emancipatory horizon.

This vindication of Marxism's centrality is accompanied by an implacable criticism of all post-modern, relativist, disillusioned, irrationalist postures that seek to deny the objective of searching for solid social and historical truths and assert that all interpretations of the world are equally valid and legitimate. These approaches cobble together eclectic and impossible intellectual mishmashes, such as the misguided attempt to fuse Marxism and religion into absurd, teleology-esque "ethics of liberation" or the senseless ideas of a fundamentalist anti-Eurocentrism which sees all thought that has come out of Europe, including that of Marx, as colonialist, dominant, and Eurocentric, positing all Latin American thought as intrinsically anti-colonialist, critical, and anti-Eurocentric. The most recent avatars of these post-modernist postures have been the contemporary decolonial, post-colonial, and anti-colonial theories of all stripes which have (not by coincidence) today become part of the official ideology of some of the timid so-called "progressive" social-democratic governments of Latin America, like those of Evo Morales and Rafael Correa. These are totally capitalist governments who represent and defend only the interests of their respective national bourgeoisies but by no means do the same for the popular and subaltern classes of their respective peoples.[6]

5 On the thesis of Marxism as the unsurpassable horizon of our time which will endure until the global termination of capitalism, cf. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Crítica de la razón dialéctica*, Losada, Buenos Aires, 1970. In our opinion, the neo-Zapatistas also subscribe to and defend this thesis, as can be observed in Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos's letter to Adolfo Gilly dated October 22, 1994, available at *Enlace Zapatista*, ezln.org.mx.

6 For a broader and (naturally) critical characterization of these "progressive" Latin American governments, cf. Bolívar Echeverría, "El Socialismo del Siglo XXI es un Capitalismo cristiano corregido", interview in *Contrahistorias* 16, 2011, and Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *América Latina en la encrucijada*, Contrahistorias, Mexico, 2009, as well as *Antimanual del Buen Rebelde*, op. cit., chapter 3.

THESIS 4: In the context described above, one of the indirect or involuntary impacts the appearance of neo-Zapatismo has had on contemporary social science has been that of having become an extensive "object of study" of practically all existing fields of social science. Beyond the logical and natural attention that neo-Zapatismo drew from anthropologists, sociologists, and political scientists by being a powerful indigenous social movement that openly confronted the Mexican state, it is notable that the movement has been analyzed not only by philosophers, economists, pedagogues, psychologists, communication experts, and historians, but by urbanists, geographers, epistemologists, ethnographers, and even specialists in Latin American studies. Likewise, neo-Zapatismo has drawn the interest of feminists, ecologists, and activists of all strata of the Left, as well as of biologists, doctors, and agricultural engineers, and even of astrologers, believers in shamanism, and representatives of the "occult sciences."

Neo-Zapatismo's multifaceted and variable impact on absolutely all disciplines that attempt to explain the social (and even on a segment of the natural sciences) has in many cases produced a surprising but logical effect on specialists in the social sciences. When these specialists attempt to explain the various dimensions and constructions of neo-Zapatismo using the old and worn-out concepts, methods, paradigms, and theories of the same social sciences which today find themselves in profound crisis, these concepts and theories fall to pieces. Truly honest and genuinely self-critical social scientists are therefore obliged to abandon the old paradigms and undertake the complicated but immensely heuristic and fruitful task of inventing new theories, new concepts, renewed paradigms, and innovative methods capable of adequately explaining the complex phenomenon that is the current neo-Zapatista universe. When formulated seriously, it is no accident that these new theories and methods reencounter many important theories of critical Marxism, original and subsequent, on their own paths.

Although there are many examples and they cut across all social sciences, we can mention only one of these. When political scientists approach neo-Zapatismo and attempt to explain it with the current concepts and theories of hegemonic political science, they realize that these theories and categories *do not work*. Their concept of democracy, for example, is the concept of bourgeois, delegative, substitutionist, supplantative democracy that today rules across the planet. This is the opposite of neo-Zapatista democracy, which is a direct, assembly democracy in line with the original meaning of democracy, a

true "government of the people," and is necessarily identical and equivalent to strict popular self-government.[7]

Just as the prevailing concept of democracy falls to pieces when faced with the reality of neo-Zapatista democracy and the structures of the Councils of Good Government (JBGs), we see the collapse of the concept of political "representation" and the category of "government." The same happens to contemporary interpretations of the state; of political parties; of the political class itself; of the function of "elections," the "vote," "parliaments," and "chambers." The JBGs likewise show the inadequacy of prevailing conceptions of leaders, leaderships, and the role of "bases" and "masses" in movements, political life, political organizations, and even and more radically of the idea of "politics" itself as a human activity whose slow but unstoppable death we are witnessing even now. It is not a coincidence that this subversion and placing in crisis of all the political theories which are dominant today and their central concepts is connected to Marx's keen contributions in the field of political science, or with the lessons of a handful of critical Marxist political theorists like Lenin or Gramsci.

This complete subversion of political science also occurs for economics, history, anthropology, sociology, etc., when applied by the few serious social scientists and intellectuals who attempt to explain neo-Zapatismo in a truly rigorous and scientific manner.

THESIS 5: By virtue of its public appearance in 1994 and of the various real effects it has had in Mexico, Latin America, and the world, neo-Zapatismo has profoundly modified the general agenda of issues that contemporary social science addresses. It has renewed interest in old topics, creating and opening new problems and fields of inquiry, and it has reordered emphases and hierarchies in the topics of study of the social sciences. In every area, it has transformed approaches, concepts, theories, methods, and paradigms used to examine both old and new questions and fields of inquiry.

In this way, on the basis of its vast and rich practice of struggle over the last two decades—as well as of the brilliant theoretical reflections contained

7 On the rich and specific neo-Zapatista concept of democracy, cf. Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "Una otra democracia para el Programa Nacional de Lucha", in *Contrahistorias* 10, 2008. On the close ties between this conception of democracy with the idea of neo-Zapatista Other Politics, cf. Sergio Rodríguez Lazcano, "La forma zapatista de hacer política (entrevista)", in *Viento Sur* 83, 2005, and Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Mandar obedeciendo: Las lecciones políticas del neozapatismo mexicano*, op. cit.

in its declarations, documents, and communiques—neo-Zapatismo has reformulated and renewed an endless number of topics and areas of social research. We will perfunctorily mention only the most evident and well-known of these topics.

A first obvious subject is that of the indigenous question, with its multiple facets. These include languages, worldviews, identity, and customary law, but also specific indigenous political practices, cultural expressions, and particular conceptions of autonomy, justice, art, and relationships with nature, among many other facets. However, despite the rivers of ink spilled and mountains of paper piled around neo-Zapatismo and the indigenous question, it has rarely been noted that for five centuries indigenous peoples have embodied the project of a *modernity of resistance*, different from the baroque modernity which predominates in Latin America and that today they embody a project of a radical modernity that is alternative to capitalist modernity, now in its death throes.[8]

Another important topic is the study and characterization of contemporary social movements, a field in which neo-Zapatismo, with its profoundly antisystemic and anti-capitalist character, has demonstrated the enormous limitations of *all* theories on currently-existing social movements. Likewise, neo-Zapatismo has shown the profound shortcomings of the empty American functionalist theories which are today in vogue and of the European theories of the 1970s and '80s which are now long out of date. This situation shows that if we wish to adequately understand the essential nature of neo-Zapatismo, as well as of other important contemporary antisystemic social movements, it is urgent that we build a new, truly critical theory for social movements, a theory appropriate for our times.

Neo-Zapatismo has also compelled the social sciences to seriously reconsider the issue of characterizing the present stage of global capitalism. Mocking the empty ideology of "globalization," the Zapatistas instead characterize this stage with the sharp oxymoron of "organized systemic chaos." They furthermore add, from a clearly political approach to this problem, that what we are actually experiencing today is a "Fourth World War" of the planet's powerful against the poor, the exploited, the excluded, and the inhabitants of the social below in every corner of the world. This sharp and suggestive thesis has not

8 On this point, cf. Bolívar Echeverría, "Chiapas, la conquista inconclusa", in *Chiapas en perspectiva histórica*, El Viejo Topo, 2nd ed., Barcelona, 2002, and Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Mandar obedeciendo: Las lecciones políticas del neozapatismo mexicano*, op. cit., chapter 4.

been properly examined or debated by contemporary social scientists. In our opinion, there is no coincidence in its resemblance to and compatibility with Immanuel Wallerstein's thesis that the current stage of capitalism is global capitalism's terminal crisis.[9]

Another issue around which neo-Zapatismo has contributed many new reflections is the complex issue of characterizing and explaining power. What is power? What are powers? How do social powers become inter-articulated? What is the relation between power and resistance? What attitude should antisystemic movements take to political power and to other powers? How can we position ourselves from below and to the left when we confront power? What role do power and powers play in the process of radical social change? What does it mean to revolutionize power from below? And what is the relationship between power and powers on one hand and counter-power and counter-powers on the other? Neo-Zapatista practice and analysis have asked these questions directly of the social sciences, and the latter are still far from formulating an adequate response. From our perspective, any response might well begin by critically recovering the contributions of Marx as well as, in this case, those of Michel Foucault, among other essential points of reference in terms of this complex subject.

In addition to the four topics mentioned above, other issues include the redefinition of "civil society" and its components; the contemporary character of nation-states and their new function; the true role of indigenous peoples in the history of Mexico, Latin America, and the world; the question of democracy; the radical critique of the egotistical, destructive, and anti-human logic of capitalism; the radical concept of autonomy; the relationship between politics and ethics; and the relationship between memory and history. These are only some of the many issues that neo-Zapatismo has updated, renewed, and raised again in new forms for the contemporary social sciences.

THESIS 6: Looking retrospectively at the developments of the past two decades of social science which have coincided with the public life of neo-Zapatismo, we can say that, unfortunately, there have been very few social scientists who have risen to face the enormous and complex challenges with which the theory and practice of neo-Zapatismo have posed to the social

9 On the terminal crisis of capitalism, cf. Immanuel Wallerstein, *Después del liberalismo*, Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1996, and *La crisis estructural del capitalismo*, Desde Abajo, Bogotá, 2007, as well as Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Para comprender el mundo actual*, Instituto Politécnico Nacional, Mexico, 2010.

sciences. Among the handful of social scientists who have taken up and helped to clarify those challenges are Carlos Lenkersdorf (in philosophy), Andrés Aubry (in history), and Immanuel Wallerstein (in sociology).

When we carefully examine these intellectual challenges, it appears that despite all the profound effects noted above, neo-Zapatismo's impacts on the social sciences are only beginning and will have to develop more organically in the years and decades to come.

For example, as astutely asserted by Carlos Lenkersdorf, the point of view of the neo-Zapatista worldview stems not from the classic and well-known Cartesian 'I' but from a complex 'we.' This 'we' synthesizes modernized versions of the communitarian 'we' of the Maya worldview, read in a key of rebellion, with complex variants of the communist and collectivist 'we' derived from councilist traditions beginning with the experience of the Paris Commune and running through the Russian soviets, Italian, German, and Hungarian workers' councils, and the committees of Red Guards during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, to the neo-Zapatista Councils of Good Government.

Consequently, seriously and radically taking up this neo-Zapatista 'we'—whose broader concrete construction is part of what is today the Mexican and international movement of the Sixth—would make it possible to 'unlearn' all the modern philosophy of at least the last five centuries and completely rebuild it, resolving its central problems in another way and redefining its concepts, now no longer on the basis of the Cartesian 'I' but of the neo-Zapatista 'we' and in this way rebuilding a new philosophy on this "we-ist" principle.[10]

And if this "we-ist" principle would allow all existing philosophy (and, in part, all remaining social sciences) to be rebuilt from the ground up, something similar happens with the current "science" of economics when faced with the neo-Zapatista understanding of the Earth as Mother Earth, the source of all life and a precious interlocutor of the human race which must be "loved and defended" instead of bought, sold, and used, as is done now. By radically affirming that "the Earth is not for buying or selling, it is for loving and defending," the neo-Zapatistas question not only the very heart of the commodifying logic of capitalism but also an older logic of instrumentalization which degrades

10 On this major challenge to philosophy, cf. Carlos Lenkersdorf, *Filosofar en clave tojolabal*, Miguel Ángel Porrúa, Mexico, 2002, and *Los hombres verdaderos*, Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1996. See also Norbert Elías, *La sociedad de los individuos*, Península, Barcelona, 1990, part III, and *Sociología fundamental*, Gedisa, Barcelona, 1982. Likewise, see Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "La muerte (simbólica) del Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos y el 'nosotros' colectivo neozapatista", in *Contrahistorias* 24, 2015.

land and nature in general, reducing them to simple "productive" instruments or useful implements for humans.

On the other hand, from this rich and respectful conception of Mother Earth—which also implies what the indigenous people of South America call Buen Vivir (Living Well)—it becomes possible to restore the centrality of *the logic of use-value as the structuring principle of a "new economy,"* returning to the concrete, qualitative, always specific and variable dimensions of goods and all the elements involved in the material production of humanity. This use-value logic was explicitly theorized by Marx and later developed in great detail by Bolívar Echeverría. Just as the "we-ist" principle does, the logic of use-value makes it possible to *un-think* and *re-think* the whole of the science of economics in force today.[11]

Likewise, as we have already asserted, the neo-Zapatista understandings of democracy, government, representation, the state, power, etc. make it not only possible but urgent to totally reconsider and rebuild contemporary political science and theory in another way. The same is true of sociology and social theory: these must be broadly reformulated and redefined on the basis of neo-Zapatismo's practical and theoretical contributions. Doing so would undoubtedly permit the creation of a new theory of social movements, but also a new theory of contemporary capitalist society, which as a result of having entered its terminal crisis is now composed and configured in a manner very different to its previous iterations. Capitalist society is now comprised not only of groups that are useful to it—those groups which it exploits, pillages, disparages, and represses each day in spinning what the neo-Zapatistas have called the four wheels of capitalism—but also and increasingly by socially excluded groups. In this terminal crisis of capitalism, these excluded groups cease to be essential to the existence of the system itself and multiply on an enormous scale, creating the day-by-day greater figures of those "without" or the "-less" across the world: the landless, the homeless, the jobless, the undocumented, those without rights, without citizenship, without legal existence or social

11 To list only some examples, we can name Karl Marx, *El Capital*, Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1975–81, as well as *Elementos fundamentales para la crítica de la economía política: Grundrisse*, Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1971–76, and Bolívar Echeverría, *El discurso crítico de Marx*, Ediciones Era, Mexico, 1986, and *Valor de uso y utopía*, Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1998. On the specific point of the implications of the idea of the Earth as Mother Earth, see Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "Los movimientos antisistémicos y su lucha por la tierra en América Latina", in *Contrahistorias* 13, 2009.

acknowledgment. These are those who the *compañeros* once called capitalism's modern "bags of forgetting."

To the unprecedented composition of contemporary capitalist society is added the heightened reproduction of an immense gamut of social hierarchies, both capitalist and inherited from pre-capitalist stages, which establish various borders between the many "aboves" and "belows" of the social totality. The theorizations and contributions of neo-Zapatismo, alongside a taking-up of the "we-ist" principle," would allow the field of sociology to be refounded and completely renewed. In the same way, if they were to take up the complex neo-Zapatista concept of autonomy, anthropology and all the sciences that study the various dimensions of culture could renew and refound themselves on the basis of seriously and systematically recuperating the various forms of "popular knowledge" and their centrality, explicitly defended by neo-Zapatismo.

All of this without mentioning that taking up the profound lessons the neo-Zapatistas give us on the most basic concepts of time and space—when they assert the difference between official time and the times of those below, or the divergence of the geographies of capitalism and those above and the geographies of struggle and rebellion of the multiple social belows—would also allow us to renew and completely reformulate the entire episteme which is currently in force within the limited and impoverished universe of what are now called the dominant social sciences. This, not at all by coincidence, always runs back into Marx, his rich teachings, his central intellectual legacies, and the legacies of the foremost representatives of genuinely critical social thought across the 20th century.

With hope in the future, we trust that in times to come we will gradually and truly understand the profound impact that neo-Zapatismo has had on contemporary social sciences and, above all, on the new social sciences that are currently being built.

Mexico City, December 26, 2014

Appendix 7

MEXICAN NEO-ZAPATISMO'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONTEMPORARY CRITICAL THOUGHT

Like the majority of the colleagues who have preceded me in speaking at this seminar, I want to begin by thanking the neo-Zapatista *compañeros* for inviting me to participate in this event, which they have also called a "seedbed" of ideas.[1] But I do not want this to be a mere ritual or declarative affirmation. Rather, I would like it to be a truly profound and simultaneously well-established expression of thanks. And I begin by saying this because in some way I would imagine all of my presentation to be the basis of this expression of thanks, or an effort to give it a more well-established meaning. When I finish my talk, you will understand what I mean.

The subject I've chosen for my presentation—because the *compañeros* gave us total freedom to choose our topics when they invited us—is what the neo-Zapatista movement's contribution has for 20 years been and currently is to the development and deepening of contemporary critical thought. This is the subject I would like to address, although I am conscious of the fact that it is an immense and complex subject, so I will limit myself to addressing only four examples and some leads, though it is clear to me that the list of these could easily multiply.

To begin with, the first question we should ask ourselves is: what do we understand by "critical thought"? In response, I would first say that I believe

1 This text is a corrected version of a presentation delivered at the "Critical Thought vs. the Capitalist Hydra" Seminar convened by the neo-Zapatistas and held at Oventik and San Cristobal de Las Casas from May 3–9, 2015.

that today, at the chronological beginning of the 21st century, Marx's thought is perhaps even more relevant than it was in Marx's own day. This is true despite, for example, certain liberation theologists who today would like to disguise themselves as Marxists. A few years ago, in the same spot where we are now, one of these theologians of liberation came and offended the neo-Zapatista *compañeros* and all of us by saying that the peoples of Latin America were primitive and backwards peoples. The following day, the now-extinct Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos gave him the response he deserved, but that has not stopped him from continuing to disguise himself as a Marxist in order to unsuccessfully recycle his now expired and overwhelmed liberation theology.[2] Though it stings these liberation theologists, Marx's Marxism is today more relevant than ever.

