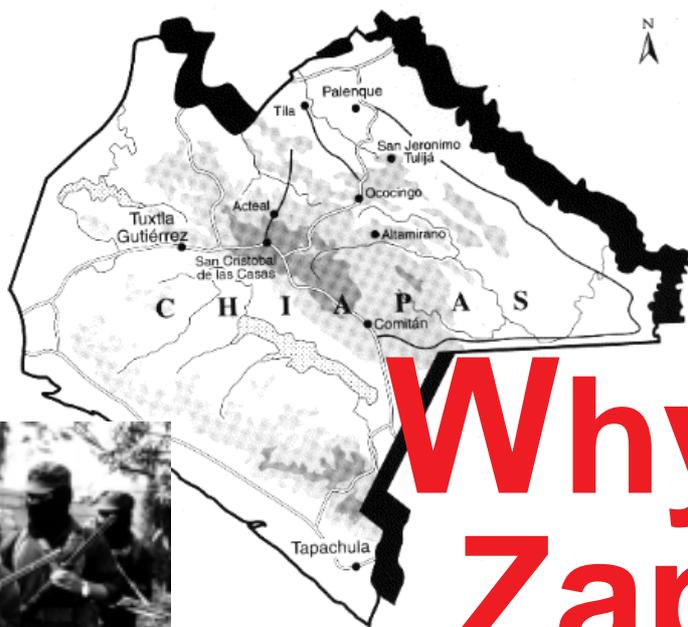


Chiapas Revealed



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<http://zap.to/chiapas>

Why are the Zapatistas different?



Inside:

- What makes the Zapatista's different?
- The Seven Loose Pieces of the Global Jigsaw Puzzle
- Fair trade organic coffee from Chiapas
- S26 - Zapatistas take Prague





Introduction

Welcome to the first issue of Chiapas Revealed. This is the latest publications from the Irish Mexico Group and represents a significant departure from our previous formats.

It is seven years since the Zapatistas emerged into the public eye in Chiapas. In that time we have learnt a lot about Mexico and a lot about Chiapas. As Marcos

would put it 'a shitload'.

Hundreds of people have visited the Irish Mexico Groups peace camp in Diez de Abril. In Ireland dozens of meetings and protests have been held in solidarity with the Zapatistas.

But many of us who formed the IMG took seriously the slogan to 'be a Zapatista

where ever you are'. While we have focused on solidarity work we have not managed to explain what that slogan might mean.

So with this new format we are concentrating on long personal articles that seek to explore in depth aspects of what is happening in Chiapas. These articles will represent the views of the people who write them rather than an IMG position. Our hope is that they will not only explain what is happening in Chiapas but will contribute to a real debate about how we could organise in Ireland.

PDF edition

www.struggle.ws/mexico.html

What is it that is different about the Zapatistas?

Andrew Flood takes a personal look at why the Zapatistas have attracted international support and why many activists see them as an example of a different way of organising.

The EZLN (Zapatista National Liberation Army) came briefly to the worlds attention when they seized several towns in Chiapas on New Years day in 1994. This image of a new armed rebel movement in the period when such movements were meant to have recognised their own redundancy was startling and demonstrated that history was not yet over.

Since then most of the continued support the Zapatistas have received is strongly based on the idea that the Zapatistas are different. Different not just from the neoliberal world order they oppose but, more fundamentally, different from the armed revolutionary groups that exist and have existed elsewhere in the world.

Those involved internationally in Zapatista solidarity work are drawn to it not because they believe Mexico is uniquely repressive. There are many countries that are far worse, Columbia being one obvious example. They hope there is something in the Zapatista method that they can take home to their own city or region. Hence the popularity of the call from the EZLN to 'be a Zapatista wherever you are'.

So although the Zapatistas remain isolated in the jungles and mountains of south eastern Mexico their ideas have influenced many activists across the globe. Not least in the round of global days of action against capitalism. One call for these protests actually arose at an international conference in La Realidad, Chiapas in 1996[36] and is part of the reason for the 'anti-capitalist' demonstrations of London J18 And Seattle N30 in 1999 and those that followed

in 2000 including A16 Washington and S26 Prague.[37]

On the 1 Jan 1994 we woke from our hangovers to find that a new rebel army had emerged, seemingly from nowhere, in southern Mexico and seized a number of provincial towns. This army, the EZLN, distributed a paper called 'The Mexican Awakener' [*El Despertador Mexicano*]. It contained their declaration of war, a number of revolutionary laws and orders for their army. They said they were fighting for "work, land, shelter, food, health care, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice and peace."

Nothing unusual about these demands. In the last couple of hundred years there have been thousands of organisations and movements, armed and otherwise that could have summarised their program in a similar way. But the vast majority of these movements saw the implementation of their program occurring when they took power on behalf of the people. This could be in one of two forms, an armed seizure of power like the October revolution of 1917 in Russia or a democratic election like that of 1945 which returned the British labour government.



Although these two movements, the one 'revolutionary' the other 'reformist' are often portrayed as being very different in reality they share an essential feature. The change they proposed was a change of politicians and not a change in the way of doing politics. Both could talk about mobilising the working class in the course of coming to power but once in power they made sure their party ruled alone. And indeed both shared the common source of the '2nd International' which differed from the first **because** it choose to exclude those who opposed the taking of state power[35].

The 'Mexican Awakener' rather than talking of the EZLN seizing power as a new revolutionary government outlined the military objectives of the rising as "Advance to the capital of the country, overcoming the Mexican federal army, protecting in our ad-

vance the civilian population and permitting the people in the liberated area the right to freely and democratically elect their own administrative authorities."

Unusually for any revolutionary organisation these laws then defined a right of the people to resist any unjust actions of the EZLN. They defined a right of the people to:

"demand that the revolutionary armed forces not intervene in matters of civil order or the disposition of capital relating to agriculture, commerce, finances, and industry, as these are the exclusive domain of the civil authorities, elected freely and democratically." And said that the people should *"acquire and possess arms to defend their persons, families and property, according to the laws of disposition of capital of farms, commerce, finance and industry, against the armed attacks committed by the revolutionary forces or those of the government."*

These sections and other things done and said by the EZLN at the time suggested that there was something in this rebellion that broke what had become the standard model for revolutionary organisation. The traditional model was for the revolutionary organisation to mobilise whatever forces were available to overthrow the existing government and then to form a new government itself. Fundamental to this model, from the Russian revolution of 1917 to the Nicaraguan one of 1979 was the (flawed) assumption that the interests of 'the people' or 'the workers' were identical to the interests of the new government.

In all cases this led to the situation where the new government used its monopoly of armed force against sections of the working class that disagreed with it. In Russia by 1921 this had led not only to the destruction of the factory committees and their replacement with one man management but also to the crushing of all opposition through the closure of individual soviets, the suppression of strikes and the banning, jailing and even execution of members of other left organisations.

Before 1989

Once upon a time left activists could fool themselves that this suppression of democracy had at least delivered a society that was fairer in economic terms and that was some sort of (perhaps flawed) 'workers state'. The EZLN emerged in a period when such illusions could no longer be held due to the overthrow of the majority of the old 'communist' states. So they found a ready audience internationally of activists who had not given up on the project of transforming society but saw the need for a new model for doing so.

The main spokesperson for the Zapatistas, subcommandante Marcos, referred to this

attraction in 1995 saying "...It is perhaps for this reason—the lack of interest in power—that the word of the Zapatistas has been well received in other countries across the globe, above all in Europe. It has not just been because it is new or novel, but rather because it is proposing this, which is to say, to separate the political problem from the problem of taking power, and take it to another terrain.

Our work is going to end, if it ends, in the construction of this space for new political relationships. What follows is going to be a product of the efforts of other people, with another way of thinking and acting. And there we are not going to work; instead, we would be a disturbance. [18]

The collapse of the Eastern European 'socialist states' in 1989 resulted in the rapid collapse of all the left parties that had considered these societies as 'actually existing socialism'. In general the only Leninist parties that survived were the ones who had already put a major break between their politics and these societies. But they still had a problem in the fact that they had supported the authoritarian policies of the Bolsheviks in 1918-21 that had created these regimes. [38]

This contradiction may be the reason why there had been very little discussion of the Zapatistas by the traditional left in Ireland and elsewhere until the last year or so. The discussion has only started now because of the realisation that the influence of the Zapatistas was at least part of the reason anti-authoritarian politics were so popular among anti-capitalist activists. So now we are subjected to half baked 'analysis' that insist the Zapatistas are on the one hand only the latest manifestation of the foci tactics of Che Guivera and on the other that they need to be taught that the traditional left has the 'real' answers'.

This attitude is not unique to Ireland, Marcos refers to a similar attitude on the Mexican left and elsewhere in a 1994 interview "... What upsets the Pentagon is that when you punch Zapatista into the computer, nothing comes out that says, Moscow, or Havana, or Libya, Tripoli, Bosnia or any other group. And the left, accustomed to the same way of thinking, says, Well, they don't fit in anywhere. It doesn't occur to them there might be something new, that you have to retheorize. And they say, Well then, these poor people don't know what they want, we need to help them.... I have seen various magazines. ...of Trotskyites and Maoists, of all of the orthodox leftists and of the old dinosaurs that say, Well, the EZLN is very good and what they've done is very good and all, but they lack a program, so here's a program. They lack a party, so here's a party. They lack a leader, so here's a leader" [15]

Marcos returned to this theme in 1995 in a letter that sought to explain why the Zapatistas are different. "We do not want others, more or less of the right, center or left,

to decide for us. We want to participate directly in the decisions which concern us, to control those who govern us, without regard to their political affiliation, and oblige them to "rule by obeying". We do not struggle to take power, we struggle for democracy, liberty, and justice. Our political proposal is the most radical in Mexico (perhaps in the world, but it is still too soon to say). It is so radical that all the traditional political spectrum (right, center left and those of one or the other extreme) criticize us and walk away from our delirium.