It is relevant despite some outdated anti-Leninists who feel big for criticizing Lenin without understanding him and taking him out of his context and without understanding that Lenin was one of the most creative, most intelligent, and most important Marxists of the entire 20th century. It is relevant despite all the strains of post-colonial or decolonial thought, which I believe understand nothing and are low-quality ideological knick-knacks far below the extremely subtle analysis of (for example) Frantz Fanon, who in contrast explained modern colonialism to us from a critical and Marxist point of view. It is relevant despite all the post-modernist postures which have already been referred to and criticized here, irrationally relativist postures which affirm that there is no such thing as historical truth and that all points of view are equally valid and comparable. Despite all these positions and groups, I believe that Marx's original Marxism is today more relevant than ever, as is the Marxism of the truly *critical* Marxists of the 20th century, like Lenin, like Antonio Gramsci, like Rosa Luxemburg, like the Frankfurt School, or like Mao Zedong. And more recently, like the Marxisms of Edward Palmer Thompson, Bolívar Echeverría, and Immanuel Wallerstein, to mention only a few of the best-known Marxists and Marxisms.

Based on this living relevance of Marx's Marxism, I believe that the way that Marx himself defines critical thought is still likewise valid. Marx authors the rich and fundamental book that is *Capital*, where he explains that critical thought consists of beginning with capitalist *appearance*, taking the

2 On this subject, consult the audio recordings of the First International Colloquium in Memory of Andrés Aubry from the afternoon of December 15 and the morning of December 16, 2007, at *Enlace Zapatista*, ezln.org.mx.

bourgeois categories which reflect capitalism's immediate appearance (always mystified and deceitful) and then dismantling these categories' mechanisms of concealing and deforming reality. He shows its lacunae, its tricks, its lies, its insufficiencies, and its biases, and on the basis of this deconstruction Marx gains entry into the deep essence of capitalist reality. And once this process of deconstruction and access to the essence of things is complete, Marx begins to construct a new, genuinely critical, rigorous, and scientific vision of the reality he analyzes.[3]

Further on I will return to this still-valid and fundamental Marxist definition of critical thought to ask what the neo-Zapatista *compañeros* contribute to it. In this way, to think critically today, we must recover Marx's rich thought, which continues to be, as Jean-Paul Sartre once affirmed, the unsurpassable horizon of any possible contemporary critical reflection.[4] Although afterward, we must also recover the thought of the critical Marxists who came after Marx and who I mentioned before.

Likewise, I believe that it is also fundamental to recover the primary contributions of the critical thinkers of the 20th century who, although they were not Marxists or on occasion openly declared themselves to be outside of Marxism, were able to think against the current of reigning bourgeois philosophy and from horizons that were genuinely critical of the ruling ideology. It is no coincidence that when we research the intellectual biographies and spiritual itineraries of these thinkers we sometimes find that they were Marxists in their youth, or that they engaged with Marxism, or that they never called themselves Marxists as a result of the vulgar Marxism and communist parties that coexisted in their countries over the course of the 20th century.

To various degrees, these critical thinkers *did* know Marx, and they incorporated him into their analysis, or engaged critically with him, or took him as an important (though polemical) point of reference for their research. I am thinking here of authors such as Fernand Braudel, Michel Foucault, Norbert Elias, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Carlo Ginzburg. It is my opinion that all of their

3 For this definition of critical thought, cf. Karl Marx, *El Capital: Crítica de la economía política*, 8 vols., Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1975–81. See also Bolívar Echeverría, *El discurso crítico de Marx*, Ediciones Era, Mexico, 1986, and "La actualidad del discurso crítico", in *Contrahistorias* 19, Mexico, 2012, and Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *El problema del fetichismo en* El Capital, Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales—UNAM, Mexico, 1984.

4 On this point, cf. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Crítica de la razón dialéctica*, 2 vols., Losada, Buenos Aires, 1963.

principal contributions to critical thought should be recuperated alongside our recuperation of Marxist authors.

I cannot develop this point further here, but I believe that in general, what the Marxist and non-Marxist authors I have mentioned contribute to the Marxist definition of critical thought are different modes and mechanisms through which we can execute the deconstruction, dismantling, and later reconstruction I referred to earlier. This is what Walter Benjamin meant by his fantastic metaphor of "brushing history against the grain" so that defeated pasts can emerge. It is the same thing that Fernand Braudel means when he proposes that we decenter our habitual points of observation so that instead of seeing the Mediterranean from Europe, as everyone does, we instead see Europe from the Mediterranean, or instead of analyzing consumption from the point of view of production, we should attempt to analyze production from the point of view of consumption.[5]

Norbert Elias gives us one of these mechanisms when he invites us to dissolve the limited binary dichotomies (which have done so much damage to critical thought) that rigidly place nature in opposition to culture, or pit the individual against society, or instinct against civilization, or labor against idleness, and instead assume more dialectical approaches in dealing with the complex relations between these realities. Michel Foucault does the same when he proposes to do away with naivety over the alleged neutrality of knowledge and to always search for the implicit and hidden mechanisms of power within the development and use of knowledge. Likewise, Foucault invites us to radically historicize all of the categories and concepts that we use so as not to believe that the term "madness" meant the same thing in the 16th century as it did in the 18th, or the same thing in the 19th century as it did in the 20th.[6] For this reason, when the *compañeros* say that we must build new concepts they are entirely right, and I believe that we must also learn to define what the old concepts meant in every era and mean now, and which concepts are still valid and fundamental, such as the idea of the class struggle or of capital accumulation, for example.

5 I refer here to Walter Benjamin, *Tesis sobre la historia y otros fragmentos*, Contrahistorias, Mexico, 2005, and Fernand Braudel, *El Mediterráneo y el mundo mediterráneo en la época de Felipe II*, Fonda de Cultura Económica, Mexico, 1976, and *Civilización material, economía y capitalismo: Siglos XV – XVIII*, Alianza Editorial, Madrid, 1984.

6 On these points, cf. Norbert Elías, *Sociología fundamental*, Gedisa, Barcelona, 1982, and Michel Foucault, *El poder, una bestia magnifica*, Siglo XXI, Buenos Aires, 2012, and *Historia de la locura en la época clásica*, Fonda de Cultura Económica, Mexico, 1986.

Something similar happens when Immanuel Wallerstein tells us that we must "unthink" the categories and concepts we have accepted: not "dethink" or "rethink" them, but *unthink* them in order to reveal their unstated assumptions. It happens too when Carlo Ginzburg defends the process of estrangement, or when Edward Palmer Thompson suggests that we reevaluate and assume the point of view of "those from below," or when Walter Benjamin asserts that we must see from the point of view of the victims. The same is true when Mikhail Bakhtin teaches us how to recuperate the codes of mass culture or how to reconstruct and remake dialogical and polyphonic discourses so that we can become capable of reinterpreting history on the basis of these mechanisms.[7] I will not delve more deeply into these theses here. Instead, I will now move on to the second part of my presentation, which deals with the specific contribution that neo-Zapatismo has made to the development of contemporary critical thought.

How can we, using the contributions and approaches suggested by all these authors, situate the critical thought developed by the neo-Zapatista *compañeros*? My personal interpretation is that the way the *compañeros* have named what it is to think critically has been formulated through a wonderful and fundamental metaphor. I will return to that metaphor later, but it is that we should learn to "look below and to the left." But I emphasize that this looking below and to the left is complex, as it implies both looking *to* below and *from* below, two things which are not at all the same. Likewise, it includes looking *to* the left but also *from* the left, which once again are not identical actions.[8]

7 In terms of the authors mentioned in this paragraph, cf. Immanuel Wallerstein, *Impensar las ciencias sociales*, Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1998; Carlo Ginzburg, "Extrañamiento. Prehistoria de un procedimiento literario", in *Ojazos de madera*, Península, Barcelona, 2000; Edward Palmer Thompson, *Costumbres en común*, Crítica, Barcelona, 1995; and Mikhail Bakhtin, *La cultura popular en la Edad Media y en el Renacimiento*, Alianza Editorial, Mexico, 1990, and *Problemas de la poética de Dostoievsky*, Fonda de Cultura Económica, Mexico, 1986. Furthermore, on several of the critical thinkers mentioned in the last three paragraphs, cf. Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Retratos para la historia*, Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográficos, Havana, 2010.

8 On the many implications of looking below and to the left, cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, "Durito y una de miradas y herencias", in *Rebeldía* 37, 2005; "Las políticas y las bolsas (las nuestras y las de ellos)", in *Crónicas Intergalácticas: Primer Encuentro Intercontinental por la Humanidad y contra el Neoliberalismo*, EZLN, Mexico, 1996; and the series "VI. Las miradas" in *Ellos y Nosotros*, Equipo de apoyo de la Comisión VI del EZLN, Mexico, 2013. See also Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "La mirada neozapatista: mirar (hacia y desde) abajo y a la izquierda", in *Rebeldía* 68, 2010.

To close this short introduction and transition to the four examples that I want to address, I would like to remind everyone—particularly my colleagues and fellow speakers at this seminar—of a truth that I believe is basic but also essential. This is the fact that thought is *not* the product of the genius brains of intellectuals. Rather, thought is born out of practice, and therefore critical thought can *only* come out of critical practice. But those who carry out that critical practice, as Marx said in the *Communist Manifesto*, are precisely anti-capitalist social movements, which today are also antisystemic movements. Marx said that his theoretical work, which he called communism and which later came to be called Marxism, was nothing other than the "expression in theory" of the rising communist movement itself.

Following this idea, we might say that all critical thought developed in the last 150 years is nothing more than the expression in theory of the critical practice that all antisystemic social movements on earth have developed in the same time. In this way, we are all the children of the practice of these movements, since I believe that Marx and the first Marxism are inconceivable and could not have existed without the revolutions of 1848 and later the rich experience of the Paris Commune. Likewise, Lenin and his life's work are the offspring of the process of the Russian Revolution, in the same way that Foucault or Wallerstein's work and contributions are clearly the expression in thought of the many effects of the French and U.S. iterations of the World Cultural Revolution of 1968. Without these social movements and revolutionary experiences, their critical practice, and their concrete contributions, none of these authors or the brilliant critical thought they illuminated could exist.

In this sense, my personal opinion is that this seminar, which is close to concluding, has been an *exchange of knowledges* held in public. In other words, it has been an exchange between the neo-Zapatista *compañeros* and ourselves, the guests who are delivering our presentations. They organized it that way, and this exchange has been held in front of all of you, the audience, because as the Zapatistas tell us clearly (and I think we should remember), this seminar, this seedbed of ideas, is only the *starting point* of an initiative that later must be replicated and reproduced many times, in all geographies, until all of us manage to clarify the fundamental problems that we are facing, until we deepen and sharpen critical thought enough that we can understand how we can successfully confront the capitalist hydra.

But my personal impression is also that, as in many exchanges, the exchange that has taken place here has been highly unequal. Because we, the

speakers, have given only a little. We have included, for example, only some slightly interesting ideas, or perhaps a small new clue, or only one original idea. The neo-Zapatista *compañeros*, on the other hand, have generously given us each day a true wellspring of profound, constant, enormous wisdom, gifting us an immense series of lessons that it will take real work to assimilate.

I believe that this has been an experience similar to the First Gathering of the Zapatista Peoples with the Peoples of the World, where many of us learned much more than we had in our slow progress through our undergraduate degrees, master's degrees, doctorates, and universities in all corners of the world. I believe that during the days of this seminar and using the wellspring of knowledge that the *compañeros* have shared with all of us, we can once again grow our trove of truly critical thought enormously. This is why I said at the beginning of my talk that I wanted my thanks to be more than simply declarative, as I am profoundly grateful to the *compañeros* for all the profound critical wisdom that they have imparted during this seminar.

I will now briefly cover only four examples of this great neo-Zapatista critical wisdom and the lessons it gives rise to. The first example has to do with the important characterization of what today's capitalism is. This is a crucial subject that I remember debating when we were students, recuperating and confronting the various theories of capitalism. The *compañeros* position themselves clearly and critically in regard to this subject by asserting their theory that the capitalist world is currently experiencing the "Fourth World War."[9] In this sense, I remember that upon analyzing the Mexican juncture during the Zedillo government, the now-extinct Subcomandante Marcos would say that social analysts trying to understand what was then happening in Mexico found an absolute confusion in which it was unclear if Zedillo represented the interests of commercial capital or industrial capital, or the interests of the landowners or this or that economic or political interest group, or particular businessmen, because one day he would act in a way that would benefit some of these, and the next day he would act in the benefit of others, and the day after that he would seem to break with both.

This confusion continued under the government of the blundering Vicente Fox and under the genocidal government of Felipe Calderón and today endures under the disastrous government of Enrique Peña Nieto. Seeing

9 On this neo-Zapatista characterization of contemporary capitalism, cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, "7 piezas sueltas del rompecabezas mundial" and "¿Cuáles son las características fundamentales de la IV guerra mundial?", both available at ezln.org.mx.

this, and ironically mocking the characterizations of capitalism which some colleagues continue to defend, Subcomandante Marcos put forward another explanation. He made fun of the idea of thinking about the contemporary world through the lens of globalization, saying that the bad thing about globalization is that globes pop.[10] In this way, he also rejected globalization's twin, mundialization (the French translation of "globalization"). Neither does he say that we are facing a "new imperialism," or the so-called "Empire" explained in a book that no one now remembers, or imperialism at all. Instead, he says, we are facing something new and different: a kind of "organized chaos" whose fundamental feature is that it is a Fourth World War, a genuine war of extermination waged by the powerful against all of humanity.[11]

This is the Zapatista idea of a Fourth World War. I believe that the *compañeros*' characterization is very similar to Immanuel Wallerstein's thesis on the terminal crisis of capitalism, which I agree with profoundly, although I would add to Wallerstein's thesis this political dimension of a war of extermination against humanity, which is also fundamental. It is due to this structural (or terminal) crisis of capitalism that all formerly relevant tendencies lose cohesion, separating, becoming autonomous, and shooting off in all directions. This has happened not only in Mexico or the United States but in France, Germany, and around the world, which explains why today we are experiencing total chaos in the policies of all the world's governments, as well as a kind of free-for-all struggle. All factions are attempting to impose their malicious interests within the general horizon of this war of the powerful against the dispossessed: the Fourth World War. Thus, the keen neo-Zapatista characterization of contemporary capitalism is very important and more than justifies infinite thanks to the *compañeros*, who are helping us to think through the global capitalist context in which we must now struggle.

The second example is related to the question of who the *new* social subjects of the revolution are, the subjects of the radical social change for which we are all fighting. This neo-Zapatista contribution could allow for a great

10 Marcos was punning here on the similarity between the Spanish words for balloon (*globo*) and globalization (*globalización*). – Trans.

11 On these criticisms and mocking remarks and on the neo-Zapatistas thesis that neoliberalism is "the chaotic theory of economic chaos" and "the catastrophic management of catastrophe," alongside the idea that "chaos is the form that distinguishes the new world order," cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos's communiques of March 11, July 17, and September 29, 1995, in *EZLN: Documentos y Comunicados*, vol. 2, Ediciones Era, Mexico, 1998.

part of all contemporary sociological theory to be reformulated, as well as for a transcending of limited political theories of "rational choice" and other similar nonsense, such as clumsy theories of social movements or "social or political opportunities" or functionalist theories, among others.

What the neo-Zapatista *compañeros* have discovered before contemporary social analysts, sociologists, and political scientists have, are precisely these new social subjects of radical transformation. In this respect, you may remember a very interesting text in which the now-extinct Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos said that "Marcos is gay in San Francisco," later adding that he was also Black in South Africa, a feminist in political parties, a Mapuche in the Andes, a pacifist in Bosnia, a misogynist in the feminist movement, a Chicano in San Ysidro, and a Palestinian in Israel, among more than 30 examples.[12] And since the *compañeros* have told us that all of us must build new concepts to think through the new realities of contemporary capitalism, I believe that in general, what was being portrayed in this text are the different forms of contemporary *social exclusion*. Therefore, an important task for us is to more carefully study and theorize this concept of social exclusion, as well as its specific contemporary forms.

And I think that this is one of the fundamental reasons that neo-Zapatismo has achieved the profound and lasting worldwide effect it has had: it has constituted itself as an essential point of reference for all the struggles that combat the various forms of social exclusion across the world. In the last four decades, these struggles have multiplied and intensified exponentially as a result of the terminal crisis of capitalism we are now seeing. The neo-Zapatistas understood this long before we did. Because, as Silvia Marcos said in regard to the contemporary feminisms of the academic world, we as social theorists and scientists are always following behind the discoveries, contributions, and concepts of social movements. We limp behind the neo-Zapatista movement and, for example, its highly advanced feminism, without really being able to keep up with it. All of the supposedly highly advanced feminisms—the feminisms of difference or equality, or the backward and expired feminism of empowerment—are insufficient for understanding a feminism as complex and advanced as that of the neo-Zapatista *compañeras*.

The neo-Zapatista *compañeros* took notice, in a highly pioneering way, of a phenomenon that was born out of the structural crisis of capitalism: the

12 This text is "Comunicado del Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos del 28 de mayo de 1994", in *EZLN: Documentos y Comunicados*, vol. 1, Ediciones Era, Mexico, 1998.

generalization of forms of exclusion in multiple modalities. This phenomenon clearly emerges following the crisis of 1968–73, when the world began to see the massive proliferation, for example, of the protagonists designated by the sympathetic oxymoron of the "unemployed workers" of Argentina. I emphasize here that that movement and that term exist only in Argentina, and we would have to explain the *longue durée* reasons that explain why that term—"unemployed workers"—is used there. But likewise, alongside those "jobless" there is a mass proliferation of the "landless," as in Brazil, and the "undocumented," as in Europe and the United States, as well as the "stateless" and those who are entirely socially "invisible." On this last group, *compañero* Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés tells us that prior to 1994, Mexican indigenous people simply did *not exist*, as they had no citizenship, no rights, and no visibility whatsoever (and this could apply as well to indigenous people across Latin America and the world).

All these groups are the various new groups who are "-less" or "without," the *excluded* who multiplied exponentially after 1968–73. The first people to understand this, outline it, and formulate it in theoretical terms are the *compañeros* of the neo-Zapatista movement. There is still serious work to be done on this concept of social exclusion, as it alludes to a foundational phenomenon which the *compañeros* expressed very early on and to which they quickly called our attention.

Furthermore, there is still a second major neo-Zapatista contribution on this same issue of the new social subjects of the radical change which is today underway. In a January 2013 text titled "La Sexta," Subcomandante Marcos asserted that beyond the social divisions that we are already familiar with and which neo-Zapatismo has called the "four wheels of capitalism," and beyond social exclusion, there exists yet another social division: the division between the social "above" and "below."[13] It is clear that the *compañeros* recover the work of other authors in order to critically think through contemporary capitalism. To adequately understand exploitation, they resort to what Marx explained in *Capital*; to assess different forms of discrimination and scorn they take up the lessons left to us by Walter Benjamin. To decipher current modes of dispossession, they use the work of David Harvey (among other authors) as

13 See this distinction in Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, "La Sexta," in *Ellos* y *Nosotros*, Equipo de apoyo de la Comisión VI del EZLN, Mexico, 2013. On some of its central political implications, such as characterizing the present stage of neo-Zapatismo, cf. Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "La nueva etapa del neozapatismo mexicano", in *Contrahistorias* 21, 2013.

a starting point. In the same way, to analyze repression they retake the classic works of Lenin and Antonio Gramsci, the most brilliant truly Marxist political theorists.

The *compañeros* have called our attention, as I said earlier, to the recent phenomenon of massive social exclusion which has become generalized in the last decades. I will leave that issue here. What's more, in the text of "La Sexta," Subcomandante Marcos added another suggestive and challenging thesis in telling us that beyond the divisions which stem from the four wheels that make capitalism go, beyond the social exclusion which has been massively reproduced in recent times, there is yet another social division which differentiates the experiences of, for example, a woman from above from a woman from below, or of an indigenous person from above—a *cacique* who sells himself to the highest bidder—from an indigenous person from below. With this thesis, neo-Zapatismo proposes a fruitful idea that allows us to enrich and problematize the traditional analysis of class struggle. We should not renounce this analysis, but we can make it more sophisticated in order to confront current challenges, introducing this categorization which is neither horizontal nor vertical. Instead of class strata or class struggle, it is transversal, because the difference between the social above and below marks both those sectors who in terms of social class may be above and those who may be below, within those horizontal class structures.

For my part, I maintain the hypothesis that what the *compañeros* are naming with this proposal of the social above and below is that which Michel Foucault formulated in his theories and concepts of power, powers, micropowers, and counter-powers. The social above appears to define itself by its possession of a whole series of privileges, positions, and statuses that are derived from different forms of power, whether symbolic, economic, military, religious, material, knowledge-based, political, social, cultural, etc. In contrast, the below is defined by its dispossession or lack of those same powers. But it is not impossible for me to develop this problem more broadly here.[14]

And here we face a somewhat complicated, even tragic situation. Because when Subcomandante Marcos postulated this provocative thesis—which is

14 On this point, it is useful to consult Michel Foucault's *El poder, una bestia magnífica*, op. cit.; *Vigilar y castigar*, Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1976; *Un diálogo sobre el poder y otras conversaciones*, Alianza Editorial, Madrid, 2012; *Las redes del poder*, Prometeo Libros, Buenos Aires, 2014; and *La société punitive*, EHESS—Galllimard—Le Seuil, Paris, 2013. See also Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "Generando el contrapoder desde abajo y a la izquierda", in *Contrahistorias* 8, 2007.

a brilliant idea and a new categorization of social subjects, as well as a creative line of research for understanding contemporary capitalist society and the new social subjects of anti-capitalist and antisystemic protest—he stated that he would not go deeper into that point in that moment but that he might do so on another occasion. This was in January 2013, but Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos died, and so now we must ask Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano to try to search among the papers of the late Subcomandante Marcos to see if he left anything more written on this subject. If he did not, we might ask Subcomandante Galeano himself if he might be up to developing this subject more broadly. If he is not, then we should ask Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés to help us delve more deeply into this question. And if none of this works, then we may all have to come together and tackle the problem together to see if we can figure it out between all of us.

I will only outline the third example, as it is very broad and complex and several *compañeros* have already evoked it here. The neo-Zapatistas are also helping us to think through how we should position ourselves politically now, facing power and micro-powers. To this end they redefine the concepts of democracy, the state, politics, and the concept of power itself. On these points, I will note here that some colleagues said that the neo-Zapatista *compañeros* are fighting for participatory democracy: in my opinion, this is an enormous and absolute mistake. I may be wrong, but I do not think that the *compañeros* have ever used this term, 'participatory democracy,' which is a misleading and politically correct concept peculiar to the limited and social-democratic, so-called "progressive" governments of South America.

What the *compañeros* practice, defend, and promote is *direct* and *assembly* democracy, which according to their own explanations in their various communiqués since 1994 and 1995 is the kind of democracy that corresponds to the original concept of democracy, which comes from *demos*, people, and *cratos*, government: in other words, government of the people, or popular self-government. This was what existed in ancient Greek communities before they became divided into social classes. This real and strict democracy, theorized by Aristotle, later became perverted, emptied of its content, and replaced by the degraded and limited forms of delegative, representative, supplantative, deceitful democracy, which is in no way a true democracy. Democracy must be in line with its strict definition, and it is this democracy that the *compañeros* practice through their assemblies and the intelligent principle of leading by obeying.

But they have also given us another definition of what government is, and accordingly of what a 'good government' should be. Over these past few days, Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés reminded us of the fundamental truth—which we do not completely understand either or which we do not account for in our analyzes—that an administration is not the same thing as a government, in the same way that a government is not a state, and that likewise the state and politics are different things in the same way that politics and power also diverge. For this reason, the neo-Zapatistas have never asserted the overly simplistic idea of changing the world without taking power. What they state is that their objective is to 'revolutionize power from below,' a much more complex idea[15] that implies revolutionizing massive and centralized structures of power—like the political power embodied in the state, though these two things are not the same—as well as subverting all the micro-powers, structures, and relations of power that infiltrate and manifest within (for example) relationships between romantic partners or in the family, or in the student-teacher relationship, or in hierarchies within hospitals, schools, and factories, between overseers and workers.

In this way, according to the neo-Zapatista *compañeros*, as long as we do not subvert relations of power from below, we can switch out all the administrations or parties or governments in the world, and we can build as many "progressive" governments as we like, but we will not truly eliminate capitalism or create a new world where many worlds fit. As Subcomandante Marcos has said, the state can never be our friend, because the state is not neutral: instead, it is and always will be our enemy. And moreover, the state is like a stomach. Everything that goes into it, the state swallows, and after swallowing all it can produce is what stomachs produce as their end result. For this reason, the reiterated experience of the past, confirmed in the current day, is that all who manage to take power end up reneging on their left-wing principles and acting contrarily to what they previously preached, no matter how selfless they may have been before and though they, like Lula, may have been leaders of workers all their lives who established unions and parties and

15 Among many other references we could give on this important point, we will mention only Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, "Invitación al Encuentro Intercontinental por la Humanidad y contra el Neoliberalismo", May 1996, in *EZLN. Documentos y Comunicados*, vol. 3, Ediciones Era, Mexico, 1997, and "Unas palabras sobre nuestro pensamiento", in *Crónicas Intergalácticas: Primer Encuentro Intercontinental por la Humanidad y contra el Neoliberalismo*, EZLN, Mexico, 1996.

were imprisoned. For this reason, it is essential to revolutionize power from below and radically transform all social micro-powers.

The fourth and final example has to do with the way in which the Zapatista *compañeros* refer to critical thought: the idea that it is necessary to 'look to and from below and to and from the left.' Without expanding this point more broadly, I will limit myself to briefly discussing its central implications. I believe that to look *from* below is to look at things, as Walter Benjamin said, from the perspective of the victims. In other words, it means attempting to see as the oppressed see, as those who experience exploitation, exclusion, and the social below each day see. Looking *to* below means focusing our view on the central problems and issues that affect the social below, the vast world of the excluded, forgotten, and repressed. As you can see, it is not at all the same to look from below as it is to look to below. To look *to* the left is to always focus on the contradictions within processes. Instead of seeing the smooth and pretty side of history and reality, looking to the left means (as Benjamin said) brushing history against the grain in order to see its rough and unpleasant side, what Hegel called the "bad side" of history: the fundamental contradictions. Finally, to look *from* the left is to look from an always emancipatory logic, to look in search of genuinely anti-capitalist and antisystemic solutions that will allow us to exit the capitalist labyrinth. As Raúl Zibechi explains, this is no easy task, because the hydra reproduces itself by disguising itself as "progressive" governments that steal our discourse and slogans and even our ways of thinking and acting.

Besides the four examples I have already mentioned, I could take up many more examples that demonstrate the immense wealth and enormous contribution of Mexican neo-Zapatismo to contemporary critical thought: for example, its complex redefinition of the concept of autonomy, which overcomes the limited understandings of this issue advanced by contemporary jurists, political scientists, sociologists, and anthropologists. Neo-Zapatismo has also completely reformulated the concepts of resistance and rebellion in ways which Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés has explained to us over the last few days and which completely renew our old debates on reform versus revolution. Fortunately, the Zapatistas are turning everything on its head. There is also their fruitful proposal of what the new form of organization in social movements ought to be today, based on the idea that we must all organize ourselves on all levels, from the most micro to the most macro, without homogenizing or hegemonizing. This is what makes it possible to return the leading role to the bases and greatly relativize the role of leadership, in

addition to preserving and cultivating horizontalism and equality. Likewise, there is neo-Zapatismo's generous openness and tolerance, symbolized in its slogan of fighting for "a world where many worlds fit," which has also materialized at this seminar, where those of us who have been invited to speak come from a huge range of positions, educations, ideologies, and horizons.

But there is also its astute feminism, its rich approach to pedagogy, and its critical lessons on political economy, discussed at this seminar by Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés. There is neo-Zapatismo's contribution to totally redefining the concept of culture and its posture toward art (from a perspective very close to that of Walter Benjamin's) of carrying out the *death of art* which Benjamin asserts in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. Neo-Zapatismo has made original contributions in the sphere of communication media: among an endless etcetera of examples, the first text by Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano, published in August 2014, represents a fundamental contribution.

I will finish with two ideas: one is difficult but hopeful, and the other is quite optimistic. The first is a painful conclusion but is one that is also important. Over the past few days, I had the opportunity to spend some time with *compañeros* who are parents of Ayotzinapa, Doña Berta and Don Tomás, and with two young student teachers from the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers' College itself. From this brief experience, from the jokes and conversations we have been able to have on everyday subjects, and from what they have told me that they have experienced in their own movement, I can say that they are good, noble, affectionate, and respectable people, as are the immense majority of the people of Mexico, as are the subaltern classes of all of Latin America and those from below across the world. They did not deserve and do not deserve what they have had to live through, but it is also clear that they represent the tip of the iceberg of a greater tragedy and of a painful and complex national situation. At the same time that Doña Berta and Don Tomás and the young student teachers are good and noble people, they are also rebellious people who will not surrender or sell out or let themselves be coopted. They will fight until the end. So my first conclusion is that we are missing 43, or 46 or 47. This is linked, as the *compañeros* always remind us, to the fact that "what's missing is yet to come."

My second concluding idea is very optimistic and is based on a thesis of Marx's. When Marx writes the little text titled *Wage Labor and Capital*, he affirms that without wage labor there can be no capital, and without capital there can be no *wage* labor either, since both are correlative categories that

assume each other's existence. But Marx immediately adds that though capital could not exist without wage labor or without labor in general, labor in general *can* exist and has existed without the existence of capital. Capital can live only from the exploitation of labor, transforming it into wage labor. But, Marx says, what would happen if we took capital out of labor in general? And he answers that wage labor, without capital, would cease to be *waged* and would become free labor, and that we would all be happy and content.

This important idea—that capital cannot survive without labor, but that labor can in contrast easily and happily survive without capital—can easily be extended to other spaces and relations. Without the dominated, there can be no dominators, but without dominators, we the dominated would simply be free and happy. Without oppressed people there can be neither powers nor micro-powers, nor the multiple hierarchies that now exist. But without hierarchies or powers or micro-powers, those of us who are now oppressed would live happily.

This is Marx's profound idea: that in the medium and long term, *we* are indispensable, since if they kill us all the game will simply be over for them. But they, on the other hand, who bother us, repress us, torture, disparage, exclude, and mock us for being from below: without us, they could not exist. At the risk of sounding overly optimistic—and I surely am—I believe that on the basis of this profound thesis, there is no doubt that we will win.

But I want to add something else. In light of this Seminar, and especially in light of what the neo-Zapatista *compañeros* have taught us over the last 20 years, and on the basis of these immense lessons that allow us to redefine what capitalism, the new social subjects, and autonomy are today (among a long list I have already mentioned), and on the basis of the wisdom that the Zapatistas have lavished upon us over the course of this Seminar, I honestly believe that we will not only win in the future but that we have already won, here and now, because as Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos once said, even if we lose, we've won. Even if we lose, we've won, because having been able to learn about and draw on this incredible construction of autonomy that the *compañeros* carry out day after day; having been able to draw on their knowledge and wisdom, which we slowly and sputteringly attempt to study, analyze, research, and clarify; having put all of Mexico's social movements back on the offensive; having caused the rebirth of the entire indigenous movement in Latin America, putting it on the offensive; having returned hope to the world after the fall of the Berlin Wall; having organized this Seminar, this seedbed, Critical Thought Versus the Capitalist Hydra, gives us renewed hope

that very soon we will be able to defeat that capitalist hydra. For these reasons and many more, there is no doubt that even if we lose, we have already won. Thank you very much!

Appendix 8

NEO-ZAPATISTA DISCOVERIES: BIRTHING THE NEW WORLD FROM BELOW, KNOWING ARTS, CREATING SCIENCES

> "Our path is based in some of the roots of the originary (or indigenous) communities: the collective, mutual support and solidarity, care for the earth, the cultivation of the arts and sciences, and constant vigilance against the accumulation of wealth. These roots, along with the arts and sciences, is our guide. This is our way […]". Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés and Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano, "300, Part II: A Continent as a Backyard, a Country as a Cemetery, Pensamiento Único as a Government Program, and a Small, Very Small, Ever So Small Rebellion", August 21, 2018.

Introduction

In the last four years, neo-Zapatismo has developed a vast array of original and heuristic initiatives surrounding the promotion and defense of art and sciences as levers and supports which are central, even foundational, to its antisystemic struggle against capitalism in Mexico and the world.[1] This range of creative initiatives represent an *open proposal* and a lesson worthy of consideration by the world's antisystemic movements. From July 2016 to June of 2020, in the current difficult times of the COVID-19 pandemic, these initiatives comprise the four CompARTE for Humanity festivals, two "Zapatistas

1 This text is an updated, modified, and expanded version of my article "Artes, ciencias y saberes neozapatistas. Nacer desde abajo el nuevo mundo no capitalista", originally published in *Contrahistorias* 27, Mexico, 2017, pp. 25–42.

and ConCIENCIAS for Humanity" gatherings, two Puy ta Cuxlejaltic Film Festivals, and two International Gatherings of Women Who Struggle.

These rich and varied initiatives began with the First CompARTE festival, which dealt with the arts in general. A second CompARTE festival in August 2017 was also intended to address the arts in general but in the end dealt only with digital and cybernetic art. A third CompARTE similar to the first one was held in August 2018, and a CompARTE Dance Festival was held in December 2019. 75 films and documentaries were screened at the First Film Festival, some of them created by the neo-Zapatistas themselves (through the Tercios Compas, their media apparatus), and musical activities, theater, dance, photographic exhibitions, and storytellings were held in addition to the screenings. A second Film Festival was held in December 2019. The First International Gathering of Women Who Struggle took place in March 2018, with a second iteration held in December 2019; the latter event dedicated one of its three days entirely to culture, art, and celebration.

All of this was accompanied by the first two ConCIENCIAS gatherings (December 2016–January 2017 and December 2017), where scientists in the so-called "natural" or "exact" sciences were solidly questioned from multiple angles by a section of the neo-Zapatista support bases. The "To Watch, to Listen, to Speak: No Thinking Allowed" round table was attended by various artists (musicians, filmmakers, writers, visual artists, novelists, theater directors, and photographers, among others) who spoke at the event, and the first day of the event was dedicated to a "Music Concert." To these events we can also add the broad project of new initiatives which neo-Zapatismo made public in August 2019, declaring: "To those who have dedicated their life and their livelihood to art, science, and critical thought: we will be inviting you to festivals, encounters, seedbeds, fiestas, exchanges, or whatever they might be called. We will let you know soon how, when, and where we might have these events. These will include CompArte and the Film Festival 'Puy ta Cuxlejaltic' but not be limited to them. We hope to be able to have CompArtes specific to each art, for example, theater dance, visual arts [artes plasticas], literature, music, etc. In addition, there will be another edition of ConCiencias, but perhaps this time we will start with the social sciences. Finally, there will be another seedbed for Critical Thought and we are thinking we will begin with the topic of The Storm."[2] Of these planned events, the only one that has been

2 Cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, "Communique from the EZLN's CCRI-CG And, We Broke the Siege", August 17, 2019, *Enlace Zapatista*, ezln.org.mx.

able to be held until now was the CompARTE Dance festival in December 2019; the rest were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This diverse range of initiatives promotes the arts, sciences, critical thinking, and the central presence of all of these elements within our struggles and our movements. These insert themselves into the new and recent strategies which neo-Zapatismo began to deploy seven and a half years ago—from the beginning of the fourth stage of its development at the end of 2012 and until now. It is this stage that has given birth to an increasingly widespread and strong twofold movement: the national Sixth in Mexico and the international Sixth across the world.[3]

For this reason, if we want to adequately understand the broad meaning of all of these neo-Zapatista initiatives surrounding art and science, we must situate them within the even broader set of projects and proposals which neo-Zapatismo has promoted for the last seven and a half years, its ongoing fourth stage of life. At the same time, however, we must situate these initiatives within the overall context of the worsening crisis which Mexican capitalism and the entire system of global capitalism are now experiencing. With the COVID-19 pandemic, this truly terminal crisis of world capitalism is now demonstrating its true face to the populations of all the world's countries, as well as its deep, structural wretchedness and irrationality.

These two dimensions—the overall meaning of this fourth stage of neo-Zapatismo and the clear perception and assumption of the terminal moment of global and Mexican capitalism—explain in large part the deep meaning of all the neo-Zapatista initiatives we have referred to above. These initiatives are intended to promote collective, overall discussion, here and now, from Mexico out to the world. From 2016 until the present day, they have been based on the premises, central moments, and concrete paths for beginning to immediately build (as far as possible) a radically new world, a non-capitalist, non-classist world that is no longer pre-historic. The new world is a "world where many worlds fit" and where freedom, autonomy, and communitarianism and collectivism will be easily affirmed. Likewise, it will be a world that affirms *art as the creation of all, and as an integrated dimension of the lives of human beings* and that affirms *science as the heritage and shared result of the ordinary activity of all of humanity as a whole*.

3 On the specific features of this fourth phase of neo-Zapatismo, cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, "V: La Sexta", in *Ellos y nosotros*, Equipo de Apoyo de la Comisión VI del EZLN, Mexico, 2013, pp. 71–87, and Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "La nueva etapa del neozapatismo mexicano", *Contrahistorias* 21, Mexico, 2013.