It is not our arms which make us radical; it is the new political practice which we propose and in which we are immersed with thousands of men and women in Mexico and the world: the construction of a political practice which does not seek the taking of power but the organization of society. Intellectuals and political leadership, of all sizes, of the ultraright, of the right, the center, of the left and the ultraleft, national and international criticize our proposal. We are so radical that we do not fit in the parameters of "modern political science". We are not bragging ... we are pointing out the facts. Is there anything more radical than to propose to change the world? You know this because you share this dream with us, and because, though the truth be repeated, we dream it together." [25]

Not the same thing

In Mexican terms 1996 was the year when the EZLN most wished to emphasise this difference. A new armed group called the EPR (Popular Revolutionary Army) launched attacks on police stations in several Mexican states, saying specifically that unlike the Zapatistas they wished to seize state power. The EZLN was keen to distance themselves from the EPR, all the more so because the EPR sought to imply links between the two organisations.

In a EZLN communique "to the soldiers and commanders of the Popular Revolutionary Army" the EZLN wrote "What we seek, what we need and want is that all those people without a party and organization make agreements about what they want and do not want and become organized in order to achieve it (preferably through civil and peaceful means), not to take power, but to exercise it. I know you will say this is utopian and unorthodox, but this is the way of the Zapatistas. Too bad.

... it is useful to point out and repeat, that we are different. And the difference is not what you and others have insisted upon, that you do not dialogue with the government, that you do struggle for power and that you have not declared war, while we do dialogue (attention; we do this not only with the government but in a much larger sense with national and international civic society); we do not struggle for power and we did declare war on the Federal Army (a challenge they will never forgive us). The difference is that our political proposals are diametrically different and this is evident in the discourse and the practice of the two organizations. Thanks to your appearance, now

many people can understand that what makes us different from existing political organizations are not the weapons and the ski-masks, but the political proposals. We have carved out a new and radical path. It is so new and radical that all the political currents have criticized us and look at us with boredom, including yourselves. We are uncomfortable. Too bad, this is the way of the Zapatistas.

... You struggle for power. We struggle for democracy, liberty and justice. This is not the same thing. Though you may be successful and conquer power, we will continue struggling for democracy, liberty and justice. It does not matter who is in power, the Zapatistas are and have always struggle for democracy, liberty and justice." [26]

One recent Leninist critique that said "It is a curious 'quality' in a revolutionary organisation that it does not seek state power" goes on to ask "What then is the nature of the revolution they advocate?". We are told "in the end, the issue is power, the control of society by the producers". This handy confusion of a party seizing power on behalf of the producers with direct democracy leads to the expected conclusion that the Zapatistas "are not in a position to provide political leadership for the movement that has celebrated their example".[46] This particular 9,000 word critique finds only a couple of sentences to mention the structures of direct democracy that arguably define "the nature of the revolution they advocate".

Other left critics, pointing to the fact that the rejection of seizing power was not explicit in the first Zapatista paper, have suggested that this idea was only later developed to gain international support. However, Marcos did in fact vaguely express these ideas in an interview with the Mexican liberal paper 'La Jornada' on the first of January.

"We hope that the people understand that the causes that have moved us to do this are just, and that the path that we have chosen is just one, not the only one. Nor do we think that it is the best of all paths. We do not want a dictatorship of another kind, nor anything out of this world, not international Communism and all that. We want justice where there is now not even minimum subsistence. We do not want to monopolize the vanguard or say that we are the light, the only alternative, or stingily claim the qualification of revolutionary for one or another current. We say, look at what happened. That is what we had to do." [14]

The Encounter

This rejection of the traditional methods of the left is not simply confined to Mexico. In 1996 the Zapatistas organised an international encounter in Chiapas attended by some 3,000 activists from over 40 countries (including the author). The Encounter ended with the 2nd declaration of Reality (the final venue being the community of La Realidad) which asked, what next, what

is it that we were seeking do to do?

"A new number in the useless enumeration of the numerous international orders?

A new scheme that calms and alleviates the anguish of a lack of recipes?

A global program for world revolution?"

This rhetorical rejection of the methods the left had used to organise internationally, particularly in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th international, was followed by a suggested alternative:

"That we will make a collective network of all our particular struggles and resistance's. An intercontinental network of resistance against neoliberalism, an intercontinental network of resistance for humanity.

This intercontinental network of resistance, recognising differences and acknowledging similarities, will search to find itself with other resistance's around the world. This intercontinental network of resistance will be the medium in which distinct resistance's may support one another. This intercontinental network of resistance is not an organising structure; it doesn't have a central head or decision maker; it has no central command or hierarchies. We are the network, all of us who resist." [21]

The quotations above contain the essence of what it is that makes the Zapatistas different. The purpose of the organisation is not to seize power on behalf of the people – rather it is to create a space in which people can define their own power. This is a radically different project from what revolutionary politics have been in the twentieth century. In the aftermath of the Russian revolution, Leninism, the idea that the party must rule on behalf of the people, became the common core of almost all revolutionary movements. Contrast, for example, the Zapatista approach with Trotsky's speech to the 1921 Bolshevik party congress attacking one faction he said had "placed the workers right to elect representatives above the party. As if the party were not entitled to assert its dictatorship even if that dictatorship temporarily clashed with the passing moods of the workers democracy"

Pinch of salt

On this ideological level we can see what separates the Zapatistas from most of the left. But anyone who has been a member of a left organisation will know there can be a sharp difference between the external rhetoric of workers democracy and an internal reality where real discussion is suppressed, instructions come from the top down and mechanisms exist that insure the same small clique runs the organisation for decade after decade. Do similar problems exist with the Zapatistas?

This is a more difficult problem to answer. It is no use simply quoting Marcos or any other prominent Zapatista as they may simply be telling us what they reckon we'd like to hear. The ongoing Low Intensity



War means that it can be very difficult to ask questions (particularly in relation to the military side of the organisation) never mind get accurate answers. This has led some left critics to claim that visits to the rebel zone are controlled so that "On a well-signed route, people have to agree to see only what they have to see and to believe in the leader's words" [4].

Indeed, there can be a point to such critiques. Left parties, particularly in power, have been experts at arranging carefully controlled trips to model communities and workplaces where international visitors come into contact only with carefully coached party members. Much of the discussion around the Zapatistas has focused on their communiqués and essentially divides into two camps, one that sees them offering a new model of revolutionary organisation, the other that criticises them on the basis of problems with their political program. Little has been written about day-to-day life in the rebel area.

One of the immediate gains of the Zapatista rising was the creation of a partially liberated zone of thousands of square kilometers. Within this zone thousands of Zapatista communities have carried out a long running experiment in self-mangement. Sometimes this has been on land they have occupied since the rising but more often it is on new land cleared from the Lacanodon jungle in the decades before 1994.

I don't want to over state the liberated nature of this area. For one year to February 1995 it was under the more or less uncontested control of the Zapatistas. Then the army launched an offensive which was halted only by massive demonstrations in Mexico city. The years since have seen a Low Intensity War where up to 70,000 soldiers have been installed in army bases throughout the Zapatista area and dozens of paramilitary groups have been armed and encouraged to attack Zapatista com-

munities. In addition, the selective distribution of government aid and religious sectarianism have both been used to divide individual communities and areas into pro and anti government groups.

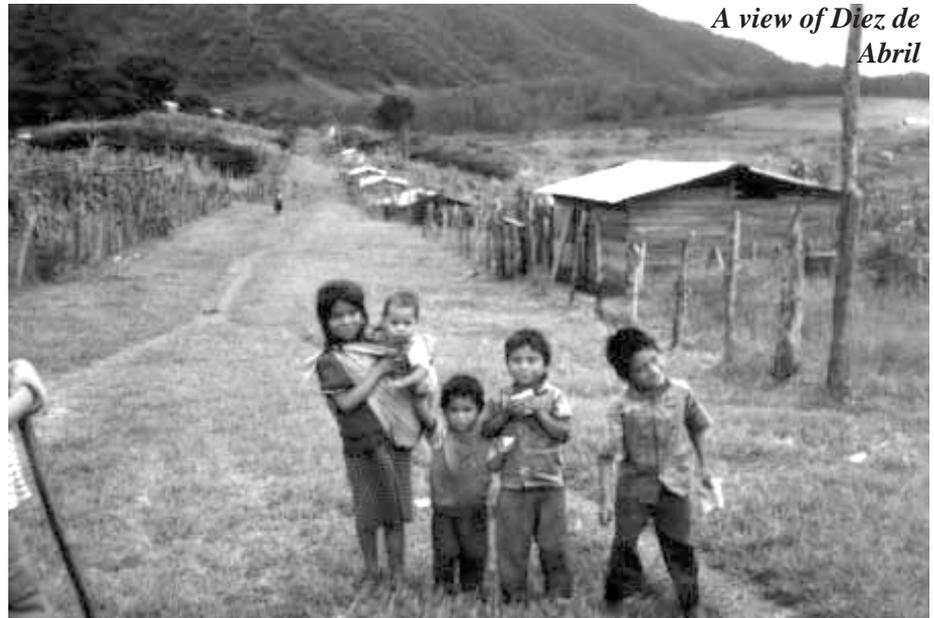
The importance of this area is not that it can form some sort of permanent isolated alternative. Even if this was what the Zapatistas wanted there would be no way they could defeat the far larger and better equipped Mexican army (and if they did the US would intervene). The importance of this zone is that it provides a space in which the methods advocated by the Zapatistas are being put into practise. This is in the most difficult circumstances, for even without the army and paramilitary presence, the extreme poverty, lack of education and infrastructure would present formidable barriers.

Difficult conditions

The areas the Zapatistas openly organise in are rural and extremely poor. Small communities of a dozen to over 100 families are typical, forced to live off the land without the benefit of modern agricultural machinery. Some of the men will have worked outside the village in local towns or even as far as the USA but in the villages themselves the only political presence tends to come from the Catholic church's local variety of 'liberation theology', the EZLN itself and a variety of campesino organisations.

Prior to the rebellion many communities did not have sufficient fertile land to produce enough food. Typically ranchers (who boasted they were of pure 'Spanish blood') had seized the fertile land at the bottom of the canyons leaving the less fertile mountainside to the indigenous people. As well as getting the most fertile land this also effectively forced the local indigenous people to work for them, virtually as serfs. Stories of physical punishment of those they considered not to be working hard enough and assassinations of those who sought to organise against them were all too common. With the rebellion the landowners fled and in many cases their abandoned land was taken over and sometimes used to establish new communities.