All of this is the only viable solution by which to confront present-day capitalist chaos and annihilation, the "storm" which all of the world's peoples now face. By virtue of the *terminal crisis of capitalism*, which is its source, this storm has begun not only to devastate and destroy entire populations but to pillage natural resources, goods, and products of all sorts. It remakes and reorders territories, countries, continents, and whole economies around the entire world. Combined with the coronavirus pandemic, its destructive policies which threaten the subaltern elements of all societies become an open social Darwinism, controlled and consciously directed by the world's states. It rescues corporations and capitalist profits and the ruling classes as it abandons great parts of the mass and subaltern sectors of the Earth's countries to their deaths.

It is for this reason, and in keeping with their profoundly anti-capitalist and antisystemic character, that the neo-Zapatista *compañeros* have promoted the various initiatives we have seen since December 2012. As a whole, these initiatives try to give answers to and open real paths for confronting and overcoming the primary manifestations of the terminal crisis of capitalism. In the positive sense, these initiatives also attempt to articulate the skeleton of problems and their possible solutions that will allow the growing and increasingly powerful movement of the international Sixth to be built in the world and the national Sixth to be built in Mexico. It is this movement that today confronts the genocidal "megaprojects" of the deceitful and totally pro-capitalist government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

Let us first examine some of the various initiatives of neo-Zapatismo's fourth stage of life, created in response to the terminal crisis of world capitalism. Later, we will specify which of these initiatives deal in particular with the complex fields of the arts and sciences and delve into them in more detail. Today, these initiatives in arts and science are dormant while the *compañeros* intelligently confront the COVID-19 pandemic—this will be the subject of our final reflection.

Revolutionizing the Forms of Making the Revolution

> "Fundamentally, revolutionaries propose to transform things from above, not from above, which is opposite to social rebels […] social rebels organize the masses and transform things from below […]"

Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, "Entrevista con Julio Scherer" (Interview with Julio Scherer), March 10, 2001, Milpa Alta.

The World Cultural Revolution of 1968,[4] which manifested its presence in practically the entire world, had many widely-varying historical meanings. Beyond a doubt, it was also the symbolic point of a deep historical mutation which ended global capitalism's centuries-long period of life as a mostly stable and balanced social system and ushered in the stage of *global capitalism's structural and terminal crisis*, which is still ongoing. Alongside this major historical mutation, 1968 was also the last gasp of the form of revolutionary strategy which postulated that the first, inevitable task of any revolutionary movement was the seizure or conquest of the state or the political power of the country at hand. Later, the strategy dictated, state or political power would be used to promote the economic, social, political, and cultural changes needed for the complete transformation of society.[5]

Various movements of the 20th century applied this revolutionary strategy, and recent years have seen it used again, this time within peaceful, electoral parameters, by the so-called "progressive" governments of Latin America. All of these governments clearly failed in their objective of radically transforming their respective societies in genuinely anti-capitalist and antisystemic terms. Instead, they produced the peculiar societies of what was called Actually Existing Socialism, and although they undoubtedly promoted processes of modernization and moderate social development, these did not eliminate economic exploitation, social classes, or the state monopoly on politics, to say nothing of the division between manual and intellectual labor, the patriarchal family and misogyny, or different hierarchies, such as knowledge-power, racial, or military hierarchies, among many others.

4 For a general description of this global cultural revolution and its primary effects, cf. *La revolución cultural mundial de 1968*, Desde Abajo, Bogotá, 2018, including texts by Fernand Braudel, Immanuel Wallerstein, and Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, among others.

5 For a description of this *terminal crisis* of capitalism, cf. Immanuel Wallerstein, *La crisis estructural del capitalismo*, Quimantú, Santiago de Chile, 2016, and Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Para comprender el mundo actual*, Instituto Politécnico Nacional, Mexico, 2010. In regard to the change in revolutionary strategy discussed here, cf. Immanuel Wallerstein, *Historia y dilemas de los movimientos antisistémicos*, Contrahistorias, Mexico, 2008, Raúl Zibechi and Decio Machado, *Cambiar el mundo desde arriba: Los límites del progresismo*, Desde Abajo, Bogotá, 2016, and Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Antimanual del buen rebelde*, El Viejo Topo, Barcelona, 2015.

The movements of 1968 criticized that strategy, instead advancing theses like the Italian slogan "*vogliamo tutto, e subito!*" ("we want everything, right away!"); "*l'imagination au pouvoiur*" ("all power to the imagination"); "the personal is political"; amd "be realistic, demand the impossible," a phrase coined by Che Guevara and popularized across the world by the global revolution of 1968. In addition to pressing for *integral global change* in all spheres of social life and of capitalist civilization as a whole, the deep spirit of the World Cultural Revolution of 1968 rejected moderation, gradualism, and the rigid separation of and sequential approach to levels and realms proposed by the old revolutionary strategy.

While the movements of 1968 clearly foresaw this change in the ways and paths of "making the revolution," their lessons and demands would be assimilated only slowly and partially, in contradictory and difficult ways, by post-1968 revolutionary movements. It would fall to Mexican neo-Zapatismo to initially embody and model the concrete ways and paths which were foreseen in an embryonic form in 1968. Sweeping aside the strategy of seizing state or political power and then attempting to change society, the neo-Zapatistas would instead propose a new revolutionary strategy, or better said a *rebel* strategy, consisting of beginning to immediately create the kernels and embryos of new non-capitalist, non-classist, non-prehistoric (in the Marxist sense) worlds, and to immediately begin creating the popular counter-power which, in addition to protecting those embryos of the new world, daily confront world capitalism and national capitalisms in all their forms and at all their levels, progressively dismantling, besieging, and defeating them until causing their final collapse.[6]

6 To better understand this new rebel strategy according to neo-Zapatista terminology, a strategy quintessentially embodied by neo-Zapatismo, it is worth carefully reading *El pensamiento crítico frente a la hidra capitalista I: Participación de la Comisión Sexta del EZLN*, EZLN, Mexico, 2015, particularly the section "Apuntes de Resistencia y Rebeldía", pp. 137–80, and "Organizarse", pp. 337–49. See also "Palabras del Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés", in "Las Artes y las Ciencias en la historia del (neo) Zapatismo", December 28, 2016; Julio Scherer's interview with Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, March 10, 2001; and Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos's letter to Ángel Luis Lara, October 12, 2002; all of these can be found at *Enlace Zapatista*, ezln.org.mx. On the quintessential or model character of neo-Zapatismo in terms of present-day global antisystemic movements, cf. Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Mandar Obedeciendo: Las lecciones políticas del neozapatismo mexicano*, Contrahistorias, 14th ed., Mexico, 2018; *Una tenera furia: Nuovi saggi sul neozapatismo messicano*, Aracne Editrice, Rome, 2019; and "The Meaning of Mexican Neozapatismo within the Current Antisystemic Movements", in *Research in Political Economy*, vol. 34, Croydon, United Kingdom, 2019.

This new rebel strategy of radical anti-capitalist and antisystemic transformation has been present within neo-Zapatismo since its beginnings in 1983, and publicly present since New Year's Day, 1994, but it has become consolidated and made itself more explicit in the fourth stage of neo-Zapatismo, which began on December 21, 2012. This innovative rebel strategy is key to understanding the main neo-Zapatista initiatives of the last seven and a half years, including the series of open calls on art, dance, film, science, etc. contained within them. Of course, this new strategy has nothing to do with either the ridiculous idea of wanting to "change the world without taking power" or the naïve posture of ignoring power or trying to do away with it by decree: instead, this strategy means radically *unlearning* the old revolutionary strategy which is still dominant in broad swathes of the "Left." It means ceasing to think of the world and the revolution "from above," from the logic of the ruling power and of the state, and beginning instead to deploy a new form of looking (to and from) below and to the left,[7] criticizing and dismantling the ruling power and all dominant powers, including the state, from a platform of promoting (self-)organization from the social "below," a platform of building social counter-powers and of beginning to immediately and everywhere build new, non-capitalist, non-classist, and non-prehistoric worlds. The profound spirit of the new rebel or revolutionary strategy and contemporary resistance confronts, annuls, and destroys the state, political power, and various forms of social power by building social relations, organizations, popular and subaltern movements, realities, and bonds which, in addition to being genuinely anti-capitalist and antisystemic, are all embryos of new worlds which obstruct the survival and reproduction of the state, of political power, and of antagonistic economic, social, cultural, etc. power in general.

It is this profound spirit which has been apparent in all the initiatives of the nearly eight years of neo-Zapatismo's fourth stage. It was present in the peaceful symbolic occupation of the municipal seats of five Chiapas municipalities which took place on December 21, 2012, when the neo-Zapatistas built five platforms which they then climbed with their left fists raised, watching their astonished spectators in absolute silence. They then came down from

7 On the complex implications of looking (to and from) below and to the left, cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, "Durito y una de miradas y herencias", in *Rebeldía* 37, November 2005; "Una certeza, dos dudas y una carta inconclusa", in *Rebeldía* 43, June 2006; and "VI. Las miradas", in *Ellos y nosotros*, op. cit., pp. 89–120, as well as Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "La mirada neozapatista: mirar (hacia y desde) abajo y a la izquierda", in *Rebeldía* 68, December 2009–January 2010.

the platforms and dismantled them in an act that contained various evident and profound messages.

The first and most important of these messages is the idea that the bases of the neo-Zapatista movement are their own leaders and that the way they operate as an organization and as a movement breaks radically with the *longue durée* division between 'leaders' and 'led,' a division which was reproduced even within leftist movements and organizations prior to 1968. This division between leaders and bases is repeated in a thousand forms, fed and reinforced by the divisions between those who allegedly think and those who merely act; between those who decide and those who obey; between those who can allegedly see the future of a movement in the medium and long term and those who perceive only its immediate future. It is the division between those who negotiate, represent, speak, and play the leading role and those who merely observe, are represented, keep silent, and linger in anonymity.

The Zapatista break with that age-old division between leaders and bases is born from the fact that in neo-Zapatista communities, major decisions are always *collective decisions made by everyone*, as they are made in assemblies through direct democracy and within a framework where the collective 'we' prevails over any possible individual 'I.' Logically, these facts make it impossible for 'leaders' to even exist and always give the central role to the collective, i.e., to the social bases of the organization and of the movement.[8]

In turning the bases into leaders and thus dissolving the division between leaders and led, it becomes possible to intelligently critique the old vanguardism of left-wing movements and organizations both within a movement itself (in which its 'intellectuals' or its Central Committee or its leaders etc. are the "vanguard" of the entire organization) and outside of it (renouncing the vocation of dictating to other organizations or classes or social sectors what the "right" route, or the only correct strategy, or the exclusive path of the revolution or radical social change are).

For this reason, when neo-Zapatismo defined the general outlines of its fourth stage of life in January 2013, the Zapatistas insisted (among other points) on the point that (seen from the point of view of the pre-1968 left) their movement-organization of the Sixth is almost a non-organization, an

8 On the role of these assemblies in the social life of neo-Zapatismo and on the predominance of the collective 'we' over the individual 'I', cf. Carlos Lenkersdorf, *Filosofar en clave tojolabal*, Miguel Ángel Porrúa, Mexico, 2002, and Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "La muerte (simbólica) del Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos y el nosotros colectivo neozapatista", in *Contrahistorias* 24, Mexico, 2015.

anti-organization. In any case, it is a movement that does not want to wield hegemony over other movements or subaltern classes or to homogenize them. Instead, it explicitly and consciously promotes thousands of processes of popular self-organization and fronts of struggle. In defending their own types of being and struggle in their own geographies and calendars, all of these fronts deploy their own struggles, coordinating these struggles in mutual solidarity through the mechanism of organization represented by the Sixth but at the same time remaining respectful of their different demands and individual particularities.

This movement extends and universalizes Marx's principle that "the emancipation of labor must be the work of the working class" by asserting that the emancipation and liberation of each person or group or social class can only be the work of each subject's action, and therefore of their own capacity for self-organization and self-emancipation.

Alongside this radical break from the leader/led division, which returns the leading role within movements and organizations to the social bases of these organizations and which ends the possibility of vanguardism, neo-Zapatismo has begun to show the whole world an important part of the *concrete paths to building the real embryos of new, non-capitalist worlds*, here and now. With the carrying out of three rounds of the first course of the Little Zapatista School in July and December of 2013 and January of 2014, the neo-Zapatista *compañeros* have shown us what it is to build, day by day and in difficult circumstances, their *integral global autonomy*, their true and concrete collective freedom, and their chosen forms of relating to nature and each other on absolutely all levels of social reality. These levels stretch from their radically anti-capitalist vision of "Mother Earth"[9] to the particular forms of a very other antisystemic anti-capitalist culture, passing through their likewise varying and subversive forms of economics, exchange, labor, family, gender relations, decision-making, 'we'-based social relations, real and direct democracy, a very other politics, self-government and social self-management in general, original and highly advanced education, and very other arts and sciences, among many possible examples.

9 On this important conception of land and territory as a Mother Earth, cf. the open call by the EZLN and the National Indigenous Congress, "Invitation to a Gathering in Defense of Territory and Mother Earth", November 21, 2019, *Enlace Zapatista*, ezln.org.mx, and Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "Latin America's Antisystemic Movements and its Struggle for the Land in the Twenty-First Century", in *Review*, vol. XXXIII, No. 4, 2010.

From their experience of life and struggle, the neo-Zapatistas show us how they have been able to *build new and non-capitalist worlds* based on the exercise of their collective freedom and integral global autonomy. At the same time, they show us how even under the most difficult circumstances it is possible to confront and overthrow capitalism in deeds (although, for now, this has only been possible on a local level and in certain locations which, though important, are fenced in). In demonstrating this, they appeal to each of us directly, showing us that we can also self-organize in our own territories and our own calendars, combat and overcome capitalism, and begin to experience our own anti-capitalist and antisystemic freedom and autonomy.

In addition to showing us the challenges of building neo-Zapatista autonomy as well as its achievements, the Little Zapatista School critically educates us in that it compels us to question and unlearn our limited ideas of what freedom and autonomy are. It furthermore challenges us to unlearn our outdated hierarchy of knowledge, our ridiculous fetishism of admiring scholarly, university, book knowledge, and our absurd disparagement of profound popular knowledge. It teaches us to critique the idea of the 'intellectual' and their possible role within social life, particularly in terms of genuinely antisystemic and anti-capitalist social movements. These various lessons of the Little Zapatista School constitute several important elements of the new radical strategy of social transformation promoted now and always by neo-Zapatismo.[10]

It was within this same logic that the grave and important decision (though highly in keeping with neo-Zapatista practice and postures) was made to respond to the cowardly murder of teacher Galeano by Chiapas paramilitaries in May 2014 by letting the character of Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos symbolically die. This decision once again emphasized the fact that neo-Zapatismo has never had sole leaders who make decisions on the general fate of the movement or the paths of its struggle. Its "leaders" are its own bases, and its most important decisions are made by its collective 'we' through assemblies and direct democracy and through the simple structures of the Rebel Autonomous Municipalities (MAREZ) and Councils of Good Government (JBGs).

10 To better understand this important experience of the Little Zapatista School, it is worth reviewing the four textbooks which were discussed within it, the first-level textbooks for the course "Freedom According to the Zapatistas", written by the neo-Zapatista *compañeros* and now available online. See also Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "La Escuelita Neozapatista: vivir desde adentro la lucha por la autonomía", *Contrahistorias* 21, Mexico, 2013.

The symbolic death of Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos (who was reborn as Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano, but with duties and tasks radically different to those held by Marcos) allowed the world to see the enormous maturity and progress neo-Zapatismo had achieved in its nearly 40 years of existence. It also demonstrated the various changes that have happened within the movement in this period, ranging from the natural generational replacement of the old by the young to the ethnic change which has seen the position of official spokesman for and primary public figure of neo-Zapatismo switch to Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, a keenly intelligent and deeply wise indigenous *compañero*.[11]

In May 2015, neo-Zapatismo organized the Critical Thought Versus the Capitalist Hydra seminar, which saw participation by dozens of intellectuals, as well as various Zapatista *compañeras*, Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, and Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano. At this seminar and through the participation of those *compañeros* (who together form the Sixth Commission of the EZLN), we gained access to the essence of neo-Zapatista wisdom, with its enormous theoretical and conceptual wealth and complexity, as well as its profound contribution to contemporary critical thought. We gained access, in other words, to an important part of the specific contribution that neo-Zapatismo has made to the advancement of contemporary critical consciousness in terms of present-day social reality through its own practice and its own theoretical and philosophical thought.[12]

Reading the various texts that came out of the participation of the Sixth Commission of the EZLN at this seminar (all compiled in Volume I of *El Pensamiento Crítico Frente a la Hidra Capitalista*), we discover a truly radical and anti-capitalist (as well as intelligent and centered) feminism. This is a feminism that is very distinct from the "light" feminisms of empowerment

11 In this regard, it is worth rereading the texts by Subcomandante Insurgentes Moisés compiled in *El Pensamiento Crítico Frente a la Hidra Capitalista I: Participación de la Comisión Sexta del EZLN*, op. cit., as well as texts he wrote when he was still Lieutenant Colonel Insurgente Moisés, "Palabras del Teniente Coronel Insurgente Moisés", in *Contrahistorias* 8, Mexico, 2007, and "El campo y la ciudad: Intervención en el Primer Festival de la Digna Rabia", in *Contrahistorias* 12, Mexico, 2009. On the context and meaning of the symbolic death of Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, cf. Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "La muerte (simbólica) del Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos y el nosotros colectivo neozapatista", op. cit.

12 On neo-Zapatismo's important contribution to contemporary critical thought, cf. Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "La contribution du néozapatisme mexicain au développement de la pensée critique contemporaine", in *Theomai* 35, 2017.

and difference now promoted even by women across the whole spectrum of Mexico's corrupt and degraded political class. Likewise, the feminism found in these texts is a far cry from the fundamentalist and fallen-behind feminisms of the academic world which see men as the enemies of women. Likewise, neo-Zapatista feminism explicitly defends the Marxism of Marx and critical Marxism in general as indispensable levers and starting points for accurately analyzing the modern world and for deciphering (with the support of other currents of critical thought of the 20th and 21st centuries) possible solutions to the terrible chaos of the "global capitalist storm" and the genocidal behavior of the capitalist hydra in general.

Among other points, these central contributions to contemporary critical thought include a perceptive characterization of global capitalism's current crisis, as well as keen lessons on the political economy of resistance and rebellion. Within the latter contribution, neo-Zapatismo presents elements of a new strategy of "making the revolution," as well as several lessons in methodology and a radical critique of the existing functions and modalities of contemporary social sciences, among various other important points.[13]

Since 2016, neo-Zapatismo has actively promoted the reorganization and relaunching of the anti-capitalist segment of the Mexican indigenous movement, a segment which has been organized as the National Indigenous Congress (CNI) since 1996 (in fact, this organization occurred at the urging of neo-Zapatismo itself). This support and new outlook for the anti-capitalist indigenous movement in Mexico was solidified in 2017 with the bold initiative of naming an indigenous woman, María de Jesús Patricio Martínez (better known as Marichuy), as a candidate in Mexico's 2018 presidential election.

As a candidate, the election itself was *never* Marichuy's primary objective. Rather, she made use of the election to fulfill her three main goals, explicitly declared by the neo-Zapatistas and the CNI itself. First: to denounce the poverty, limitations, and abjection of the entire Mexican political class. This abjection showed itself (to name only one example) in the National Electoral Institute's (INE) dirty tricks in preventing the registration of signatures in support of Marichuy's candidacy. Second: to denounce to Mexico and the world the real process of dispossession and slow extermination which the indigenous peoples of Mexico and Latin America are now enduring. If Latin

13 On these extremely important neo-Zapatista contributions to critical thought, cf. *El Pensamiento Crítico Frente a la Hidra Capitalista I: Participación de la Comisión Sexta del EZLN*, repeatedly cited above. See also the various essays included in *Contrahistorias 25*, centered on the question of what critical thought is.

American societies do nothing against this dispossession and extermination, indigenous peoples run the risk of being erased from the face of the earth in this century. Third: to propose to all the mass and subaltern sectors and classes of Mexico that the solution to our problems lies not in elections or in the corrupt political parties which currently exist in Mexico but only in popular self-organization—from below and to the left and in concerted struggle with all other subaltern sectors and classes—coordinated through the Sixth.[14]

This promotion of the self-organization of all Mexican subaltern classes and sectors has been a constant strategy for the entire fourth stage of neo-Zapatismo. The Zapatistas, for example, convoked these subaltern sectors together to attend the Little Zapatista School in 2013 and 2014, and later to support the campaign of *compañera* Marichuy in 2018. Later, the subaltern sectors were called on in 2018 and 2019 to extend the Network of Resistances and Rebellions and to take part in the "We Are All Samir" Days of Action in Defense of Territory and Mother Earth in 2020. Intellectuals were also called upon to take part in the seminars entitled Critical Thought Versus the Capitalist Hydra (2015), The Walls of Capital, the Cracks of the Left (2017), and To Watch, to Listen, to Speak: No Thinking Allowed? (2018). Women were invited to the two International Gatherings of Women Who Struggle (2018 and 2019). Likewise, through the permanent support of the National Indigenous Congress (which has increased notably since 2016), indigenous people were also called upon. Artists, filmmakers, dancers, scientists, and even cybernauts have also heard the call of the neo-Zapatistas.

These multiple initiatives promote the self-organization of every sector or social class, which tomorrow might come to include students, or workers, or urban dwellers, or young people, or the "to each their own," or small farmers, or retirees, or any of the various groups that make up the vast and varied universe of Mexican subalternity. For this reason, in August 2019 the EZLN publicly declared its intention to convoke "an encounter between the families of the murdered, disappeared, and imprisoned and those organizations, groups, and collectives that are dedicated to accompanying those families' rage and their search for truth and justice," as well as to convoke "a meeting of otroas [others]" and "an encounter between groups, collectives, and

14 On this bold initiative on the part of the CNI and EZLN which has not always been properly understood, it is worth carefully rereading Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés and Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano, "A STORY TO TRY TO UNDERSTAND", November 17, 2016, *Enlace Zapatista*, ezln.org.mx, and Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "La candidatura anticapitalista del CNI", *Uníos!*, vol. IV, no. 55, November 2017.

organizations that work in the defense of Human Rights," emphasizing that at these meetings and encounters, "we the Zapatistas will limit ourselves to acting as hosts."[15]

The conscious and combative self-organization of each class or social group multiplies fronts of struggle and confrontation with the world capitalist system in every country and on the global scale. At the same time, this self-organization articulates and interconnects an increasingly large, numerous, and powerful "Network of Resistance and Rebellion" that constitutes the broad antisystemic movement of the Sixth, both national and international. For this reason, the neo-Zapatistas explicitly declared in August 2018 that they would "have to incorporate into our horizon of struggle all of our own realities and the pain and rage [originary peoples] hold. We will have to move toward a new phase of this process: the construction of a Council that includes the struggles of all of the oppressed, marginalized, disappeared, and murdered, the struggles of political prisoners, of women who have been attacked and harassed, of children who have been prostituted, of all the calendars and geographies that delineate a map that is impossible within the laws of probability and illegible to polls and votes: the contemporary map of rebellion and resistance across the planet."[16]

It is precisely as a continuation, strengthening, and addition to all of their initiatives described above that the rebel indigenous *compañeros* of the Mexican southeast have carried out all their open calls surrounding the arts, film, dance, and science. All of these open calls very clearly advance the line of the urgent and immediate task of *building and rebuilding* new, non-capitalist worlds in the face of the imminent total collapse of the planetary capitalist system. The neo-Zapatistas affirm that they "have concluded that the artists, scientists, originary peoples, and those below must put together our wisdom and begin to construct a new world where those of us who live will live well."[17]

15 On this announcement of these initiatives, which have still not been finalized due to the COVID-19 pandemic, cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, "Communique from the EZLN's CCRI-CG And, We Broke the Siege", op. cit.

16 Cf. "300 Part III: A Challenge, Real Autonomy, An Answer, Multiple Proposals, and a Few Anecdotes about the Number 300", August 22, 2018, *Enlace Zapatista*, ezln.org.mx.

17 On this quote, cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano, "A Few First Questions for the Sciences and their ConSciences", December 26, 2016, *Enlace Zapatista*, ezln.org.mx. The *compañeros* are very clear on the fact that this role is taken on by science and the arts *after* January 1, 1994, since prior to that date these fields had been recovered only to a very limited degree, as arts and science in service of the war effort. Now, however, science and art are understood in a more holistic and positive manner, as rich, powerful levers central to the construction of the new world and of everyday resistance, rebellion, freedom, and

Let us examine in greater detail the fundamental lessons which have come out of these initiatives in science and the arts that neo-Zapatismo has developed in the last four years.

Art and Science for Birthing the New Non-capitalist World from Below

> "The totality as a conceptual entity seen by the intellect is a product of the thinking intellect which assimilates the world in the only way open to it, a way which differs from the artistic, religious and practically intelligent assimilation of this world."
> Karl Marx, General Introduction to *Foundations of a Critique of Political Economy* (*Grundrisse*), 1857

Between 2016 and 2020, channeling the new strategy for achieving radical and anti-capitalist social change and focused specifically on urgent *constructive and reconstructive* tasks intended to manage the new non-capitalist, non-classist, non-prehistoric worlds, the neo-Zapatistas convoked and held four CompARTE for Humanity festivals, two Puy ta Cuxlejaltic Film Festivals, and the two The Zapatistas and CONSciences for Humanity gatherings, as well as complementary elements of these initiatives.

In doing so, the neo-Zapatistas have demonstrated their profound conception of science and the arts, as well as illustrated the fundamental role that both of these fields play within their movement's present-day processes of antisystemic and anti-capitalist struggle. Not by coincidence, their conception of science and the arts recalls many of Marx's theses and interpretations on the scientific and artistic dimensions of the social totality. Likewise, it also recalls some of the sharp critical reflections on these subjects outlined by authors such as Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault, Bolívar Echeverría, and Carlo Ginzburg, among others.

A first neo-Zapatista thesis on art and science is that which posits the major *centrality and relevance* of these fields in human history and within the totality of human activity. According to neo-Zapatismo, "the sciences and the arts rescue the best of humanity," and it is the arts which "delve most deeply into the human being," given that "artistic works throb with life and

autonomy. Cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano, "Las Artes y las Ciencias en la historia del (neo) Zapatismo", antes ya citado.

liberty." The depth and historical-essential character of science and the arts lead the Zapatistas not only to admire the "wonder of knowledge, the marvel of the arts"—though they naturally affirm these fields not as an eternal and immutable human essence but as a complex, historically-contingent, and changeable essence—but also to intelligently and challengingly propose that the "possibility of a better world" (naturally non-capitalist) "rests on a tripod." The three legs of this tripod are the arts, the sciences, and the indigenous peoples and "basements" of the world, i.e., the social below which neo-Zapatismo so often evokes. This is what leads the Zapatistas to say "Begin to dream and you will see that we can only fight capitalism with good scientific science, the art of the artist, and the guardians of mother nature together with those below from across the world."[18]

As the neo-Zapatistas themselves say, their theses on the centrality and essential nature of science and the arts—as well as on the role of levers and platforms that science and the arts can play in the process of giving birth to a new, non-capitalist world from below—are the direct result of their nearly 40-year experience of struggle and 27-year experience of building autonomy. Not by coincidence, their ideas often overlap with Marx and Engels' own understandings of the arts and sciences.

When in the 1857 introduction to his 1859 *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* Marx attempts to characterize the results of the process of human scientific knowledge, he does so beginning from the idea that the activity of science is merely one *specific way* (out of many) that humans have of appropriating the world. Marx compares the scientific method of

18 All quotes in this paragraph are taken from the first neo-Zapatista texts and communiques on science and the arts, published between February 2016 and January 2017. In order, they belong to Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, "ZAPATISTA CONVOCATION FOR 2016 ACTIVITIES", February 29, 2016; Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano, "The Arts, the Sciences, the Originary Peoples and the Basements of the World", February 2016; Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés and Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano, "The geography? Oventik. The calendar? July 29, 2016", July 17, 2016 (2 quotes); Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, "The Arts, the Sciences, the Originary Peoples and the Basements of the World"; and Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, "Words of the General Command of the EZLN in the name of the Zapatista women, men, children and elders at the opening of the Gathering 'The Zapatistas and ConSciences for Humanity'", December 26, 2016. All available at *Enlace Zapatista*, ezln.org.mx.

appropriation with three other methods: artistic, "practically intelligent," and religious.[19]

These four ways or methods by which human beings first confront nature and then confront the social world which we ourselves have created lead humans to various other ways of assimilating external reality. They furthermore lead to many other activities invented and cultivated by our species, and therefore to realities and relations which for millennia (but not forever) will be fundamental and decisive realities in terms of the human task in its totality.

Because given that all of these realities are different variants of the human connection with nature, they are primordial relations of all human societies, which reproduce and appropriate nature. They do so in fetishistic, limiting, deifying ways, as with religion; in entertaining, aesthetic ways, as with art; in technical and instrumental ways, as with economics; or in inquisitive, critical, and comprehensive ways, as with science. According to Marx, some of these forms of assimilating the world and reality decay and disappear as social life develops: for example, the "religious world," the "reflex of the real world," will disappear as the laws of nature's functioning become completely recognized and understood. Other forms, such as economy, will see their role in social life considerably reduced once work is abolished and carried out in practice not by humans but by machines. Still other forms of assimilating the world—such as science and the arts—will finally expand and flower unobstructed when they become activities common to and shared by all humans.

When neo-Zapatismo defends the centrality and future fundamental role of the arts and of science, it largely coincides with Marx's idea on what the true "kingdom of freedom" will be. On the basis of the abolition of labor and the death of politics; the end of religion; the suppression of the antithesis between town and country and manual and intellectual work; the abolition of social classes, of private property, of patriarchy, of egotistic and possessive individualism; on this basis the free development of a new individuality will become possible, in harmony with the collective. On this basis there can be an unlimited flowering of love, science, human social exchange, and art.[20]

19 This is the quote that serves as this section's epigraph and is found in Karl Marx, *Elementos fundamentales para la crítica de la economía política: (Borrador) 1857–1858*, vol. I, Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1971, p. 22.

20 Marx develops these well-known theses in several of his central texts. For example, the thesis on the abolition of labor is found in the first chapter of *The German Ideology*; the death of politics is found in the final section of *The Poverty of Philosophy*; the end of religion is found in Volume I of *Capital*; the abolition of the antithesis between town and country, as well as between manual and intellectual labor is found in various passages

It is the second neo-Zapatista thesis on science and the arts that in many senses 'explodes' the very concept of what is today considered art, expanding it immensely. In this thesis, art comes to include folk art, which is currently and absurdly considered to be mere handicraft, but also comes to encompass different activities that may include artistic dimensions or aspects in their exercise and application. Furthermore, 'art' comes to include activities like the construction of good governments and autonomy, or scientific labor, among other activities. On one hand, this second thesis allows us to burst the current understanding of science in order to include within it all true knowledge created now and in the past by human beings in practical life and the vast world of experience, and not only that knowledge which has come out of universities and laboratories. On the other hand, the second thesis allows us to more rigorously delimit the concept of science itself, distinguishing it from widely disseminated contemporary pseudoscience, as well as from philosophy, religion, and the absurd intellectual postures advanced by a huge range of present-day postmodern and decolonial currents.[21]

On the basis of the wise and radical idea that "an artist is anyone who considers their activity as art, independent of canons, art critics, museums, wikipedias, and any other 'specialist' schemas that classify (that is, exclude) human activities,"[22] neo-Zapatismo recovers the well-known historical fact that at the dawn of human history, when communitarian forms of social organization still predominated and society was not yet riven by antagonistic social classes, art and science were not activities that were separate from daily life. Nor were art and science the exclusive labor of a chosen few, classified and qualified as 'artists' or 'scientists.'

The separation of art as a specific activity opposed to other human activities and comprised as a sphere of action limited to 'artists,' as well as the separation of science and the activity of knowledge from daily life and social life and their exclusive assignment to 'scientists' are the direct results of the appearance of class societies. These societies not only promote and stratify

of *Capital*; the theses on the abolition of social classes, private property, patriarchy, and egotistical individualism are found in both *The Communist Manifesto*, cowritten with Friedrich Engels, and the *Grundrisse*, (*Elementos fundamentales para la crítica de la economía política (Borrador): 1857–1858*, op. cit.).

21 On the neo-Zapatista understanding of science, cf." ZAPATISTA ALCHEMY", January 2, 2017, available at ezln.org.mx, op. cit.

22 Both of these affirmations are found in the text of Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, "ZAPATISTA CONVOCATION FOR 2016 ACTIVITIES", op. cit.

the differences between manual and intellectual labor but reassign and redistribute various tasks and social activities between different social classes. In this way, the immense majority of popular and subaltern classes are limited to productive economic activities in which they are continuously and brutally exploited, while the activities of art and science (as well as politics) are separated from daily life and the entire fabric of society and assigned almost exclusively to certain members of the dominant, exploiting classes. For this reason, Marx says clearly that "exclusive concentration of artistic talent in particular individuals, and its suppression in the broad mass which is bound up with this, is a consequence of division of labour."[23] With its own specifics, this could also be directly applied to "scientific talent," the activity of science itself.

Thus, when neo-Zapatismo says that an artist is anyone who understands their own activity to be art, and when it asserts that the arts as a whole must include the art of good government, the art of resistance, or the art of building autonomy—even affirming that "the most marvelous of all of the arts is collective mutual support"—what it is doing is questioning the very roots of the processes by which art and science become autonomous and independent from human social life itself. In this way, neo-Zapatismo bursts the current limits of what is considered to be art and science and returns to art and science a way to reconnect to daily life or even to achieve their own dissolution within daily life in such a way where art and life, life and science, science, life, and art can mix freely and easily as they did at beginning of human history, though now in forms a thousand times richer, more complex, and more sophisticated than they were in those days.

The third neo-Zapatista thesis on art and science is closely connected to the second and likewise comes out of the neo-Zapatista practice of struggle and of building autonomy. It affirms that instead of being the exclusive activity of a small elite considered to be 'artists' or 'scientists,' science and the arts are (and must be) the common patrimony of all human beings. The *compañeros* have expressed this in the ingenious idea that in their communities, each Zapatista is a jack-of-all-trades, since at the same time as they do particular concrete labor (such as agriculture, ranching, silviculture, weaving, chicken-raising, etc.), they are also support bases or militiamen and militiawomen of the EZLN, with all the responsibilities these roles imply. Likewise, they are promoters of health, education, and agroecology and they are members of

23 Cf. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Ideología Alemana*, Ediciones de Cultura Popular, Mexico, 1974, p. 470.

the Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities or of the Councils of Good Government. Furthermore, the neo-Zapatistas also take the time to work as artists and to cultivate knowledge and scientific activity.[24]

Because in the same way that the division between manual and intellectual labor no longer makes sense (as all human beings have a head and hands and legs and a body), the division between artists and non-artists, between scientists and non-scientists, likewise has no purpose, as absolutely all of us have scientific talents. When we are able to recognize, cultivate, and appropriately train these skills and talents, all humans will be scientists and artists simply by virtue of being human. Neo-Zapatista youths have gradually discovered this artistic-scientific talent present in all humans in the process of organizing the various CompARTE festivals, film festivals, and ConSCIENCES gatherings, a process which the neo-Zapatistas themselves have described in texts such as "The CompARTE Festival and Solidarity" (July 2016) and "A Few First Questions for the Sciences and their ConSciences" (December 2016).

Therefore, if the concepts of art and science must expand and burst, and if the new realities they now designate must be reintegrated, reabsorbed, and dissolved again into daily life and the social fabric of contemporary societies, then the contemporary arts and sciences must die. But this is not a total death, as must happen to politics, religion, and social class; rather, science and the arts must die in order to be reintegrated into the daily social life of all, transforming every individual into an artist and all human beings into scientists. Art and science as they exist now must die so that all human activity can receive its corresponding elements of art and science, so that the life of each person can become a work of art and a work of science.

For this reason, and under the logic of defending the potential of all human beings to be scientists and artists, the neo-Zapatistas have imagined and presented the existence of an "impossible movie theater" with an "impossible" big screen. Instead of representing a rigid border that separates a movie's audience from its creators and producers, the impossible screen becomes a "screen" which allows both of these groups to cross it and switch roles, turning

24 On this point and in terms of the arts, cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, "THE ART THAT IS NEITHER SEEN NOR HEARD", July 29, 2016, *Enlace Zapatista*, ezln.org.mx. Regarding science, cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, "What Comes Next I: Then and Now", and Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano, "What's Next? II. The Urgent and the Important", both speeches delivered January 3, 2017, available at *Enlace Zapatista*.

filmmakers into audience members and audience members into filmmakers.[25] This total relativization and radical questioning of the division between 'active creators' and 'passive consumers' of art is already partially present in different ways in many plays, novels, and films of the most avant-garde artistic currents of the 20th and 21st centuries; it also recalls the significant fact that the murals that adorn the buildings of neo-Zapatista communities are collective works. The entire community discusses a planned mural's subject matter and motifs with an artist who has come from outside the community, also touching upon the figures that should appear in the mural, as well as its colors, design, dimensions, and how it will use the available space. Later, the community and the artist carry out the practical execution of the mural as a group.