The ongoing Low Intensity War makes accurate ground reports difficult. For the last few years the government has run a program of roadblocks and observer deportation designed to hide these communities from the world's eye. The war also means ordinary people are deeply suspicious of outsiders in general, and are particularly wary of tall, white and comparatively wealthy N. American or European observers who look far more like the traditional enemy than any sort of ally. However, thousands of people from outside Chiapas have lived in Zapatista com-



munities as peace observers or worked with communities on solidarity projects like the construction of water pipe lines.

Dies de Abril

Many observers have been able to form a real idea of how Zapatista communities function. The Irish Mexico Group maintained a peace camp in one community, Diez de Abril from the start of 1997 to early 2000 (and still occasionally visits)[2]. Over these three years at least 200 of people people visited Diez (including the author in September '97). The core presence was maintained by three or four people, each of whom spent months in the community during these years and developed friendships with people living there.

Diez de Abril is situated between the towns of Altamirano and Comitán in the highlands of Chiapas. About 100 families lived there in 1997. 80% of the people are Tzeltal, the other 20% are Tojolobal. Linguists estimate these languages diverged over 3,000 years ago[27], so discussion in the community requires translation from one language into another or more commonly through the use of Spanish. However, while most of the men speak some Spanish only 1/3 of the women do and very few are fluent. As elsewhere in Chiapas, living conditions are difficult due to poverty, poor education (typically only one year of formal education), a lot of ill health and a high death rate (particularly of children and old people). There is no sanitation in the community, except the latrines they constructed themselves, no access to clean water and only a single 'unofficial' electricity cable.

The ranch Diez is on was occupied on 10th April, 1995. Those who moved onto the land had worked for the rancher before the rebellion in atrocious conditions. In the months before the takeover they met in assembly on the land to decide how to di-

vide up the land. One decision was the name of the new community 'Diez de Abril', after the day (10th April 1919) when Zapata was assassinated. As a community delegate explained

"we had to move onto the ranchers' land because we were living like animals in the hills. The land there was very bad, and difficult to harvest. ...The majority of the community voted to call the village Diez De Abril. They chose that name because it honoured Zapata who was killed on that date. He was a companero, fighting against the government."

"We used to meet where the church is now, and there decided where to put the houses, and to give a house to the international observers. We measured the land and divided it up among the people. Each family has a plot of land of their own and then there are also collective [plots]."[38]

The church in Diez is the main assembly point for the community. All the people of the community meet there once a week - after mass on Sunday morning. These village assemblies, at which everyone may speak and everyone over 12 has a vote (although votes are very rare, most decisions being made by consensus), decide all questions that face the community, from whether to buy a lorry or a tractor to how the repair of the fences or the bridge will be done.

Sometimes it is necessary for more than one assembly in a week, particularly at times of high tension. In addition there are several sub-assemblies of the people that work on particular projects in the community. Two examples are the cattle collective and the sewing collective. Each collective has a co-ordinator, a secretary and a treasurer. The co-ordinator is changed at least once a year.

The main assembly may also appoint delegates to co-ordinate particular tasks. These delegates form a council that meet between assemblies and organise the day-

to-day work. These 'responsibles' co-ordinate work in particular areas. They serve a limited term (one to two years) and are subject to re-call within this time if it's felt they are not 'leading by obeying' (the Zapatista slogan for following the mandate given to them).

The collectives that carry out particular tasks are set up by and answerable to the assembly but are otherwise autonomous. Collectives in Diez include ones for coffee, cattle, honey, horticulture, baking, sewing and chicken rearing. Some of the production of each collective goes to its members; the surplus goes into a central community fund controlled by the assembly.

Very occasionally the Assembly structure is mentioned in EZLN communiqués. For instance in Jan 2000 the community of Nicolas Ruiz was in dispute with a company building a warehouse on its land, the communiqué they released read in part:

"On various occasions, we have let Engineer Enrique Culebro Siles, State Delegate of FIDELIC, know that in our community there is a decision-making structure in place, whose highest authority resides in the Assembly, and it is only by consensus of this assembly do we take action on any given issue. In this case, we have let him know that the Assembly has not discussed or made a decision on the establishment of a warehouse by the company he represents. Thus, setting up a shed to buy corn in the community is irresponsible and shows a lack of respect for our authorities, since there has been no agreement on the matter." [13]

When several hundred soldiers approached the community of Morelia on January 8th 1998 they were driven off by the women of that community. Roselia, "a middle-aged woman from Morelia" explained: *"We held a meeting and decided that we were going to throw out the army if they came, ... we have decided that we are going to defend our communities, ... We want everything for the pueblo and not just for a few people or for one community,"* [9]

Activists who have visited other communities report a similar decision making mechanism, (see box opposite). There is a lot of variation from community to community but the basic model of the assembly remains the same, its origins lie in indigenous tradition, a tradition common to many other indigenous groups throughout the Americas.

Some problems

There are problems with the traditional indigenous structure, especially the fact that traditionally women had no voice except in some cases where widows were allowed to speak (because they had become responsible for family land). Another problem was that the assemblies were often control-

led by a group of 'elders' rather than recallable delegates. In the past the Spanish invaders and later the landlords were able to make use of this by buying individuals off as part of the *cacique* system.

The assemblies in the Zapatista area are struggling against these elements. Women now have the right to speak and vote - although what extent they actually do so varies from community to community. In Diez the elders now only have automatic power in questions of tradition. In 1997 they were resisting a demand from the younger people that the system of paying dowrys as part of marriage should be abolished.

This description of how the Zapatistas make decisions on the basis of a single community confirms the reality behind the 'decision making from below' language of the interviews and communiqués. But it is obvious that such a structure cannot easily be scaled up to accommodate more people and larger geographical areas. An assembly of 10,000 or 100,000 people could not be a good decision making mechanism because very few people can speak at such a gathering. And of course we don't want to spend our whole lives at (or getting to) such meetings.

This has led some to conclude that the decision making structures used in the small villages of Chiapas have little relevance for those of us in large cities. (A discussion that as we shall see is also taking place within the Zapatistas). But even in Chiapas decisions have to be made that affect tens and even hundreds of thousands of people. One of the strengths of the Zapatista movement is that have a method for making such decisions that preserves the right of ordinary people to decide what decisions are made (and not as in our 'democracy' merely who gets to make them.)

The method the Zapatistas use is a variation of 'delegate democracy', a method that is used in many countries at the base of trade unions and student unions. An individual is elected from amongst those they normally work with (eg a shop steward or class rep). Rather than being then allowed carte blanche to decide what they like they are given a clear mandate to represent the views of the group that selected them to regional meetings of delegates. Such systems also contain other mechanisms to limit the power delegates can informally accrue like

- limiting the length of time any one person can represent a group
- insisting that they still carry out at least some of their normal work
- ensuring that they report back how they voted and what decisions were made to the group that delegated them.

If they fail to do so then the group can im-

Another view

A couple of years ago I was asked to write a report about the work of a local NGO with Zapatista communities in Chiapas and in the course of observing their work, I was fortunate enough to be present at an assembly of the men of a community.

I suppose it says something that only the men attended, they were the ones who would do most of the work on the project, but the outcome would change things for everyone in the village, men and women. Anyway, this is what I saw.

The assembly took quite a long time, and it seemed that no one was in a great hurry, and everyone got to say their piece. No one seemed to be told to shut up at any stage, though as the villagers talked among themselves in their indigenous language, Tojolabal, which I don't understand. As far as I could make out, the man chairing the assembly was gathering opinions from everyone who wanted to give one, then summarising it, and then people would add to that or disagree with it.

Every now and then he would translate for the the outsiders - us, and again this would prompt others to add comments, and start a new round of the discussion. There were no votes, and no obvious signs of people feeling they had been excluded by a majority decision, everything appeared to be decided by consensus, talked over until a point was reached where everyone agreed. Perhaps that's why the assembly took a long time.

The most striking thing about it all was the respect with which the men treated each other. They listened to all opinions and there was no sign of competition for primacy of viewpoint. I was told by the group that took me to the village that this is the norm in other assemblies in Zapatista communities too, and that in the main weekly village assemblies men and women have equal rights, though the women are often slower to speak.

Apparently there are also women's assemblies, where men are not invited, which decide issues felt to be exclusively the concern of the women.

Donal

Regular news from Chiapas

If what you seek is regular news about Chiapas we recommend using the internet. We maintain a huge archive of English language documents at <http://zap.to/chiapas>. For regular news we run a mailing list where every week we sent the two or three most relevant English language articles. To join this simply mail img_news-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

mediately re-call them and select someone else.

The Zapatista decision making structure broadly functions along these lines. This makes it one where all levels of the organisation from the top down are answerable to the ordinary people at the base. The Zapatista communities form an organisational and decision making network involving hundreds of thousands of people. There are 38* rebel municipalities, each one with from 50 to over 100 individual communities.

Military command

The Zapatista military structure is not however internally democratic. Rather it is organised as a conventional army with officers apparently appointed from the top down. Some would argue that in a war situation a democratic structure is not possible. I would point to the Makhnovista of the Russian civil war and the anarchist militia of the Spanish Civil War as historical demonstrations that military systems where the rank and file select delegates to act as officers are feasible. [40] This of course is not simply a debate about military tactics - in any situation where the people do not directly control the army there is a real danger of the army being used against the people.

Although the internal structure of the EZLN is not democratic overall command of the army is. That is, unlike almost all other rebel armies, the command of the army does not end in its own military command but rather in the hands of those at the base whom it claims to represent. There are a number of extensive interviews with subcommandante Marcos, in which he describes how this decision-making structure evolved[1]. In essence, as the EZLN evolved from a few students who had gone into the mountains with the authoritarian project of leading the people to liberation into an army of the people, it was forced to accept that the people and not the army command should have the final say.

The CCRI

The 'Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee' (CCRI) is the body that commands the army. This body (or indeed bodies as there are also regional CCRI's) is composed of delegates from the communities. It is not in itself a military structure although it appears to include permanent military representatives like Tacho.

Important Zapatista policy communiqués are always signed by the CCRI and are normally written in a style that carries the hallmarks of a document subject to discussion and debate by a large number of people (eg comprised of a list of numbered points). As well as being in control of the

army and issuing communiqués the CCRI is also a structure for making day to day decisions that affect the entire region.