These radical neo-Zapatista theses on the current condition and status of scientists and artists coincide with Marx's idea that in communist society there will be no more artists or scientists because all people will play these roles. The neo-Zapatista theses also echo Walter Benjamin's idea of art's extinction through its own massification, which under capitalism manifests only as a limited and antithetical massification but which tomorrow, in a non-capitalist world, will flower freely. They recall Michel Foucault when he says "What surprises me is that in our society, art's only relation is to objects, not to individuals or life itself; and also that art is a specialized field, the field of the experts called artists. But could the life of any individual not be a work of art in itself? Why is a painting or a house an artistic object but our own lives are not?"[26]

Using this same logic, a fourth neo-Zapatista thesis on art and science is that which reminds us that while art and science might well be a "synonym for freedom" or "the last bastion of humanity" or the "hope of humanity"—and in this sense are the pillars for building a new, non-capitalist world—they are, in contemporary capitalist society, not "exempt from the fierce division of

25 On this creative and original understanding of film, cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano, "An invitation to: 'The Impossible Movie Theater'", October 4, 2018, at *Enlace Zapatista*, ezln.org.mx.

26 Marx's theses on the death of art are developed in *The German Ideology*, op. cit., while Walter Benjamin's are found in his *La obra de arte en la época de su reproductibilidad técnica*, Itaca, Mexico, 2003 (on this brilliant text, see Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "Walter Benjamin's Lessons on the Present and Future of Art", in *Lessons in Critical Theory*, Peter Lang, New York, 2020). The paragraph quoted from Michel Foucault is found in the interview "A propos de la genealogie de l'ethique: un aperçu du travail en cours", en *Dits et écrits: 1954–1988*, vol. 4, Gallimard, Paris, 1994, p. 617.

classes." Art and science therefore can be and have been used as instruments for extracting profit, for dispossession and exploitation, for discrimination and repression, for exclusion, and for affirming and reproducing unjust social hierarchies which still exist today.[27]

With the rise of class societies and the constitution of science and the arts as specialized activities carried out by a society's dominant classes, scientific and artistic activities came to marginalize, displace, and deny the arts and knowledge of the masses, denigrating folk arts as mere handicrafts and reducing popular knowledge to the level of marginal, unsystematic, and secondary forms of knowledge, when not referring to these as simple beliefs or superstitions. These absurd dichotomies between art and handicrafts and science and popular knowledge are directly questioned by neo-Zapatismo, which in the text "One House, Other Worlds," (July/August/September 2016) criticizes the prejudice which many have of indigenous peoples (a prejudice which also extends to all mass and subaltern classes) that imagines that "what they do is art and culture, and that what we do is folk art and ritual. They think that what for them is analysis and knowledge, for us is belief and superstition."

This criticism has also been made (from many angles and approaches) by the foremost critical theorists of culture of the 20th and 21st centuries, including Mikhail Bakhtin, E.P. Thompson, Bolívar Echeverría, and Carlo Ginzburg, among others. All of these thinkers have postulated and demonstrated that the original and foundational culture of any possible culture is mass or subaltern culture, while the dominant or hegemonic culture is always a derivative, second-rate culture which is necessarily dependent on the subaltern culture.[28]

27 On the capitalist use of science and the degradation of science for military purposes and for the crude extraction of capitalist profit, as well as for repression and economic exploitation, cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano, "The Arts, the Sciences, the Originary Peoples and the Basements of the World" and "A Few First Questions for the Sciences and their ConSciences", and Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, "Words of the General Command of the EZLN in the name of the Zapatista women, men, children and elders at the opening of the Gathering 'The Zapatistas and ConSciences for Humanity'", op. cit.

28 We refer here to the critical work of Mikhail Bakhtin, *La cultura popular en la Edad Media y el Renacimiento*, Alianza Editorial, Mexico, 1990; E.P. Thompson, *Costumbres en común*, Crítica, Barcelona, 1995; Bolívar Echeverría, *Definición de la cultura*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico, 2010; and Carlo Ginzburg, *El queso y los gusanos*, Muchnik, Barcelona, 1981, and *Tentativas*, Desde Abajo, Bogotá, 2014. See also the essays on Bakhtin, Thompson, and Ginzburg included in *Lessons in Critical Theory*, op. cit., and "Hegemonic Cultures and Subaltern Cultures: Between Dialogue and Conflict", in *Review*, XXVIII, no. 2, 2005.

Extended to the fields of science and the arts, this implies that the real original and foundational art of all art is popular art, and that all science is ultimately derived from deep popular knowledge.

There are various examples which support this point. We know that the great tragedies, comedies, and fables of the Greeks are all of anonymous authorship, i.e., popular authorship, and that Aeschylus, Aristophanes, and Aesop were simply the skillful artistic 'transcribers' of these mass creations. The same is true of Shakespeare, who in his day created modern versions of Greek works of mass origin and made use of the popular feeling of his own day. Goethe, taking up the anonymous mass legend of Faust, put his own personal and fantastical spin on the story. Walking through the streets of Italy, Antonio Vivaldi drew on the popular music of his time to create his own works. Jazz, the emblematic music of the United States, was first developed by that country's Black masses. The slums of Buenos Aires gave rise to the tango, which would become an export of Argentina to the entire world. The list of possible examples is endless.

The same is true of science, whose primary engine of development is neither the love of knowledge for knowledge's sake nor the alleged genius of scientists; instead, its motor is simply the technical needs and practical necessities of a society in general. Friedrich Engels noted this when, criticizing the practice of writing the history of sciences "as if they had fallen from the skies," he clearly states that "if society has a technical need, that helps science forward more than ten universities."[29] And as we well know, mass and subaltern knowledge is always born as the fruit of direct experience, of the everyday contact of subaltern classes with the real world: the world of production, of urban life, of the peasant world, and of social life in general. In this way it is always a first response—which is sometimes not totally adequate or complete but which always includes profound elements of true science—to the practical and technical needs of society in general. In this sense, mass and subaltern knowledge is always a nourishing source of science's development and progress.

For this reason, in a non-capitalist society, not only will art and science expand to daily life and the entirety of the social fabric and make all humans into artists and scientists but the absurd divisions which currently exist between 'high' and 'low' art and between science and popular knowledge will disappear. These

29 Engels makes these affirmations in his January 25, 1894 letter to H. Starkenburg, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Obras escogidas en dos tomos*, vol. II, Editorial Progreso, n.d., pp. 507–9.

binaries will once again be merged in new, more complex and sophisticated ways of appropriating the world in aesthetic and cognitive terms.

It is evident that art and science are not the same and have clearly diverging objectives and strategies and that they have had likewise diverging fates: as Marx explains, though capitalism is the enemy of art and poetry, it is also the promoter of science, which it brings under its control in order to exploit it and turn it into technology, a direct lever of production. But it is also true that between science and art there exists a whole range of points of contact and convergences which are as fundamental and relevant as their divergences.

This constitutes the fifth neo-Zapatista thesis on science and the arts, which without ignoring the obvious differences between these fields emphasizes that their respective borders are neither as rigid nor as clear as might seem. For science and art to exist and develop, both need a series of skills and abilities which are often quite similar and sometimes nearly identical. For this reason, the neo-Zapatistas stress that art and science require great creativity and a close look at things, as well as imagination, an attentive ear, a practice of testing and continuous experience, intelligent reflection, patience, caution, much wisdom and intelligence, and good interpretation. Furthermore, both activities are linked by their common "humanity," which explains why the neo-Zapatistas refer, for example, to the "science of the artists" and to the "art of the scientists."[30]

These neo-Zapatista theses highlight the evident closeness between art and science in general but also and very particularly in terms of the explicit objective of creating a new world, of birthing from below and to the left a world radically different to the current capitalist world, a world "where many worlds fit." This is not only because the neo-Zapatistas affirm that their own autonomy has been built "with science and art" but also because they challengingly ask us how we can build a new house—non-capitalist, non-classist, non-prehistoric—that is so immense that many worlds can fit in it, i.e., that it can hold all of humanity, liberated and emancipated from global capitalism. To build that world, do we need the arts, or do we need science, or do we need

30 All of these are characteristics which Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés and Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano list as belonging to art and science and necessary for creating or birthing "a new world, a new system" in their texts "THE ART THAT IS NEITHER SEEN NOR HEARD" and "The Arts and Sciences in the History of (neo) Zapatismo", op. cit., as well as Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano, "The Cat-Dog and the Apocalypse", December 29, 2016, and "The EZLN's Sixth Commission at the close of 'Consciences for Humanity': 'From the Diaries of the Cat-Dog.' SupGaleano", December 30, 2017, *Enlace Zapatista*, ezln.org.mx.

popular knowledge (so-called "uses and customs")? Or would a combination of these three elements be best for building this unprecedented house, so big that it can fit all of humanity? The creation of a new world is a problem which is neither purely scientific nor purely artistic nor purely related to popular knowledge. The construction of this world-house is an art that requires science and the support of popular knowledge, because while it is art that must imagine that house, it is science and popular knowledge that will say exactly how that house must be built.

A possible sixth neo-Zapatista thesis is that which breaks with the individualist (sometimes even egotist and competitive) character of art and sometimes science in the contemporary capitalist world by highlighting their supposedly essential character as activities of individual creation or discovery (some positions even hold that these discoveries are unique and unable to be repeated). But though art and science can indeed be individual creations, they can also be collective creations: the product of collaboration, cooperation, and coordinated teamwork.

This is true of neo-Zapatista art and science, which were constructed as a "chain of art" that had many links and was "built by thousands of Zapatista men and women, with science and art," in the words of Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés in "THE ART THAT IS NEITHER SEEN NOR HEARD." This rich and complex collective construction of arts and sciences is based on the clear predominance of the 'we' over the 'I' among the neo-Zapatistas, and far from blocking the free development of individuality, this predominance creates better conditions for individuality to flower based on the coordinated affirmation of the individual alongside the collective or of the individual from and within the collective. For this reason, Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano has affirmed that "we [the Zapatistas] do not raise individual problems. As a student body, we continue to function as a collective."[31]

This recalls Marx's definition of future communist society as "a community of free individuals," i.e., as a new form of social organization in which the absurd antithesis between the individual and the community (or between the 'I' and the 'we') has been overcome and has given way to a new situation which sees the "free development of each" and the "the general reduction of the necessary labour of society to a minimum, which then corresponds to the artistic, scientific etc. development of the individuals in the time set free, and

31 Cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano, "The flower is to blame", December 27, 2016, *Enlace Zapatista*, ezln.org.mx.

with the means created, for all of them."[32] Or, as Marx says in the first chapter of *The German Ideology*, "personal freedom becomes possible only within the community": "in the real community the individuals obtain their freedom in and through their association."

This is a scenario of harmonious and combined development of free individuality alongside the affirmation and unfolding of the community. When applied to the fields of arts and sciences, it presents a new framework in which individual artistic creation must fuse with collective artistic creation and individual discovery must combine with the collective construction of science. This future is prefigured in a highly embryonic and incipient but also evident way in the arts and sciences of contemporary neo-Zapatista communities.

Finally, a seventh neo-Zapatista thesis on art and science addresses the role that these activities currently play within the "storm" that the world is enduring and in the horizon of tasks imposed by capitalism's current terminal crisis. This is a multifaceted role, since science and the arts are powerful instruments for recuperating the memory and history of all who struggle in truly anti-capitalist and antisystemic terms. They are also a fundamental mirror of the identity of the subaltern sectors, groups, and classes who struggle, as well as an essential tool for building a world very other to the world that exists now and a different future for all of humanity.

For this reason, the neo-Zapatista *compañeros* have stated that the collective creation of all their contributions to the first CompARTE Festival was "another iteration of what we [the Zapatistas] are," but "with the technique of Art." At the same time, this creation was a demonstration of how the Zapatistas live, work, make art, and do science "as Zapatistas and autonomous people, with their resistance and their rebellious ways." From here, it becomes possible for art to show us an "illustration of something new in life, […] something very different," first imagined and later created in deeds and in real life, proof of the fact "that it is possible to create another life working in common to benefit the community itself."[33]

The role of art and science in recuperating the history, memory, and deep identity of the peoples and social movements who confront capitalism, as well

32 On this point, it is worth rereading several passages from the *Grundrisse*, among which we cite Karl Marx, *Elementos fundamentales para la crítica de la economía política: (Borrador) 1857–1858*, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 83–93, and vol. II, pp. 31–39. The passages quoted are also from vol. II, p. 229.

33 All these quotes are found in Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, "THE ART THAT IS NEITHER SEEN NOR HEARD", op. cit.

as their role as tools for building a non-capitalist social future, go radically against the contemporary commodification and degradation of these fields which is so characteristic of capitalism and which was studied in depth by the theorists of the Frankfurt School as part of their complex thesis on the "cultural industry." In this context, and in a line similar to that asserted by Walter Benjamin on the politicizing of art, the neo-Zapatistas develop an entirely critical vision which goes against the contemporary current of arts and science, questioning the banalization, manipulation, and instrumental use of these fields by capitalism. Against this degradation, neo-Zapatismo defends the functions of art and science which are critical, anti-capitalist, and prefigurative of a very different future.[34]

* * *

Briefly outlined, these are the primary neo-Zapatista initiatives of the last seven-and-a-half years, as well as some of the movement's most relevant positions in terms of science and the arts. These initiatives, proposals, and positions once again show us the enormous potential and immense wealth of an indigenous social movement with roots that stretch back over more than 500 years but which in itself has existed for just over 35 years. Today, this movement is an endless source of creativity and wisdom and thus of lessons which we as artists, scientists, and social scientists are only just beginning to gradually learn about. Among these profound lessons are teachings on science, the arts, and popular knowledge which are necessary for us to adequately recover the past and to be able to intelligently face the complicated present which we must live through. Above all, we need these lessons to build the anti-capitalist tomorrow that all of us are tirelessly fighting for today.

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34 On the thesis on the cultural industry, cf. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialéctica de la Ilustración*, Ediciones Akal, Madrid, 2007. On Walter Benjamin's thesis on the necessary politicization of art, cf. Walter Benjamin, *La obra de arte en la época de su reproductibilidad técnica*, op. cit.

Appendix 9

MEXICO AND MEXICAN NEO-ZAPATISMO IN TIMES OF COVID-19

> "In this country also known as the 'Mexican Republic,' the recent national elections managed to hide reality…for a moment: economic crisis, social decomposition (with its long train of femicides), and the consolidation (despite supposed 'mortal blows' to narco-trafficking) of parallel States (or those interwoven with the Nation-State) of so-called 'organized crime.' Although only briefly, the murders, kidnappings and disappearances of women of all ages moved into the background—the same with poverty and unemployment. But as enthusiasm over the election results wanes, reality rears its head once again, saying, 'Here I am, you forgot my vote… and my scythe.'"
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> Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés and Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano, "300, Part II: A Continent as a Backyard, a Country as a Cemetery, Pensamiento Único as a Government Program, and a Small, Very Small, Ever So Small Rebellion", August 21, 2018.

On March 16, 2020, with its characteristic penetrating farsightedness, the EZLN released an important communiqué in which it clearly stated its position in terms of the global COVID-19 epidemic. In this communiqué, as it criticized the clumsy and unserious postures of both the "bad governments" and the entire Mexican political class toward this emergency, neo-Zapatismo also announced the closure of all its Caracols in the state of Chiapas as well as a series of measures intended to confront this new and complex situation.[1] In closing its Caracols and taking special health measures in all its communities, neo-Zapatismo became the *first* social and political actor in all of Mexico to apply the astute measure of social quarantine. This occurred before journalists or intellectuals began to seriously discuss the problem of COVID-19 and

1 Cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, "EZLN closes Caracoles Due to Coronavirus and Calls on People Not to Abandon Current Struggles", March 16, 2020, *Enlace Zapatista*, www.ezln.org.mx.

before doctors and epidemiologists began to explain the magnitude of the global pandemic and the enormous risk it posed. Neo-Zapatismo took its measures before the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) closed its doors, before schools shut down, and before government offices, businesses, hotels, movie theaters, restaurants, dance halls, and public spaces in general suspended activities.

It was this great far-sightedness on the part of neo-Zapatismo in terms of the real dimensions of the global pandemic that allowed the Zapatistas to describe the pandemic as a "serious and scientifically proven risk to human life" and "a life-threatening virus which endangers all regardless of nationality, gender, race, language, religion, political affiliation, social class, or history." On the other hand, one week later on March 22, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador was offhandedly dismissing the problem, saying that there was no need to panic, that we were barely in phase 1, that normal life had to go on, and that we should keep going out to eat as we had before.[2] Clearly, these two approaches to the pandemic were diametrically opposed, and the last seven months have shown that the wise and prudent neo-Zapatista posture toward this exceptional global emergency was the right one. By not having taken the problem seriously, the López Obrador government is directly responsible for the still unknown but doubtlessly enormous amount of damage done by COVID-19 in Mexico, which ranks fourth among the countries with the highest total number of deaths in the world, outdone only by the United States, Brazil, and India.

Because beyond the lies of the López Obrador government on the real numbers of infections and deaths caused by the novel coronavirus (which by its own admission have been massively undercounted),[3] there is no doubt

2 On these obtuse declarations by AMLO, cf. the article "No dejen de salir, yo les voy a decir cuándo: AMLO sobre pandemia de COVID-19", on the website of the magazine *Animal Político*, March 23, 2020, at https://www.animalpolitico.com/2020/03/no-dejen-de-salir-amlo-coronavirus-covid19/.