When one community in the region of Morelia wanted to occupy land shortly after the rebellion "*the local Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee, (CCRI) ordered locals to wait, expecting a region-wide land settlement after the 1994 dialogue*"[5]. In this sort of situation it is obviously vital that the CCRI really represents the collective decision making of the communities and is not simply a leadership keeping control of the base of the movement. In this case its judgement was wrong and was changed by late 1994 allowing land seizures, including that at Diez, to go ahead.

A month after the rising 'La Jornada' interviewed some members of the CCRI. One of them, Isacc, explained the accountability of the CCRI as follows;

"If the people say that a companero who is a member of the CCRI is not doing anything, that we are not respecting the people or are not doing what the people say, then the people say that they want to remove us ...

In that way, if some member of the CCRI does not do their work, if they do not respect the people, well compa, it is not your place to be there. Then, well, excuse us but we will have to put another in your place"[6].

This was an early description of the system of delegate democracy in place where the communities could recall their CCRI delegate if they felt they were not representing them. In a major interview with Mexican anarchists in May 1994 Marcos described the delegate system of decision making before going on to outline the limitations on even the CCRI's power to make decisions.



The bread collective in Diez de Abril

"In any moment, if you hold a position in the community (first, the community has to have appointed you independent of your political affiliation), the community can remove you. There isn't a fixed term that you have to complete. The moment that the community begins to see that you are failing in your duties, that you are having problems, they sit you down in front of the community and they begin to tell you what you have done wrong. You defend yourself and finally the community, the collective, the majority decides what they are go-

ing to do with you. Eventually, you will have to leave your position and another will take up your responsibilities.

.. strategic decisions, important decisions have to be made democratically, from below, not from above. If there is going to be an action or series of actions that are going to implicate the entire organization, the authority has to come from below. In this sense, even the Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee isn't able to make every decision. You could say that the EZLN is different because in most political-military organizations there is only one commander, and in the EZLN the Clandestine Committees are composed of 80 people, 100 people, 120 people or however many. But this is not the difference. The difference is that even the Clandestine Committees cannot make certain decisions, the most important decisions. They are limited to such a degree that the Clandestine Committees cannot decide which path the organization is going to follow until every companero is consulted" [15]

The first interview[6] with CCRI members in Feb. 1994 also included the first mention of this form of decision making. (The interview questions are in bold):

"How did you decide collectively to rise up in arms?"

"Oh, that has been going on for months now, since we had to ask the opinion of the people and because it was the people's decision. Since, why would one small group decide to jump into war? And what if the people don't support them? What if the people haven't spoken yet? Then you can't struggle in that way.

"It was the people themselves who said 'Let's begin already. We do not want to put up with any more because we are already dying of hunger.' The leaders, the CCRI, the Zapatista Army, and the General Command, if the people say so, well then, we're going to start. Respecting and obeying what the people ask. The people in general. That is how the struggle began."

"How did you carry out your assemblies?"

"They are done in each region; in each zone we ask the opinion of the people. Then that opinion is collected from different communities where there are Zapatistas. And Zapatistas are everywhere in the state of Chiapas. They are asked their opinion, to say what they want: if we should start the war or not."

"Will the people also be asked whether they want to negotiate?"

"We cannot dialogue or negotiate by ourselves. First we have to ask the people. At the state level, where there are companeros, we have to consult about whether we are going to negotiate or not over there. If the people say so, we are doing what the people say. Why? Because we are fulfilling our commitment to the people. Because the people have lived with this for so many years: a life that is so hard, with every kind of injustice. Because of this, it isn't easy to enter the dialogue so quickly. If the people go to dialogue, well fine. If not, 'sallright. No. That's why it is not easy."

So even the CCRI does not have the power to make major decisions, such as to choose between peace and war. These must instead be made through a 'consulta'.

Consultas

In June of 1994 the 'Second Declaration from the Lacandona Jungle' (these declarations are key policy statements) agreed to enter into talks. It explained that "The EZLN, in a democratic exercise without precedent in an armed organization, consulted its component bases about whether or not to sign the peace accords presented by the federal government. The Indigenous bases of the EZLN, seeing that the central demands of democracy, freedom and justice have yet to be resolved, decided against signing the government's proposal." [20]

How are such consultations carried out? Another communiqué from the same period explained the *consulta* process; "The consultations took place in every community and ejido where there are members of the EZLN. The study, analysis, and discussion of the peace accords took place in democratic assemblies. The voting was direct, free, and democratic. After the voting, official reports of the results of the assemblies were prepared. These reports specify: the date and place of the assembly, the number of people who attended (men, women and children older than 12 years old), opinions and principal points discussed, and the number of people who voted." [7]

The *consulta* is similar to a referendum but one in which intense discussions in each community is as central to the process as the vote itself. The purpose of these discussions can be to frame the questions that will be voted on. This is important, as it is through dictating the wording of referenda that governments can often impose limitations on what their effect will be. The Zapatista *consulta* take weeks and have been a great source of annoyance to the Mexican government, which always wants an answer to its proposals on the spot or within days.

In his May 1994 interview Marcos had explained how the process worked on the community level - "The people meet in assemblies and the representatives put forth, for example in the case of the consultations, the demands of the EZLN and the response of the government. They're explained. What is it that we asked for and what has the government said in response? And they begin to debate. Well, this is bad and this is good. After the community says, We have already debated, we already understand, now we can vote - this could take days. In fact, almost all the consultations have gone on for two, three days now and they haven't yet reached the point of voting. They arrive and say, Well okay, we are in agreement, let's vote if we are ready to vote, if we already understand what it is we are going to decide.

It's not about raising your hand or putting a check-mark for one option or the other. You have to debate and analyze the pros and the cons." [15]

An interview with EZLN Major Ann Maria published in March of 1994 referred to the *consulta* that had happened before the launch of the Jan 1 attacks. "First we voted on whether to begin the war or not. After the decision the attack was organized, with the support of the high commanders" [16] Interestingly in a video interview from 1998 Marcos revealed that this *consulta* had gone against the wishes of the military command who did not consider the EZLN prepared for an offensive war. Later in the same interview Ann Maria refers to how a similar process had passed the Women's Revolutionary Law "They'd given us the right to participate in the assemblies and in study groups but there was no law about women. And so we protested and that's how the Law for women came about. We all formulated it and presented it in an assembly of all the towns. Men and women voted on it. There were no problems. In the process opinions of women were asked in all the towns. The insurgents helped us write it," [16]



Seal of the Ricardo Flores Magon autonomous municipality

Autonomous municipalities

The *consultas* are ideal for making the big decisions on the questions of war or peace. However, state wide votes are far too unwieldy to settle smaller questions. Some of the more important can be settled by the CCRI, but from 1995 another regional structure emerged to deal with regional co-ordination and record keeping. The rebellion has also meant Zapatista communities refusing all contact with the Mexican state - right down to refusing to register births and deaths.

The practical problem thrown up by the need for inter community co-ordination saw the formation of these regional councils. These are known as Autonomous Municipalities. For instance 100 communities make up the Autonomous Municipality

named after the Mexican anarchist Ricardo Flores Magon. Another, Tierra y Libertad, on the border with Guatemala contains a total of 120 Tzotzil, Tzeltal and Tojolobal communities from the official government municipalities of Las Margaritas, Ocosingo, La Trinitaria, La Independencia and Frontera Comalapa. [8]

EZLN Commandante Samuel explained the reason's why the EZLN decided to create these liberated zones. "It was an idea that surfaced in 1994 as a way of not having to interact with government institutions. We said 'Enough!' to them controlling all aspects of our community for us. By creating autonomous municipalities we are defining our own spaces where we can carry out our social and political customs as we see fit, without a government that never takes us into account, interfering for its self-benefit." [9]

The Non-Governmental Organization, SIPAZ, has this to say concerning the Autonomous Municipalities: "Considered from a western political perspective, the autonomous municipalities make no sense. They have no resources or real power or legal legitimacy, and they are dying, encircled by hunger, diseases, the paramilitary threat and the security forces. However, for the indigenous peoples, they constitute an eloquent symbol of a culture which is resisting and defying the dominant culture, making a reality of a different way of understanding politics and of organizing the economy, society, and even human relations." [10]

In fact SIPAZ is wrong to state that the municipalities make no sense from the western perspective. Europe has seen similar structures emerge at times of revolutionary upheaval, as Soviets in 1905 and 1917 in Russia, as Workers Councils in Germany from 1918-23, as Factory Councils in Italy in 1920-21, as Workers Committees and Cantonal Federations in Spain in 1936-37 and as recently as 1974-76 in Portugal as Workers Committees and Neighborhood Commissions. Ireland even saw a short lived example during the Limerick general strike of 1919 when the trades council took over much of the running to the town and even issued its own money. Although these structures differed from each other and from the structures in Chiapas they all represented a mechanism for ordinary people to run their societies directly.

The business of the Autonomous Municipality is concerned with the practicalities of day to day life rather than the issuing of communiqués [41] or the commanding of troops. As such they are perhaps less exciting than the CCRI or the military command of the EZLN and so only receive media coverage when the army invades the towns where they are based in order to try and destroy them. But for the ordinary Zapatistas it is the very day to day

nature of the Autonomous Municipality that means they have a major impact on life

One observer, Mariana Mora, explains that “Within the newly created municipal structures, the communities name their authorities, community teachers, local health promoters, indigenous parliaments, and elaborate their own laws based on social, economic, political and gender equality among the inhabitants of diverse ethnic communities.

In the autonomous municipality 17 de Noviembre, located in the region of Altamirano, educational promoters from the region’s 75 communities meet regularly through workshops and meetings in order to create the municipality’s new educational system”[9]

Education is an important example of the depth of the impact of the Autonomous Municipalities, for instance in the Ocosingo region “People from the communities are saying that they might as well suspend the present education because it is being imposed from above. We consider that the present education does not include the four themes that we think are the most important: the economic question, the political question and the cultural and social questions. So now we are calling on all the teachers to elaborate a new educational project that is supported by the community bases and that is based on the four main themes mentioned. At this point all the schools are closed which was agreed on by the base communities. The communities (of our region) have said, we will close all the schools and call together all the professors who work in this region so that they can develop their proposal, even though we also have ours.” [11]

How they function

Enlace Civil, another Mexican NGO in detailing the government’s attempts to smash the Autonomous Municipalities explains how they function;

“The autonomous municipalities are made up by the indigenous communities within an area defined by zapatista influence. The communities of an indigenous zone or area are the ones who decide, at an assembly of all their members, whether or not they will belong to the autonomous municipality.