3 The manipulation and conscious concealment of the real numbers of infections and deaths from COVID-19 in Mexico has been so shocking that it has even provoked the publication of several articles denouncing this situation in the international press. One of these articles estimates that the real numbers are three to four times higher than the government's; another says that they are 22 times higher. This has forced the Mexican government to accept that there has been an undercounting, but their argument has been that this undercounting was unintentional and has taken place in all countries. If we start from the fact that in September 2020, Russia was testing 273 of its inhabitants out of every million for COVID, Spain was testing 213, and Mexico was testing only 11, we will understand one of the many reasons for this vast and criminal undercounting. On this point, cf.

that this pandemic clearly represents a *general catastrophe* in the history of the Mexican nation, which has so often been abused and deceived by its own rulers and by the powerful individuals and ruling classes which inhabit it. This COVID-19-derived economic, social, political, and cultural catastrophe for all of Mexican society is aggravated by occurring within an already-existing crisis of Mexican and world capitalism which has been ongoing for several decades. For this reason, the neo-Zapatistas have signaled that a world economic crisis is coming, and that the coming crisis will be (or is already) the adverse context in which the Mexican government will be compelled to act in the immediate years to come. This situation does not depend on any of the candidates who ran for president in 2018 and could not have been changed by any of them: it springs from a planetary context that is present (with variations) in every country in the world, and Mexico is no exception. For this reason, the *compañeros* wisely affirmed some months ago that "any other candidate who landed in the presidential office (Meade, Anaya, el Bronco, or Ms. Xerox would have faced the same 'adverse global environment' (that's what big capital's think tanks call it) and come out defeated and looking for someone to blame. Any of them would have done exactly what the current government is doing: lie and cook the books."[4]

In the case of Mexico and during the 25 months of the López Obrador government, this economic and even all-encompassing global crisis has been creeping ever more perilously toward the critical point of real economic collapse and encompassing a growing and increasingly generalized social discontent. The inevitable social background to the devastating effects of the novel coronavirus in Mexico is precisely that of the country badly governed for two years by the clumsy and pretentious López Obrador government, which beyond its empty and bombastic rhetoric of representing a supposed fundamental historical change, a profound "Fourth Transformation," has shown itself in the

Azam Ahmed, "Hidden Toll: Mexico Ignores Wave of Coronavirus Deaths in Capital", in *The New York Times*, May 8, 2020; Juan Montes, "Death Certificates Point to Much Higher Coronavirus Toll in Mexico", *The Wall Street Journal*, May 8, 2020; Jorge Galindo and Javier Lafuente, "La magnitud de la epidemia en México", in *El País*, May 8, 2020; Juan Omar Fierro, "Es oficial: hay subregistro de muertes", in *Proceso* 2271, May 10, 2020; and "Número de pruebas médicas de coronavirus realizadas por cada millón de habitantes en los países más afectados del mundo a fecha 11 de septiembre de 2020", at https://es.statista.com/estadisticas/1107740.

4 Cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano, "Sonata for Violin in G Minor: MONEY", August 15, 2019, at *Enlace Zapatista*, www.ezln.org.mx.

great majority of its deeds to be "more of the same," i.e. a linear continuation of neoliberal economic policies and growing polarization and social inequality alongside an explosive growth of uncontrolled social violence, the unstoppable decay of the entire Mexican political class, and abandonment of and general indifference toward any possible expression or development of national culture. For this reason, the neo-Zapatista *compañeros* have concisely affirmed that "those who occupy those positions above are all the same, and today we can say this literally—they are the exact same people as always. Reality washes away the makeup they try to use to simulate change."[5]

Just as neo-Zapatismo has repeatedly stated, we have not advanced much at all if we think that it is enough to switch out one person (López Obrador, for example) or a party in power (MORENA, for example) if we want to truly change things. The point is to change the capitalist social system at the national level and on the world scale. This was why, following López Obrador's inauguration, the neo-Zapatistas again insisted that the point was not to trade a bad overseer (Peña Nieto) for a less bad one (Obrador), but to truly win freedom by overthrowing the true owner of the plantation, national and world capitalism, and suppressing all the plantation owners, overseers, foremen, and managers of the world's countries, provinces, and municipalities.[6]

Andrés Manuel López Obrador sought to present himself to the world as a "new link" in the chain of "progressive" governments who played the leading roles in a supposed "turn to the left" which took place in many parts of Latin America in the first two decades of the 21st century. Following defeats in Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador, and Bolivia, this new link would come again to relaunch a new "progressive cycle," allied with the recently elected government of Alberto Fernández and Cristina Kirchner in Argentina.[7] Now,

5 Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, "Message from the Zapatista Army for National Liberation on the 100th Anniversary of the Assassination of General Emiliano Zapata", April 10, 2019, *Enlace Zapatista*, www.ezln.org.mx.

6 For this original and penetrating neo-Zapatista thesis, which imagines contemporary capitalism through the metaphor of a series of enormous plantations, cf. Subcomandante Insurgentes Moisés and Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano "300, Part I: A Plantation, a World, a War, Slim Chances", August 20, 2018, at *Enlace Zapatista*, www.ezln.org.mx.

7 In our opinion, López Obrador does indeed form part of this family of so-called progressive governments, but is without a doubt its worst possible version, i.e., its feeblest, dimmest, most bloodless embodiment. The current Mexican government basically represents the interests of the Mexican national bourgeoisie, just as all the progressive governments did before and continue to do now with their respective national bourgeoisies. While these other governments (despite being pro-capitalist) were or are genuinely nationalist and even

two years after coming to power, the López Obrador government has shown not only its true nature and its profoundly pro-capitalist character but also the emptiness and deceitfulness of its rhetoric in claiming to be a government that would put "the poor first" and carry out a "Fourth Transformation" of Mexico that would be comparable to the previous transformations in our history represented by national independence, the Reform, and the Mexican Revolution.

The deeply pro-capitalist nature of the López Obrador government is necessarily opposed to the interests and expectations of the popular and subaltern classes of Mexico. Its false rhetoric of an enormous historical change is contradicted every day by the realities and events we live through. Both of these elements have reached an extreme level in the seven months that have passed since the irruption and increasingly greater diffusion of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

If we carefully examine the experience of Mexico in the last 25 months, we can conclude that the same neoliberal policies of the last four decades have in general continued and have sometimes even been worsened as our economy flounders more and more and draws dangerously close to the brink of a large-scale economic collapse. Such a collapse will probably be accompanied by an enormous devaluation of the Mexican peso and by the widespread bankruptcy of many small and medium-sized businesses. Furthermore, it will worsen the already significant unemployment rate and the growing precarization of the still-employed labor force, taking them to extreme levels. For this reason, the neo-Zapatistas have emphasized the fact that although López Obrador "issues a decree that neoliberalism has ended," in reality it is increasingly evident that "the so-called 'Fourth Transformation' [is] really just the

sometimes anti-imperialist, the López Obrador government maintains a posture which is so servile to and dependent on the United States that it seems almost not to form part of the family of progressive governments. For this reason, the neo-Zapatistas affirm that "to say that the incoming government is leftist or progressive is just a lie." For this quote and for the characterization of Latin American "progressive governments", cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés and Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano, "300, Part II: A Continent as a Backyard, a Country as a Cemetery, Pensamiento Único as a Government Program, and a Small, Very Small, Ever So Small Rebellion", at *Enlace Zapatista*, www.ezln.org.mx, and Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Antimanual del Buen Rebelde*, El Viejo Topo, Barcelona, 2015, and *Movimientos antisistémicos y cuestión indígena en América Latina*, Desde Abajo, Bogota, 2018.

continuation and intensification of the most brutal and bloody epoch of the capitalist system," i.e., the stage of neoliberalism.[8]

For this reason, prior to the current pandemic, Mexico had become a stagnant economy by 2019, heading directly for economic collapse. The pandemic has accelerated and intensified this situation, leading some analysts (who can hardly be suspected of being leftists) to declare that Mexico is experiencing the worst economic crisis in its history since the global crisis of 1929. Facing this crisis, the Mexican government is implementing "an ultra-neoliberal, conservative, and procyclical economic policy which will end up battering the most vulnerable segments of the population." Naturally, the López Obrador government will use the pandemic as a pretext or justification for that imminent collapse of the Mexican economy which is doubtlessly in part due to the pandemic but is much more directly and mainly due to this government's clumsy and criminal neoliberal economic policy.[9]

The effects of the neoliberal policy maintained and deepened during the pandemic are intensifying even more through the new NAFTA, a treaty which is nothing other than the protocolization of Mexico's age-old economic dependence on the United States; a renewal of the Monroe Doctrine. Among the three signatories to the treaty, Mexico is undoubtedly the losing party: it is the provider of cheap labor power and low-cost raw materials, as well as being an important consumer of manufactures, capital goods, and technology, all expensive and controlled by the other two signatories. In this light, López Obrador's visit to Donald Trump on July 8 is grotesque. The Mexican president bent over backwards praising his host and lauding the treaty, thus

8 For this characterization of the economic policy of the López Obrador government, cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, "Message from the Zapatista Army for National Liberation on the 100th Anniversary of the Assassination of General Emiliano Zapata", April 10, 2019, op. cit.

9 On the serious stagnation of the Mexican economy prior to the pandemic, cf. Braulio Carbajal, "Las grandes empresas pasaron mal el primer año del nuevo gobierno", in *La Jornada*, March 8, 2020, p. 17. On the current economic recession and its effects on subaltern classes and sectors, cf. Rafael Croda, "La mayor recesión en 88 años", in *Proceso* 2271, May 10, 2020; Juan Carlos Cruz Vargas, "La estrategia de AMLO 'empuja al país al abismo'", in *Proceso* 2273, May 24, 2020; and "Desempleo, incertidumbre... El gran colapso", in *Proceso* 2287, August 30, 2020.

legitimizing the US president and his highly aggressive policy towards Mexico and therefore clumsily promoting Trump's pretensions to reelection.[10]

Given that the United States is the country most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in the world (along with its economy) and given that Donald Trump is managing this situation in the clumsiest and most catastrophic way possible, Mexico's great economic dependence on the United States will doubtless affect us considerably in the near future.[11]

Destructive Lopezobradorian neoliberalism, applied in deed and denied in word, is economically counter to the interests of the great popular majorities. At the same time as it promotes and benefits big capital and businessmen, it sacrifices and destroys the popular and subaltern classes and sectors. This explains why López Obrador has kept Mexican workers' wages among the lowest in Latin America and the entire world while simultaneously turning Carlos Slim (who for many years at a time has been the richest man on Earth) into the "preferred contractor" of the government of the Fourth Transformation. Likewise, López Obrador has promoted a new form of corruption in the proliferation of new and improvised "providers" for the current government. Despite having no business experience, these providers are directly awarded juicy contracts without having to compete for them. This is the complex economic panorama for the vast majority of the poor of Mexico. With COVID-19, this panorama has brought some to declare that we are on a direct path to "famine," a crisis of hunger for significant portions of the growing number of people who in Mexico are still mired in poverty and extreme poverty—around 65% of the total population.[12]

10 On this inept and badly-timed visit, cf. J. Jesús Esquivel, "Una visita que no beneficia más que a Trump", in *Proceso* 2279, July 5, 2020, and "López Obrador y Trump en su mundo feliz", in *Proceso* 2280, July 12, 2020.

11 On the *longue durée* historical character and structural dimension of Mexico's dependence on the United States, which has today reached a shameful extreme under the current government, cf. Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "México en el largo siglo XX histórico. Pistas wallerstinianas para su reinterpretación", in *Contrahistorias* 33, 2020.

12 On these two points, cf. Rubén Migueles, "Salario mínimo de México, de los más bajos del mundo", *El Universal*, January 22, 2020, and Antonio Sandoval, "Así están los salarios de México frente al resto del mundo", in *Alto Nivel*, September 23, 2019, at altonivel.com.mx/economia/asi-estan-los-salarios-de-mexico-frente-al-resto-del-mundo/, which adresses López Obrador being obliged to admit that Mexican wages are lower than those in Central America and China. See also Mathieu Tourliere, "El contratista favorito de la 4T", in *Proceso* 2271, May 10, 2020; Esteban David Rodríguez and Quinto Elemento Lab, "Brotan de la nada las proveedoras de la 4T", in *Proceso* 2261, March 1, 2020; and Mathieu Tourliere, "El de AMLO, un gobierno de 'fifís'", in *Proceso* 2287, August 3, 2020. On the

Facing the risk of a genuine famine whose first symptoms have already begun to manifest in different cities and regions of Mexico, the government has done nothing at all. In contrast, it is the people themselves, the mass sectors, the low-ranking Catholic clergy, the "pedestrians of history" in general, who have tried to ease or resolve the problem in some way, such as when craftspeople or indigenous people exchange their creations for food, or when the owners of small neighborhood restaurants hand out food rations to those who need them, or when parishes in working-class and poor neighborhoods take up a collection among parishioners to buy food and distribute it to those who ask for it. Civil associations or collectives who work with the people open soup kitchens, and even people without a job, money, or food hang a white flag on the door of their houses so they can receive support, among many possible examples.

This set of spontaneous practices of popular support, organization, and popular self-organization which have been created by the extreme situation of the pandemic demonstrate in practice the deep truth contained by the wise neo-Zapatista slogan that we will find no solution to the principal problems of our country and our planet if we do not organize and self-organize ourselves from below and to the left in order to confront these problems for ourselves and solve them with our own efforts. Because governments of all types and everywhere are always "bad governments" and because we can expect nothing good from the "social above," our only option is to resist and rebel and to organize ourselves from below, recognizing that "only the people can save the people." It is from this principle that we can unite to immediately confront the pandemic and capitalism today and tomorrow again confront Mexican and global capitalism. As Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés says, "as Zapatistas, every time we get the chance we tell people that they should organize to resist and to struggle for what they need," because "no one will solve their problems for them […] instead we have to solve them ourselves, as organized collectives. It is the people who create solutions […]" For this reason, facing the current pandemic, the *compañeros* have reiterated that "Given the total absence of the bad governments, we strongly urge everyone [*todos, todas, todoas*] in Mexico and around the world to follow the necessary scientifically-based sanitary measures that will allow us to survive this pandemic."[13]

risk of a famine, cf. Rodrigo Vera, "Vamos hacia una hambruna", in *Proceso* 2271, May 10, 2020.

13 The first two quotes come from Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, "Organizarse (sobre las elecciones)", included in *El Pensamiento Crítico frente a la Hidra Capitalista I: Participación*

It is clear that while the pandemic has not yet had effects as catastrophic in Mexico as it has had in the United States, Brazil, or India, this is due much more to popular knowledge and self-organization than it is to the clumsy and limited actions of a bad Mexican government which, by virtue of being a completely capitalist government, is frivolous, irresponsible, deceitful, and absent. It always prioritizes first the economy (i.e., capitalist profits), then protecting and saving the rich and powerful who it directly serves,[14] and finally presenting a false sheen of efficient activity to keep up appearances and maintain a minimum level of international credibility. Only last and very marginally does it focus on the health and wellbeing of the popular classes, which it does only in order to avoid and contain social discontent and protest.

At the same time, partially in relation to the complex economic situation described above, social violence has grown uncontrollably in multiple forms. The new government has neither confronted nor resolved this violence in any way: it has ignored, concealed, disguised, and avoided the violence, just as the recent PRI and PAN governments did.

Deadly violence against women has grown alarmingly in Mexico, making it the country with the most femicides in all of Latin America, now reaching the shameful rate of ten women murdered every day. This uncontrollable and criminal violence against women has often been ignored and trivialized by López Obrador, provoking an outpouring of legitimate, potent, and increasingly widespread feminist protest. Among its various manifestations, this wave of feminist protest occupied several departments of the largest university in the world, the National Autonomous University of Mexico, in addition to paralyzing the entire country on March 9, 2020, and generating growing sympathy and support among all subaltern classes and sectors at the many marches and protests it has organized. It was for this reason that the Second International Gathering of Women Who Struggle, organized by neo-Zapatista women in December 2019, took violence against women as its central and only theme. For the same reason, neo-Zapatista women supported the National Women's Strike of March 9, organized by the Brujas del Mar collective, mocking the

de la Comisión Sexta del EZLN, EZLN publication, Mexico, 2015, and the last is taken from Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, "EZLN closes Caracoles Due to Coronavirus and Calls on People Not to Abandon Current Struggles", op. cit.

14 On this point, cf. Fernando Camacho Servín, "Lamentable, que en la reapertura pese más lo económico y político", in *La Jornada*, June 14, 2020, p. 5.

ridiculous, arrogant, misogynist posture of López Obrador in saying that he "gave [women] permission" to miss work and to strike.[15]

Another of the central manifestations of uncontrollable violence that seeps from every pore of Mexican society is drug trafficking, which has continued to flourish unobstructed under the MORENA government. During his campaign, López Obrador declared that if he won, he would not persecute anyone. This meant a double amnesty: on one hand, for the outgoing president and government officials (with some minor exceptions),[16] and on the other for the group of cartels which have operated in Mexico for years.

López Obrador again affirmed this amnesty and even open tolerance for and coexistence with drug traffickers in a speech he gave on January 30, 2019, responding to a question regarding the state's war on drug trafficking by saying that "Officially, there is no more war. We want peace." He added that there had been no new arrests of cartel capos because "that is not our primary role," which he said was to guarantee public safety. This was confirmed in October 2019, when, following his capture, Ovidio Guzmán López (one of the sons of Joaquín Guzmán Loera, better known as El Chapo) was allowed to escape on the president's own orders and under an absurd pretext. Likewise, it was confirmed when, touring Badiraguato in the state of Sinaloa at the end of March 2020, López Obrador differentially paid a visit to El Chapo's mother. These declarations and actions show us not only that the Mexican state is a failed state which does not control large swathes of its own national territory but also that an implicit agreement evidently exists between the Sinaloa Cartel and the López Obrador government under which both parties "co-govern" the country and in which each party goes on with its own activities without meddling in the spaces and activities of the other. For this reason, the

15 On the social scourge of femicides, cf. Jessica Xantomila, "Ocupa México primer lugar de América Latina en feminicidios: AI", in *La Jornada*, April 9, 2019, and "ONU: Feminicidios en México crecieron diariamente de 7 a 10 en tres años", in *La Jornada*, March 5, 2020. On the neo-Zapatista position, cf. "INVITATION TO THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL GATHERING OF WOMEN WHO STRUGGLE", September 19, 2019, and "We Don't Need Permission to Fight for Life Zapatista Women Join the March 9 National Strike", March 1, 2020, both available at *Enlace Zapatista*, www.ezln.org.mx.

16 In this sense, it is clear that the two high-level officials of the Peña Nieto government who have been accused and later apprehended by the current government are both opportunists who joined the Peña Nieto government in its last days, i.e., mere fellow-travelers of that government, while the former president himself and the hard core of his loyal longtime followers are not touched or questioned. Once again, this demonstrates the profoundly demagogic character of López Obrador's positions.

neo-Zapatistas refer directly to the "consolidation (despite supposed 'mortal blows' to narco-trafficking) of parallel States (or those interwoven with the Nation-State) of so-called 'organized crime.'"[17]

The evident collusion between the López Obrador government and Mexican drug traffickers in general, and the Sinaloa Cartel in particular, simply prolongs the same situation that prevailed during the PRI governments that lasted until 2000, as well as the first PAN government of Vicente Fox, which allowed El Chapo to escape from a high-security prison. It bears recalling that, according to analysts who examine this issue, the Sinaloa Cartel is (quantitatively) the largest cartel in the world and (qualitatively) one of the world's best organized cartels. It employs cells that organize drug trafficking in Colombia, Ecuador, and Bolivia, as well as money-laundering businesses in Chile, Bolivia, Argentina, Guatemala, and the United States. The Sinaloa Cartel has also established itself in Spain, the door through which drugs enter all of Europe. In this context, the capture and trial of Guzmán Loera is trivial: his Sinaloa Cartel continues to operate, grow, and prosper unmolested as it always has. It does so by the hypocritical and concealed complacency of certain banks and politicians of the biggest consumer of drugs in the entire world, the United States of America.[18]

Another way in which overwhelming social violence now manifests in Mexico is through migration, a global phenomenon which has intensified enormously in the last decades as one more of the many manifestations of

17 On these declarations by López Obrador and the absurd freeing of El Chapo's son, cf. https://lopezobrador.org.mx/2019/01/30/, and Azam Ahmed, "The Stunning Escape of El Chapo's Son: It's Like a 'Bad Netflix Show'", in *The New York Times*, October 18, 2019. On AMLO's meeting with El Chapo's mother, cf. aristeguinoticias.com/2903/, March 29, 2020, and Ricardo Ravelo, "AMLO, el enemigo de los narcos", in *SinEmbargo*, www.sinembargo.mx/03-04-2020/3760627. On Neo-Zapatista's assessment of collusion between the Mexican state, drug traffickers, and organized crime, cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés and Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano, "300, Part II: A Continent as a Backyard, a Country as a Cemetery, Pensamiento Único as a Government Program, and a Small, Very Small, Ever So Small Rebellion", op. cit.

18 On this implicit collusion between the López Obrador government and drug cartels, cf. Patricia Dávila, "El de Sinaloa, un Cártel aún sólido", in *Proceso* 2243, October 27, 2019; J. Jesús Esquivel, "'El Mayo' es el capo de capos, según la DEA", in *Proceso* 2256, January 26, 2020; and Ricardo Ravelo, "AMLO, el amigo de los narcos", op. cit. It should be noted that facing the government's lack of action and paralysis in response to the pandemic, the Sinaloa Cartel and other cartels took it upon themselves some months ago to hand out provisions free of charge in the rural areas where they have a presence and operate.

the terminal crisis of world capitalism and as a consequence of Mexico's geographical location, which makes our country an obligatory and very suitable stepping-stone into the United States. Given that our 3,000-kilometer-long border with the United States is vast, porous, and impossible to monitor and control (even with the most sophisticated contemporary technology), it is logical that the enormous numbers of migrants who come out of Central America, the Caribbean, and even parts of Africa head massively toward Mexico as a mere waystation on their way to the United States. For this reason, even before the beginning of the López Obrador government the neo-Zapatistas had astutely anticipated that "in capital's grand plan, the wall against Latin America will take the shape of the impossible cornucopia and will go by the name of 'Mexico'" and that "when Donald Trump says he wants to build the wall, everyone thinks of the Río Bravo, but capital is thinking about the Suchiate, the Usumancita and the Hondo. In reality, the wall will be in Mexico in order to stop migrants coming from Central America, and this, perhaps, can help us understand why Donald Trump came out on July 1st to greet Juanito Trump, who had just won the elections in Mexico."[19]

It is clear that this neo-Zapatista thesis has been entirely confirmed over the two years of the López Obrador government, which has submitted with astonishing servility to the designs and desires of the United States, implementing a shameful migratory policy that not only breaks with Mexico's long-standing tradition of supporting and receiving migrants (including Spaniards fleeing the Spanish Civil War and Argentinians and Chileans escaping the military dictatorships of the 1970s) but also reduces Mexico to playing the degrading role of the United States' policeman—a vassal. According to the neo-Zapatistas, in "the new 'geopolitical' plans," Mexico has offered itself as "a 'cushion' or a 'shock absorber,' a filter to drastically reduce migration," selectively combining brutal repression and forced repatriation of migrants to their respective countries with assimilation of migrants as exploitable labor power for capital or with their abandonment in the extremely precarious conditions of state governments or Mexican civil society itself.[20]

19 For these quotes, cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés and Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano, "300, Part II: A Continent as a Backyard, a Country as a Cemetery, Pensamiento Único as a Government Program, and a Small, Very Small, Ever So Small Rebellion", op. cit.

20 *On Mexico's sad role as the United States' immigration police, cf. J. Jesús Esquivel, "Confirmado: México es el mejor agente migratorio de EU", in Proceso 2249, December 8, 2019, and Isaín Mandujano, "Condena unánime: la peor cara de México en materia migratoria", in Proceso 2256, January 26, 2020. See also Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés and*

This terrible repression of Latin American and African migrants is now based on the new and hypocritical version of what the government insists is not the army: the National Guard. Through this force, Obrador has continued to militarize the entire country in the same way that his predecessors did (and sometimes in worse ways), despite his hypocritical campaign-trail promise to "send the army back to their barracks." Not only has this promise gone unfulfilled but the National Guard has in fact been strengthened. Instead of being used to combat drug trafficking—the pretext under which it was created—the National Guard has been used to persecute and repress migrants, to impose the administration's megaprojects through brutal violence, and to attack and control the increasingly varied and strong movements of social protest.

As has been often pointed out by international organizations such as Amnesty International, human rights violations have continued growing and have multiplied and diversified with the current government, just as they did with previous ones. This has occurred at the same pace as the militarization of the country, and as the megaprojects of the Maya Train and the Trans-Isthmus Canal (among others) are imposed. For this reason, facing this growing militarization and attempts to impose the Maya Train megaproject in Chiapas, the neo-Zapatistas have announced that they "will stand up to what comes because [they] will not allow [López Obrador's] project of destruction to be implemented here" and that they "are not afraid of his 'National Guard,' which is just the army under another name—he renamed it so as not to have to admit it's the same army as always." Under the pretext of the COVID-19 pandemic, these human rights violations and this militarization of daily life have received institutional legitimation and carte blanche for the next four years with the executive order published on May 11, 2020, which expands the National Guard's authority and operations, increasing its ability to act with impunity, as well as López Obrador's freedom to use the National Guard as he wishes.[21]

Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano, "300, Part II: A Continent as a Backyard, a Country as a Cemetery, Pensamiento Único as a Government Program, and a Small, Very Small, Ever So Small Rebellion", op. cit., which supplies the quotes included in this paragraph; Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, "Words of the Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee-General Command of the EZLN, in the voice of Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, on the 26th Anniversary of the Beginning of the War Against Oblivion", at Enlace Zapatista, ezln.org.mx; and Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, "Noticias desde México. Entrevista a Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas", in El Viejo Topo 375, Barcelona, April 2019.

21 On the sad panorama of human rights on Mexico, which is as gloomy as it has been for decades, cf. "Amnistía Internacional: las violaciones a derechos, al nivel de los sexenios

Alongside the complex economic and social situation which we have briefly summarized, a new phase of the now-old process of the Mexican political class's decay is unfolding under the López Obrador government. In step with López Obrador's failed state, the debacle of all political parties has worsened. By leaps and bounds, these parties are losing the scarce social bases that they still had, showing themselves as what they truly are: vulgar corporations of interest groups that, with very faint ideological distinctions, compete every six years to see who will be the overseers, who will best fulfill the wishes and best defend the interests of the true owner of everything, the plantation owner—in other words, national and global capitalism.

And so we see the PRI collapse inwards: no longer in power, it loses all attractiveness for the general population and even its own members. The PAN fragments and dissolves into groups and sub-groups, all equally ideologically confused and lacking any real leadership. The PRD fades into nothingness as its leaders sell themselves off to the highest bidder and all its bases migrate toward MORENA. And this last pseudo-party shows that it is not really a party at all but an ephemeral coalition of groups and small social and political movements which, alongside a hodgepodge of opportunists and upstarts, revolve around the strong *caudillo* who is today in power but without whom they return to being multiple tribes and micro-organizations without unity, a common ideology, or shared politics of any kind. Without a clear project or structure and consumed by its internal rivalries, MORENA is currently experiencing a deep internal crisis in which the acting leader presses charges against the previous leader for misuse of party funds while the various factions clash over the crumbs of power that come from MORENA's status as the majority party in the Mexican congress.[22]

Facing the shameful panorama of contemporary Mexican politics, the neo-Zapatistas speak of "a rancid PAN, […] a PRI that survives only by bribing

anteriores", in *La Jornada*, February 27, 2020, and Mario Patrón, "El segundo Informe presidencial y los derechos humanos", in *La Jornada*, September 10, 2020, p. 23. The neo-Zapatista phrase quoted is found in Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, "Words of the EZLN's CCRI-CG to the Zapatista Peoples on the 25th Anniversary of the Beginning of the War Against Oblivion", January 1, 2019, *Enlace Zapatista*, ezln.org.mx. On the growing militarization intensified by the recent order, cf. Juan Omar Fierro, "Un paso más hacia la militarización", in *Proceso* 2272, May 17, 2020.

22 On the weakness and current crisis of MORENA, cf. Alvaro Delgado, "Morena, de la epopeya al naufragio", in *Proceso* 2278, June 28, 2020, and "Morena 'membrete sin vida': Gibrán Ramírez", in *Proceso* 2287, August 30, 2020.

the coroner into setting back the time of death, […] a PRD that will some way have to demonstrate that it still exists, and […] those 'thinkers' that accompany all of these." To this list we must add the ridiculous mini-parties—which are nothing but family businesses or letterheads for gangs of opportunist and accommodationist politicians—and MORENA itself, the new 'official party,' which unsuccessfully aspires to become a kind of new PRI, though lightly painted with a shade of moderate, discrete, domesticated, politically correct pink. Surely, MORENA too will disintegrate and decay as soon as the *caudillo*, the glimmer of hope who holds it together and gives meaning to its fleeting existence, is eclipsed and extinguished.

Finally, it is clear that the López Obrador government is not only indifferent to culture, the arts, and science, but is often even an anti-culture government. This explains the fact that it has placed the publishing house of the Mexican state in the hands of a writer without publishing experience, as well as the fact that the individuals chosen to head Secretariats, government institutes, and institutions dealing with culture, historical research, the arts, and sciences are very much middlebrow officials whose greatest merit is their uncritical and unconditional support for López Obrador himself. Furthermore, the López Obrador government reduced its cultural budget for 2019 and kept it practically frozen for 2020. On various occasions it has attempted to implement, and sometimes succeeded at implementing significant budget cuts to Public Research Centers (CPIs), the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH), public universities, the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT), several public trusts, cinema, grants for artists and creators, cultural support, and the promotion of anthropological and archaeological research, among many others.[23]

This systematic and multi-front offensive against culture, the arts, and sciences has sharpened during the COVID-19 pandemic, causing artists to gather in three movements: No Vivimos del Aplauso (We Don't Live On

23 On the 2019 and 2020 culture budgets, cf. Enrique Méndez, "El presupuesto para cultura en 2019, menor al ejercido en 2018", in *La Jornada*, December 17, 2018, and Judith Amador Tello, "Presupuesto cultural 2020: el esquema de siempre", in *Proceso* 2248, December 1, 2019. On López Obrador's anti-culture policy, cf. Judith Amador Tello, "El Programa Sectorial, ajeno a la nueva realidad", in *Proceso* 2280, July 12, 2020; José Antonio Román and Arturo Sánchez Jiménez, "Desaparecer fondos de ciencia pone en riesgo 33 centros de investigación y 13 institutos de salud", in *La Jornada*, September 30, 2020, p. 5, and "Atentado inconcebible eliminar fideicomisos de ciencia: UNAM e IPN", in *La Jornada*, October 2, 2020.

Applause); the Movimiento Colectivo por la Cultura y el Arte en México (Collective Movement for Culture and Art in Mexico), and the Asamblea por las Culturas (Assembly for Cultures). Facing a total lack of support on the part of the government, these movements have proposed a program of support called Contigo en la Confianza (With You in Confidence). Other artists have self-organized to mutually support each other, as is the case with the #Arte en Resistencia (Art in Resistance) open call, which gathers money and food and distributes it to the artists who are most vulnerable and most affected by the pandemic. The López Obrador government's indifference and aggression toward culture, art, and science stands in stark contrast to the promotion, cultivation, defense, and open support of these fields by neo-Zapatismo, which has declared that "[the Zapatista] path is based in some of the roots of the originary (or indigenous) communities: the collective, mutual support and solidarity, care for the earth, the cultivation of the arts and sciences, and constant vigilance against the accumulation of wealth. These roots, along with the arts and sciences, [are] our guide. This is our way." Facing the miserly and miserable posture of the López Obrador government's approach to culture, art, and science, this clear and beautiful neo-Zapatista posture shines even more brightly within the national and global emergency of the novel coronavirus pandemic.[24]

* * *

Facts are stubborn things. This October of 2020, the absurd policy of the López Obrador government, a servant of national and global capitalist interests, boasts of its good management of the pandemic, which it also says we are on our way out of. In fact, Mexico is third in the world in overall number of deaths and holds tenth place in deaths per million inhabitants. Mexico's mortality rate, which compares the number of deaths to the number of people infected with a disease, is among the highest in the world, ranking sixth. All these calculations assume that the official numbers of infections and deaths are true, and as we mention above, these numbers are scandalously undercounted and deceitfully downplayed.[25] With this criminal mismanagement of

24 On these movements, cf. facebook.com/NoVivimosDelAplauso, moccam.net, and asambleaporlasculturas.org. On the neo-Zapatista position, cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés and Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano, 300, Part II: A Continent as a Backyard, a Country as a Cemetery, Pensamiento Único as a Government Program, and a Small, Very Small, Ever So Small Rebellion", op cit.

25 On these indicators, cf. Rogelio Flores Morales and Rodrigo Vera, "Cifras letales en medio año de pandemia", in *Proceso* 2287, August 30, 2020.

the pandemic, López Obrador is competing with figures like Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro for the most catastrophic management of the pandemic on the global level. Such mismanagement of the health emergency will not be easily forgotten by the peoples of the United States, Brazil, or Mexico any time soon.

In contrast, seven months of the pandemic in Mexico have only seen 12 deaths in the neo-Zapatista territories of Chiapas. While this is tragic, it is far from the catastrophic figures in Mexico in general. And if we recall that the neo-Zapatista bases of support are several hundred thousand worthy indigenous rebels, we can understand the effectiveness of neo-Zapatista COVID-19 policy. For this reason, it may not be a coincidence that Chiapas is the only Mexican state which is close to reaching a low epidemic risk level, i.e., a very low rate of effective reproduction for COVID-19, according to ten indicators of epidemiological danger.[26]

The neo-Zapatistas' COVID-19 policy is based more on prevention than treatment, and it addresses this immense health problem with a collective, community approach rather than an individual one, achieving the good results mentioned above. Speaking of their approach, the *compañeros* have said that "the details of what our strategy was and is will be analyzed at an appropriate time. For now we can say, with life pulsing through our bodies, that in our estimation (which may well be mistaken) it has been our approach of facing the threat as a community, not as an individual issue, and orienting our primary efforts toward prevention that has put us in a position to say now, as Zapatista peoples: here we are, resisting, living and struggling."[27]

Here is the difference between a position that centers human life and a position that privileges the logic of insatiable capitalist profits (which López Obrador's movement euphemistically calls "the economy"). Here is the difference between a radical policy based on science, which takes science seriously, strictly following its recommendations, and a policy based on the ever-changing quips of an arrogant *caudillo* who recommends that the people use face masks, wash their hands, and maintain a healthy distance while he

26 On this point, cf. Laura Poy Solano, "Chiapas, única entidad cercana a alcanzar el bajo riesgo epidémico", in *La Jornada*, September 13, 2020, p. 3.

27 On this intelligent neo-Zapatista policy, on the figure of the sad loss of neo-Zapatista lives due to COVID-19, and on this quote, cf. Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, "Part Six: A Mountain on the High Seas", October 5, 2020, *Enlace Zapatista*, www.ezln.org.mx. See also Orsetta Bellani, "Así se cuidan de COVID-19 en territorio zapatista", *Pie de página*, July 4, 2020, at: https://piedepagina.mx/asi-se-cuidan-del-covid-19-en-territorio-zapatista/.

himself travels around without protection or respect for those health measures, emulating Donald Trump, his unconfessed idol. Here is the difference between an anti-capitalist policy that looks to the people, below and to the left, promoting their self-organization, self-care, and self-protection, and another policy that irrationally and from above imposes coercive measures compelling people to prematurely return to an alleged "new normal," that looks at the sick and dead as mere numbers and as the necessary collateral damage of its ridiculous, utterly destructive, and pro-capitalist policy.

As the wise neo-Zapatista *compañeros* have told us, facing the absence of the bad governments, all that is left for us, the "pedestrians of history," is to take care of ourselves, protect ourselves, and mutually support ourselves; to organize and self-organize ourselves from below and to the left. In this way, we can overcome the COVID-19 pandemic today, and tomorrow we can once and for all overcome national and global capitalism and turn again to saving diverse, rich, and multifaceted human life across the face of the earth, this time in a way that is structural and complete. Let it be so!

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GLOSSARY

CAR	Consejo Autónomo Rebelde
CCRI-CG	Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena—Comandancia General
CNI	Congreso Nacional Indígena
COCOPA	Comisión para la Concordia y la Pacificación
CONACYT	Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología
CONAIE	Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (Ecuador)
CRAC-PC	Coordinadora Regional de Autoridades Comunitarias—Policía Comunitaria
EZLN	Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional
FLN	Fuerzas de Liberación Nacional
INAH	Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia
JBG	Juntas de Buen Gobierno
MAREZ	Municipios Autónomos Rebeldes Zapatistas
MAS	Movimiento al Socialismo (Bolivia)
MORENA	Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional

MST	Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (Brazil)
PAN	Partido Acción Nacional
PRD	Partido de la Revolución Democrática
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional
SME	Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas
UNAM	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

This book was originally written in Spanish, and many of the works consulted are Spanish-language versions of the authors in question. In the body of the text, all titles are referred to in English. The footnotes and bibliographies, however, preserve the primarily Spanish-language editions used in researching and writing this book. Since the key authors discussed throughout *To Lead by Obeying* are widely published and, indeed, canonical figures, the author trusts that any reader who wishes to consult their seminal works in English should be able to locate them easily by using the bibliography as a guide.

The EZLN publishes translations of their own communiques on *Enlace Zapatista*, and wherever possible I have quoted directly from their own translations. Translations on *Enlace Zapatista* are not unified in the terms they use to refer to the same events or organizations, however, so when not quoting directly from an English translation I have selected one term to use throughout.

Noah Mazer

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