The autonomous municipalities, parallel to the constitutional ones, do not receive any financing from the state, nor do they collect taxes.

It is the communities who elect their representatives for the Autonomous Municipal Council, which is the authority for the municipality. Each representative is chosen for one area of administration within the autonomous municipality, and they may be removed if they do not fully comply with the communities’ mandates. Generally, a Council is made up of a President, a Vice-President, a Secretary, a Minister of Justice, a person in charge of Agrarian Matters, a Health Committee and a director for the Civil Registry. Each members’ powers are clearly defined within their appointment, and they function in a collegial manner, with the

advice of previous authorities or of the Council of Elders.

The Councils are elected and renewed every one or two years, according to the municipality.

The activities and the responsibilities of each autonomous municipality are dependent on the will of their members, and on their level of consolidation. They do not manage public resources, and their budget, if it exists at all, is very limited, and due to the cooperation of some of their members. Those who hold a position on the Municipal Council do not receive a salary for it, although their expenses should be paid by the same communities who request their presence, through cooperation among the members. In some cases, members of the Council are supported in their farm work, so they can dedicate themselves to their [Council] work, and not have to go the fields.

The autonomous municipalities resolve local problems of coexistence, relations and exchanges between communities, and they attend to minor crimes. The application of justice is based on customary law. For example, in cases of common crimes, the punishment imposed by the Autonomous Council is reparation of the damages: instead of punishment by jail or fines, a sentence is imposed of working for the community, or for the aggrieved family.

In the autonomous municipality of Polho, in Chenalho, where thousands of war displaced are found, the Autonomous Council receives national and international humanitarian aid, and it distributes it to the camps through the Supply Committee.” [10]

It is this sort of decision-making structure that truly determines the health of a revolution rather than the fine words of its leaders or the slogans it is organised under. And also of course they present a clear alternative to the state (and seizing state power) something the Leninist left is reluctant to acknowledge. Strangely enough both the Mexican government and the local Catholic church seem to be more on the ball here.

A document written by the Catholic Dioceses of San Cristobal de las Casas says “The naming of authorities through indigenous norms and customs, signifies that the political party system is no longer the only channel to elect authorities and government representatives. At a local level municipal presidents imposed by the PRI are left governing only themselves, without being able to penetrate into the communities. Basically this means the slow destruction of the false democracy sustained by the political party system and its replacement by communities and organizations that construct their own history first as autonomous municipalities and eventually as autonomous zones.”[9]

It is revealing how much left commentary on the Zapatistas ignores these structures altogether. Instead the Zapatistas are analysed on the basis of the revolutionary laws or the demands they have put forward in the peace process. Such an

analysis seems to stem more from the observers wish to be in power than any true understanding of what a revolution should look like.

On the local level of Chiapas it is this issue of autonomy that the government most fears as it threatens to remove their right to impose decisions on the people completely. “In its very basic form autonomy consists in recapturing and restoring the culture and self-determination taken away over the last 504 years. That is, in terms of territory, that the people that live in a region administer their own economy, their own politics, their own culture and their own resources.” [11]

The idea of autonomy provides the core of the attraction many of the international supporters of the Zapatistas have for the rebellion in Chiapas. But, at least as the EZLN see it, it is not an idea without its contradictions. Not least the danger of perceiving these structures as just being applicable to Chiapas or co-existing with the apparatus of state rule.

Some problems I see

The criticisms I’m moving on to make are from the perspective of anarchism. Modern socialism first arrived in Mexico with the Greek anarchist Plotino Rhodakanaty in early 1861. In the next 60 years Mexican anarchism went through many stages (parallel with the developments in Europe) which included the first agrarian uprising with a positive program and the formation of the Mexican trade unions. To this day the anarchist flag (red in one diagonal, black in the other) is the symbol used to indicate a strike in progress in Mexico.

Almost immediately the Mexican anarchists realised the connection between the society they were fighting for and elements of the traditional practise of the indigenous people. They advocated linking up with the indigenous people on this basis. By 1867 the anarchist Chávez López who declared “I am a socialist because I am the enemy of all governments, and I am a communist because my brothers wish to work the lands in common” had launched the first rural insurrectionary movement. In 1869 in April they issued in a manifesto calling for “the revered principle of autonomous village governments to replace the sovereignty of a national government viewed to be the corrupt collaborator of the hacendados”. [42]

There is no room here for a detailed discussion of anarchism in Mexico, John M Hart’s “Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class” is a useful English language introduction. The introduction above is just to demonstrate that the history of anarchism in Mexico is considerably longer and more important than even the key figures of Zapata and Ricardo Flores Magón imply.

Mexican anarchism was destroyed as a mass force by the 1930's and although small collectives have kept the ideas alive after this point revolutionary politics, including those of the Zapatistas, tended to stem from Marxist origins. However the Zapatistas represent a return to at least some of the ideas of the Mexican anarchists.

Co-existence?

From this point of view the most attractive aspect of the Zapatistas is that they demonstrate how decisions can be effectively made without a need for electing individuals to represent our views. On the historic level, there is a conflict between systems of direct democracy on the one hand and government on the other. In Russia 1918 and Barcelona 1937, as elsewhere, this conflict led to the government using force to dissolve the structures of direct democracy. So from the anarchist perspective there is a choice to be made here, you are for one or the other but not both.

I cannot claim that the Zapatistas agree. Indeed it is precisely to these sort of debates that Marcos was responding in May 1995 when he wrote (in imagining his political trial)

"The communists accuse him of being anarchist: guilty"

The anarchists accuse him of being orthodox: guilty". [43]

Because I disagree with a lot of what follows, precisely because I consider the Zapatistas to be somewhat 'orthodox' in terms of electoral politics, I quote extensively below from the material they have produced explaining their position.

The Zapatistas seem to argue for the co-existence of their system of direct democracy and the indirect electoral system of the Mexican state. They also talk of reforming the electoral system, by introducing some element of leading by obeying. Marcos in 1995 claimed that *"What is in crisis is the system, the government, the old things and the anachronous ways of doing politics. But the nation can survive with a new pact, with a new political class, and with new forms of doing politics."* [18] The existence of a distinct 'political class' separate from the ordinary people implies the continued existence of some form of state system.

On December 8 2000 the CCRI referred to Amado Avendano who had probably won the 1996 election as governor of Chiapas and who was widely recognised as the 'rebel governor'. *"Six years after his taking office, Don Amado Avendano has acquitted himself well to those who elected him and, despite the electoral fraud committed against him, who supported him."*

The zapatista indigenous communities, through the EZLN, are publicly recognizing the former Governor of Chiapas today. He can have satisfaction in having carried out his duty." [23] Again the implication here is that if Amado Avendano had been allowed into power the Zapatistas could have worked with him. In the 1994 presidential election it appears that most Zapatistas voted for Cardenas, the candidate of the opposition PRD even if the Zapatistas stopped short of publicly endorsing him.

Although the Zapatistas have broken with many elements of their political past one thing that appears to have carried over is a stages theory of liberation. In the old days this would have talked about the need for national liberation to precede a socialist revolution. Today the Zapatistas still seem to talk of the need for two stages, the first of which is equivalent to a national revolution.

Their ideas were spelled out in some detail in the Second Declaration from the Lacandon Jungle;

"We aren't proposing a new world, but something preceding a new world: an antechamber looking into the new Mexico. In this sense, this revolution will not end in a new class, faction of a class, or group in power. It will end in a free and democratic space for political struggle. This free and democratic space will be born on the fetid cadaver of the state party system and the tradition of fixed presidential succession. A new political relationship will be born, a relationship based not in the confrontation of political organizations among themselves, but in the confrontation of their political proposals with different social classes. Political leadership will depend on the support of these social classes, and not on the mere exercise of power. In this new political relationship, different political proposals (socialism, capitalism, social democracy, liberalism, christian democracy, etc.) will have to convince a majority of the nation that their proposal is the best for the country. The groups in power will be watched by the people in such a way that they will be obligated to give a regular accounting of themselves, and the people will be able to decide whether they remain in power or not. The plebiscite is a regulated form of confrontation among the nation, political parties, and power, and it merits a place in the highest law of the country." [20]

The 2000 elections

An EZLN communique released for the Presidential election in June 2000 discusses at length the flaws of the current systems and possible reforms to it;

"In Mexico, presidentialism has been a heavy burden and an obstacle for democracy. Even though we have not had a president in the last 70 years who has not belonged to the official party, the possible arrival to the presidential chair of the opposition does not mean "movement towards democracy," if the executive

branch continues to be concentrated in one single person, and while the branches charged with legislating and upholding the law are merely decorative elements which are changed every 3 or 6 years. The survival of the presidentialist system in Mexico is a fact. What kind of democracy is this, in which the fundamental decisions of a nation fall to one single individual for six years?

An autonomous legislative branch, independent of the executive, is essential in a democracy. Nonetheless, the campaigns for deputies and senators have passed unnoticed. The natural passion over the presidential contest has managed to conceal an advance which has already been seen during the last 6 year term which is now ending: a legislative branch struggling for its independence and autonomy. In addition to confronting the executive, the legislative branch should become independent of party leaders, who not infrequently replace leaders of the parliamentary wings in those agreements and regulations which correspond exclusively to the legislative arena. Legislating is not the prerogative of the political parties, but of those who are democratically elected to that task.

At the back of the line behind the presidential campaigns, the campaigns by the legislative candidates are not winning anything for themselves, nor are they of any benefit to those who are seeking executive office. They are different elections, because their function is different. The legislative contests deserve an attention they have not received.

We hope that the next legislature - which has been so neglected during these elections - does not carry out their work tied to commitments with their party leadership or with the elected executive, but with the Mexican men and women who, having voted or not for their candidacies, make up the Mexican nation and are the ones with whom they must make laws.

Today, in response to the current election process, the zapatistas declare ourselves to be in favor of an authentic balance of powers. Not just in the exercise of their duties, but also in the fight for seats. It is as important to know about the proposals and positions of those candidates seeking to be deputies and senators as it is to know of those of the presidential candidates. The end of presidentialism is a condition for democracy in Mexico.

... Today, in response to the current election process, the zapatistas denounce that it is not an election of citizens responding to political proposals, and those who represent them, but rather a state election, with the opposition confronting not only the official party, but the entire machinery of the Mexican state. No election can be called "democratic" under these conditions.

For zapatistas, democracy is much more than an electoral contest or changes in power. But it is also an election fight, if it is clean, equitable, honest and plural.

That is why we say that electoral democracy is not sufficient for democracy, but it is an important part of it. That is why we are not anti-election. We believe political parties have a role to play (nor are we anti-party, although we have

criticisms of party doings).

We believe that the elections represent, for millions of persons, a space for dignified and respectable struggle.

Election time is not the time for the zapatistas. Not just because of our being without face and our armed resistance. But also, and above all, for our devotion to finding a new way of doing politics, which has little or nothing to do with the current one.

We want to find a politics which goes from below to above, one in which "governing obeying" is more than a slogan; one in which power is not the objective; one in which "referendum" and "plebiscite" are more than just words which are difficult to spell; one in which an official can be removed from his position by popular election.

Concerning the political parties, we say that we do not feel represented by any of them. We are neither PRDs or PANs, even less PRIs.

We criticize the parties' distance from society, that their existence and activities are regulated only by the election calendar; the political pragmatism that goes beyond its mandate, the cynical juggling act of some of their members, their contempt for the different.

Democracy - regardless of who is in power - is the majority of people having decision making power concerning issues that concern them. It is the power of the people to sanction those in government, depending on their capacity, honesty and effectiveness.

The zapatista concept of democracy is something that is built from below, with everyone, even those who think differently from us. Democracy is the exercise of power for the people all the time and in all places.

Today, in response to the current election process, the zapatistas reaffirm our struggle for democracy. Not only for electoral democracy, but also for electoral democracy." [24]

The historical problem with this sort of approach, in Mexico and elsewhere, is that it leads to a process by which liberal reformist parties can use the revolutionaries to help overturn more authoritarian governments, but once this is achieved can then rapidly isolate and neutralise the revolutionaries. This happened in 1914 during the Mexican revolution when Carranza was able us use the anarcho-syndicalists of the Casa to overturn the Huerta regime. The Constitutionalist then allowed the Casa to organise amongst urban workers and used their suspicion of the religious nature of the armies of Zapata and Villa to mobilise 'red battilions' to fight them in 1915.

Once they had been defeated and strikes began in Mexico Carranza simply dissolved the red battalions in January 1916 and by February began a process of closing down the unions offices and arresting the leadership. When the unions called a second general strike in late July the government reacted with martial law including the death penalty for striking in essential circumstances. It can be easily argued

that similar process accompanied the periods of radical change everywhere from the Irish War of Independence to the ending of apartheid in South Africa. In the transition the radicals were isolated and then suppressed.

Stages theory

It remains unclear where exactly the Zapatistas stand here. Part of the confusion may arise from the two distinct stages the Zapatistas see as being necessary. Part of it is a feeling that the way they make decisions in Chiapas may not be applicable to the rest of the country. In a 1995 interview Marcos discusses these issues. Interestingly it also suggests a difference between the political leadership of the EZLN and the rank and file on this very question.

"We are planning a revolution which will make a revolution possible. We are planning a pre-revolution. That is why they accuse us of being armed revisionists or reformists, as Jorge Casataneada says. We are talking about making a broad social movement, violent or peaceful, which will radically modify social relationships so that its final product might be a new space of political relationship.

...

I was saying that the communities are promoting democracy. But the concept seems vague. There are many kinds of democracy. That's what I tell them (the Indians). I try to explain to them: You can do that (to solve by consensus) because you have a communal life. When they arrive at an assembly, they know each other, they come to solve a common problem. But in other places it isn't so, I tell them. People live separate lives and they use the assembly for other things, not to solve the problem. And they say, no, but it means that yes, it works for us. And it indeed works for them, they solve the problem. And they propose that method for the Nation and the world. The world must organize itself thus. That is what they call "to rule while obeying" ("mandar obedeciendo"). And it is very difficult to go against that because that is how they solve their problems. And the one who doesn't work out, they dis-

miss him, and there is no big scandal. When the ejido's head authority makes a mistake, they remove him and he goes on to become a member of the assembly.

We have insisted upon the fact that what the EZLN proposes is not a representative democracy, that of the political parties. And they tell us in articles, and in the newspapers, that we are wrong, that in reality the Indigenous communities have been defeated, because what is worth here is the individual, and the communities want to have the collective will valued. Yes. That's why we say: we need another, different non-partisan political force. When we propose that, we do it as when we started the war in 1994. At that time I used to tell them (the communities who had decided to start the offensive), we are going to go to hell, they are going to fuck us up; the international correlation of forces is against us, they are going to cut us to pieces. And the brothers saying: Let's go, let's go, and let's go to war. And now it's let's go, and let's go for this type of democracy. And how do you tell them that it is no good. If they have used it for years... What better result than to have resisted all the annihilation campaigns! That is why they say: the country must organize itself like this."

... the brothers are saying: "That Parliament should obey those it claims to represent." I know I am talking about something new which is difficult to understand...

Interviewer What you are saying is to take over the power...

To exert it.

What you are not saying is how to embody that.

Because we don't have the fucking idea of how to do it. I can imagine an assembly in a "canada" (canion), even within an ethnic group.

Why? Because I have seen it. I know how they organize themselves and how they go on solving their problems in the midst of a sort of mixture of representativity and assembly.

And you honestly believe that that can function for a nation?

I know that the other way does not work. What there is right now does not work." [19]

On this subject however, it is important to



CCRI at the 1st encounter

note that the EZLN has been very clear that they do not wish to become a political party or promote the formation of one. When the Fourth Declaration of the Lacadon jungle announced the formation of the FZLN (Zapatista National Liberation Front) it defined it as

"A political force whose members do not exert nor aspire to hold elective positions or government offices in any of its levels. A political force which does not aspire to take power. A force which is not a political party.

A political force which can organize the demands and proposals of those citizens and is willing to give direction through obedience. A political force which can organize a solution to the collective problems without the intervention of political parties and of the government. We do not need permission in order to be free. The role of the government is the prerogative of society and it is its right to exert that function.

A political force which struggles against the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few and against the centralization of power. A political force whose members do not have any other privilege than the satisfaction of having fulfilled its commitment." [21]

Economics

A second and related problem with the ideas put forward (or in this case not put forward) by the Zapatistas is in the sphere of the economy. On the one hand they denounce neo-liberalism and call for land occupations as in this interview from January 1994:

"The immediate objective is that our agricultural laws begin to operate in the liberated zones, that the campesinos organize themselves, taking land, respecting small rural property and working in collectives, ignoring all of the debts with the government. Banrural (Banco de Crédito Rural), all of the taken assets, all of that, we don't know anything about in the rural zone because where we move those laws will start to operate, that is, the old Constitution before they reformed it. That is the immediate plan that we have, that is, to organize the rural life of this country according to the will of the majority of our companeros. That is, that there be land, because there is land, and that it be distributed, because they just said that they were not going to give any more out." [14]

As we have seen land occupations are a reality but the rhetoric behind them is most often based on the occupiers being the legitimate owners of the land rather than on 'the land to those who work it'. "We, who have been EZLN support bases since the year of 1994, have recovered this land, which was previously called San Jacinto by the owner, but now we are the true owners." [12]

And outside of the question of land occupations in Chiapas the EZLN have been silent on the economic question. While they have supported some strikes in the cities they have not put forward any ideas

on how the relationship of workers to the factories might develop in the future. Such workers, indigenous or not, can't claim to be the original owners of the factories (although they can point out that the working class built them).

The revolutionary laws produced by the EZLN on January 1st 1994 [30] cannot be called anti-capitalist. They restrict but still very much allow for wage labour, rent and even multi national investment. For example the law that "Foreign companies will pay their workers an hourly salary in national money equivalent to what would be payed in dollars outside the country." [29] while a big step forward for many Mexican workers hardly amounts to the abolition of capitalism.

Perhaps the simple reason is that the Zapatistas don't wish to be a vanguard in any sense of the word and so are waiting for a program for the urban centres and factories to emerge from those who live and work there. Or perhaps they are worried that at this stage of the transformation to talk of economic democracy in the cities would simply serve to alienate some of their supporters.

The first of these two options is the more acceptable but it also contains its own dangers. During the Mexican revolution it was precisely such a lack of clarity that enabled the government of Carranza to mobilise the anarcho-sindicalist unions of the Casa against the rural Zapatistas. The Fox government which has the advantage of being able to claim to have ended the one party state will no doubt seek to use this credibility to isolate the Zapatistas from the workers in the cities. If we accept it was primarily the enormous mobilisations of urban workers and students that stopped the government counter offensive of 1994 and the offensive of February 1995 the danger of Fox succeeding becomes clear.

Urban Workers

The few Zapatista communiques directed to workers in struggle tend to support such an interpretation. Marcos writing to the striking workers of Ruta 100 for instance says "Whatever the outcome of your movement, today you represent what is best about the Mexican working people, you represent the dignity of the workers of the city, you represent the hope of that great revolutionary force which is the force of workers awakened from a long night in which the arrogance of money, the corruptness of phony labor representatives and the criminal action of the government have held down all Mexicans.

Be well, workers of Ruta 100. In our poverty, there is little we can give, but we give it with admiration and respect." [31]

The Zapatistas organised an encounter for teachers struggling against low wages and

democratic unions in August of 1999. At this Marcos declared the Zapatistas "are also democratic teachers and electrical workers and university students and workers in the city and the country and artists and intellectuals and religious men and women and neighbors and homosexuals and lesbians and ordinary women and men and children and old ones, that is, rebels, dissidents, inconvenient ones, dreamers.

Because of that, the most important thing we zapatistas want to ask you is to see us as another democratic union section. That you do not see us as someone who must be helped, poor things, out of pity, out of alms, out of charity. We want you to see us as your companeros, as being as willing as anyone to mobilize and to support the teachers struggles. Not only because your demands are just and because you are good and honest persons, but also, and above all, because they are our demands as well. Because nothing will be complete nor finished if teachers continue to be oppressed by pro-management unions, if bad labor conditions continue - and the low salaries - , if education continues to breed oppressed and oppressors, if school continues to be - for millions of Mexicans - as distant as dignified housing, a fair wage, a piece of land, enough food, full health, freedom of thought and association, popular democracy, authentic independence and true peace.

Now, taking advantage of the fact that you are here, we want to ask something special of you. We want to ask you to support the student movement at the UNAM and the struggle of the Mexican Electricians Union. The one is against the privatization of education, and the other against the privatization of the electrical industry." [32]

The clearest appeal for unity with the workers is contained in the CCRI's 1st of May statement from 1995. "The workers that build this country bleed from three wounds. The powerful bleed them with unjust salaries, humiliations, and threats. The heads of the great central government unions bleed the workers with extortions, beatings, and death. Those who sell the country bleed the workers with the dispatches of usurpation, writing the laws that their treason dictates.

Let your voice run together with ours.... Accept this hand that your smallest brothers and sisters offer you. Three forces should unite their



paths: the force of the workers, the force of the campesinos, the popular force. With these three forces there will be nothing to detain us.

...
Receive our voice, which, although far away, says: "Greetings, workers of the sea and of the land! The Zapatistas follow you in their struggles! With you there will be a country and future for all some day! Without you, night will continue to rule these lands!" [33]

These statements demonstrate that the Zapatistas recognise a common struggle with urban workers in Mexico (and the oppressed everywhere). The fact that have donated considerable resources in holding gatherings for radical students and teachers as well as the American and intercontinental encounters shows they take building such links very seriously.

A very lengthy discussion, from an autonomist Marxist perspective, around these points was published by Midnight Notes as *Toward the New Commons: Working Class Strategies and the Zapatistas*. They "think the Zapatistas are strategizing how to unite the 80% or more, and doing so in relationship to the existing and historical class composition in Mexico and in light of their understanding of global capital, in order to help overcome capital. In this context, and if it is correct that capital cannot now (for at least several generations) be other than neoliberal, then the actual Zapatista practice and strategy are indeed anti-capitalist." [28]

It is also not irrelevant that given their Leninist origins the Zapatista leadership have made clear that they consider the failing of the eastern regimes in 1989 was the failure of socialism. They have tended to steer very clear of traditional socialist rhetoric. But it does make you wonder how they could see such a system as socialism when it was so clearly a top down dictatorship. All the more so when as early as 1918 Lenin made no secret the immediate goal of the Bolshevik government was the creation of state capitalism.

Which leadership?

There are two meanings to the word leadership. The first one is where a person or organisation is put in a position of authority over others and can therefore tell them what to do. This is the sort of leadership exercised by elected politicians. The second which is often confused with the first is where the person or group has no power over others but they are recognised as an 'authority' in a given area and so people are willing to try what they suggest. Anarchists refer to this as being a 'leadership of ideas'. In reality the Zapatistas are already this kind of leadership (whether they want to be or not) not only in Mexico but also elsewhere in the world.

In that context perhaps the Zapatistas need

to move from simply supporting the struggles of others to suggesting the ways in which those struggles could be organised and what their goals should be. To some extent they have done this, as for instance in the 2nd Declaration of Reality. But it is almost certainly true that if they were to start to do this in Mexico their suggestions would almost certainly create a debate in which those who already agree with their method in the cities could organise.

The power of the Zapatistas is the power of example. Their methods of organisation are radically different from what has become the norm in trade unions, community organisations and left groups. Their rejection of seizing power is radically different from the project of much of the left, a project that sees revolutionary action more in terms of paper selling and 'voting left with no illusions' then ordinary people taking power into their own hands.

In holding the Zapatistas up as an example we must also point out the need to go beyond the point they have reached. Our solidarity with them must remain critical, in particular of the points they have yet to make clear or perhaps even decide on. The Zapatistas represent one example of a different way of doing things, not the sole model to be blindly followed.

* It may well be that some have not yet been publically declared to exist

- 1 See http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/marcos_index.html for English translations of many of these
- 2 For letters from observers, pictures and other information about Diez see <http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/diez.html>
- 3 This section summarises extensive notes I took. For other articles making use of these see <http://www.struggle.ws/andrew.html>
- 4 Behind the Balaclavas of South-East Mexico, Sylvie Deneuve, Charles Reeve, Paris, August 1995, <http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/comment/balaclava.html>
- 5 Making Zapatismo irreversible, Michael McCaughan, 20-8-96, http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/reports/land_se96.html
- 6 First interview with EZLN CCRI-CG, La Jornada, 2/4/94 & 2/5/94, Blanche Petrich and Elio Henri'quez, http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/ezn/ccri_1st_interview.html
- 7 How the consultations with the communities was done, CCRI, La Jornada, June 3, 1994, http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/ezn/ccri_how_consult_june94.html
- 8 Tierra y Libertad, One Year Later, Luis Fernando Menendez Medina (Human Rights defender and prisoner in Cerro Hueco), http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/ezn/1999/pris_1year_terr_jun.html
- 9 The EZLN and Indigenous Autonomous Municipalities by Mariana Mora - Apr 1998, http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/comment/auto_munc.html
- 10 Enlace Civil, A.C., Autonomous Municipalities: The resistance of the indigenous communities in response to the war in Chiapas, Nov. 1988, http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/comment/auto_munc_nov98.html
- 11 IV. On autonomy an interview of Zapatistas from the Ocosingo region Published in "El Navegante" (Sailors in every port) translated by Beto Del Sereno
- 12 San Manuel New Town, Francisco Gomez Autonomous Municipality, August 3, 2000, http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezn/2000/com_sm_our_lands_aug.html
- 13 The company fails to respect the assembly, Nicolas Ruiz, Chiapas; January 20, 2000, http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/ezn/2000/assNR_corn_conflict_jan.html

- 14 Excerpted transcriptions that were published in La Jornada. They were recorded in San Cristobal de las Casas just after the EZLN liberated the city on January 1, 1994, and the transcription was published in La Jornada http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/ezn/marcos_interview_jan94.html
- [15] Interview with Subcomandante Marcos, May 11, 1994, <http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/ezn/anmarin.html>
- [16] Don't Abandon Us!, Interviews with EZLN women, Interview conducted by Matilde Prez and Laura Castellanos, published in La Jornada's special supplement for International Women's Day, March 7, 1994, <http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/ezn/woint.html>
- [17] *Comandante Javier demands federal army leave Simjovel*, By: Jose Gil Olmos and Hermann Bellinghausen, La Jornada, Los Altos Chiapas, December 21, 1994
- [18] Interview with Marcos - August 1995, La Jornada August 25, by Carmen Libra, http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/ezn/inter_marcos_consult_aug95.html
- [19] Interview with Marcos about neoliberalism, the national State and democracy. Autumn 1995, by Samuel Blixen and Carlos Fazio, Taken from Uruguayo's "Brecha" newspaper, http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/ezn/inter_marcos_aut95.html
- [20] Second Declaration from the Lacandona Jungle, June 10, 1994, http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/ezn/ccri_2nd_dec_june94.html
- [21] Fourth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle, January 1, 1996, <http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/ezn/jung4.html>
- [22] 2nd Declaration of La Realidad, August 3rd 1996, http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/ezn/1996/ccri_encount_aug.html
- [23] *Don Amado Averdano has acquitted himself well*, Communique' from the Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee, December 8, 2000.
- [24] EZLN communique regarding elections, June 19, 2000, http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/ezn/2000/ccri_elections_june.html
- [25] "What makes us different is our political proposal" Marcos, August 30, 1996, http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/ezn/marc_to_cs_se96.html
- [26] EZLN communique "to the soldiers and commanders of the Popular Revolutionary Army, August 29, 1996, http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/ezn/ezn_epr_se96.html
- [27] *The ancient Maya*, 5th ed, Robert J. Sharer, p585
- [28] *Toward the New Commons: Working Class Strategies and the Zapatistas* by Monty Neill, with George Caffentzis and Johnny Machete
- [29] Labour Law & Industry and Commerce Law, Jan 1, 1994, http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/ezn/law_labour_industry.html
- [30] The EZLN Revolutionary laws, Jan 1 1994, <http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/revlaw.html>
- [31] Marcos: To the workers of Ruta 100 - Aug '95, http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/ezn/marcos_ruta100_aug95.html
- [32] Marcos in 'Teachers are a mirror and window' to Closing Session of the "Democratic Teachers and Zapatista Dream" Encuentro, August 1, 1999, http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/ezn/1999/marcos_teachers_close_aug.html
- [33] CCRI of the EZLN to the Workers of the Republic on May 1st 1994, http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/ezn/ccri_may1_94.html
- [35] See The story of how we learnt to dream at Reality, http://www.struggle.ws/andrew/encounter1_report.html
- [36] see for instance James Joll, *The Second International*, Ch. The struggle with the anarchists
- [37] see Where do we come from? Where do we go to? (talk to S26 Prague counter summit), September 2000, <http://www.struggle.ws/andrew/prague3.html>
- [38] For a discussion of Bolshevik policies in the 1918-21 period see Aileen O'Carroll, 'Freedom and Revolution', Red & Black Revolution no1, 1994.
- [39] Interview conducted by the author in Diez de Abril, Chiapas, September 1997
- [40] See Can you have an anarchist army?, WS59, Spring 2000, <http://www.struggle.ws/ws/2000/makhno59.html>
- [41] Although some have issued communiques see About the Zapatista autonomous council's, <http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/councils.html>
- [42] John M Hart's "Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class"
- [43] La Jornada, May 5, 1995
- [44] Mike Gonzalez, *The Zapatistas: the challenges of revolution in a new millennium*, International Socialism, Winter 2000

The Seven Loose Pieces of the Global Jigsaw Puzzle

(Neoliberalism as a puzzle: the useless global unity which fragments and destroys nations)

“War is a matter of vital importance for the State, it is the province of life and death, the path which leads to survival or annihilation. It is indispensable to study it at length.”

The Art of War, Sun Tzu

Modern globalization, neoliberalism as a global system, should be understood as a new war of conquest for territories.

The end of the III World War or “Cold War” does not mean that the world has overcome the polarity and finds its stability under the hegemony of the victor. At the end of this war there was, without doubt a loser (the socialist camp), but it is difficult to say who was the victor. Western Europe? The United States? Japan? All of them? The fact is that the defeat of the “evil empire” (Dixit Reagan and Thatcher) signified the opening of new markets without a new owner. Therefore a struggle was needed in order to possess them, to conquer them.

Not only that, but the end of the “Cold War” brought with it a new framework of international relations in which the new struggle for those new markets and territories produced a new world war, the IV. This required, as do all wars, a redefinition of the national States. And beyond the re-definition of the national states, the world order returned to the old epochs of the conquests of America, Africa and Oceania. This is a strange modernity that moves forward by going backward. The dusk of the 20th century has more similarities with previous brutal centuries than with the placid and rational future of some science-fiction novel. In the world of the Post-Cold War vast territories, wealth, and above all, a skilled labor force, await a new owner.

But it is a position of owner of the world, and there are many who aspire to it. And in order to win it another war breaks out, but now among those who call themselves the “Good Empire”.

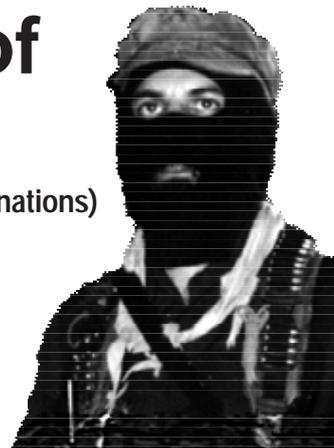
If the III World War was between capitalism and socialism (lead by the United States and the USSR respectively) with different levels of intensity and alternating scenarios; the Fourth World War occurs now among the great financial centers, with complete scenarios and with a sharp and constant intensity.

Since the end of the Second World War until 1992, there have been 149 wars in all the world. The results are 23 million dead, and therefore there is no doubt about the intensity of this Third World War (Statistical source: UNICEF). From the catacombs of international espionage to the astral space of the so-called Strategic Defense Initiative

(the “Star Wars” of the cowboy Ronald Reagan); from the sands of Playa Giron, in Cuba, to the Mekong Delta in Vietnam; from the unbridled nuclear arms war to the savage blows of the State in the tormented Latin America; from the ominous maneuvers of the armies of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to the CIA agents in the Bolivia which oversaw the assassination of Che Guevara; the badly-named “Cold War” reached temperatures which, in spite of the continuous change of scenery and the incessant ups-and downs of the nuclear crisis (and precisely because of that) ended up sinking the socialist camp as a global system, and diluted it as a social alternative.

The Third World War showed the magnanimity of the “complete war” (in all places and in all forms) for the victor: capitalism. But the scenario of the post-war was profiled in fact, as a new theater of global operations. Great extensions of “No man’s land” (because of the political, social and economic devastation of Eastern Europe and the USSR), world powers in expansion (The United States, Western Europe and Japan), a world economic crisis, and a new technological revolution: the revolution of information. “In the same way in which the industrial revolution had allowed the replacement of muscle by the machine, the information revolution replaced the brain (or at least a growing number of its important functions) by the computer.” This “general cerebralization of the means of production (the same as occurred in industry as in services) is accelerated by the explosion of new telecommunications research and the proliferation of the cyberworlds.” (Ignacio Ramonet “La planete des desordres” in the “Geopolitique du Chaos” Maniere de Voir 3. Le Monde Diplomatique (LMD), April of 1997.)

The supreme kind of capital, financial capital, began then to develop its strategy of war towards the new world and over what was left of the old. Hand in hand with the technological revolution which placed the entire world, through a computer, on its desk and at its mercy, the financial markets imposed their laws and precepts on the entire planet. The “globalization” of the new war is nothing more than the globalization of the logic of the financial markets. The National States (and their leaders) went from being directors of the economy to those who were di-



Article written by EZLN spokesperson Subcomandante Marcos (above) in 1997

rected, better said tele-directed, by the basic premise of financial power: free commercial exchange. Not only that, but the logic of the market took advantage of the “porosity” which in all the social spectrum of the world, provoked the development of telecommunications and penetrated and appropriated all the aspects of social activity. Finally there was a global war which was total!

One of the first casualties of this new war was the national market. Like a flying bullet inside an armored room, the war begun by neoliberalism bounced from one side to the other and wounded the one who had fired it. One of the fundamental bases of power in the modern capitalist State, the national market, was liquidated by the shot fired by the new era of the financial global economy. International capital took some of its victims by dismantling national capitalism and wearing it out, until it disabled its public powers. The blow has been so brutal and definitive that the national States do not have the necessary strength to oppose the action of the international markets which transgress the interests of citizens and governments.

The careful and ordered escapade which the “Cold War” handed down, the “new world order” quickly became pieces due to the neoliberal explosion. World capitalism sacrificed without mercy that which gave it a future and a historic project; national capitalism. Companies and States fell apart in minutes, but not due to the torments of proletarian revolutions, but the stalemates of financial hurricanes. The child (neoliberalism) ate the father (national capitalism) and in passing destroyed all of the discursive fallacies of capitalist ideology: in the new world order there is no democracy, liberty, equality, nor fraternity.

In the global scenario which is a product of the end of the “Cold War” all which is perceptible is a new battleground and in this one, as in all battlegrounds, chaos reigns.

At the end of the “Cold war” capitalism created a new bellicose horror: the neutron bomb. The “virtue” of this weapon is that it only destroys life and leaves buildings in-

tact. Entire cities could be destroyed (that is, their inhabitants) without the necessity of reconstructing them (and paying for them). The arms industry congratulated itself. The “irrationality” of nuclear bombs could be replaced by the new “rationality” of the neutron bomb. But a new bellicose “marvel” would be discovered at the same time as the birth of the Fourth World War: the financial bomb.

The new neoliberal bomb, different from its atomic predecessor in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, did not only destroy the polis (the Nation in this case) and imposed death, terror and misery to those who lived in it: or, different from the neutron bomb, did not solely destroy “selectively”. The neoliberal bomb, reorganized and reordered what it attacked and remade it as a piece inside a jigsaw puzzle of economic globalization. After its destructive effect, the result is not a pile of smoking ruins, or tens of thousands of inert lives, but a neighborhood attached to one of the commercial megalopolis of the new world supermarket and a labor force re-arranged in the new market of world labor.

The European union, one of the megalopolis produced by neoliberalism, is a result of the Fourth World War. Here, economic globalization erased the borders between rival States, long-time enemies, and forced them to converge and consider political unity. From the National States to the European federation, the economist path of the neoliberal war in the so-called “old continent” would be filled with destruction and ruins, one of which was European civilization.

The megalopolis reproduced themselves in all the planet. The integrated commercial zones were the territory where they were erected. So it was in North America, where the North American Free Trade Agreement between Canada, the United States and Mexico is no more than the prelude to the fulfillment of an old aspiration of U.S. manifest destiny: “America for Americans”. In South America the path is the same in terms of Mercosur between Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. In Northern Africa, with the Union of Arab States (UMA) between Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Mauritania; in south Africa, in the Near East, in the Black Sea, in Pacific Asia, etc., all over the planet the financial bombs explode and territories are re-conquered.

Do the megalopolis substitute the nations? No, or not only. They also include them and reassign their functions, limits and possibilities. Entire nations are converted into departments of the neoliberal megacompany. Neoliberalism thus operated **Destruction/Depopulation** on the one hand, and **Reconstruction/Reorganisation** on the other, of regions and of nations in order to open new markets and renovate the existing ones.

If the nuclear bombs have a dissuasive, coercive, and intimidating character in World War III, in the IV global conflagration the financial hyperbombs play the same role. These weapons serve to attack territories (National States) **Destroying** the material bases of national sovereignty (all the ethical, judicial, political, cultural and historic obstacles against economic globalization) and producing a qualitative depopulation on their territories. This depopulation consists in detaching all those who are useless to the new market economy (as are the indigenous). But, in addition to this, the financial centers operate, simultaneously a **Reconstruction** of the National States and they **Reorganize** them according to the new logic of the global market (the developed economic models are imposed upon weak or non-existing social relations).

The IV World War in rural areas, for example, produces this effect. Rural renovation, demanded by the financial markets, tries to increase agricultural productivity, but what it does is to destroy traditional economic and social relations. The results: a massive exodus from the countryside to the cities. Yes, just as in a war. Meanwhile, in the urban zones the market is saturated with labor and the unequal distribution of salaries is the “justice” which await those who seek better conditions of life.

Examples which illustrate this strategy fill the indigenous world. Ian Chambers, director of the Office for Central America of the ILO (of the United Nations), declared that the indigenous population of the world, estimated at 300 million, live in zones which have 60% of the natural resources of the planet.

Therefore the “*Multiple conflicts due to the use and final destination of their lands as determined by the interest of governments and companies is not surprising ... The exploitation of natural resources (oil and minerals) and tourism are the principal industries which threaten indigenous territories in America*” (interview with Martha Garcia in “*La Jornada*”. May 28, 1997). Behind the investment projects comes the pollution, prostitution and drugs. In other words, the reconstruction/reorganization of the destruction/depopulation of the zone.

In this new world war, modern politics as the organizer of National States no longer exists. Now politics is solely the economic organizer and politicians are the modern administrators of companies. The new owners of the world are not government, they don't need to be. The “national” governments are in charge of administering the businesses in the different regions of the world.

This is the “new world order”, the unification of the entire world in one complete market. Nations are department stores with CEO's dressed as governments, and the new

regional alliances, economic and political, come closer to being a modern commercial “mall” than a political federation. The “unification” produced by neoliberalism is economic, it is the unification of markets to facilitate the circulation of money and merchandise. In the gigantic global Hypermarket merchandise circulates freely, not people.

As in all business initiatives (and war), this economic globalization is accompanied by a general model of thought. Nevertheless, among so many new things, the ideological model which accompanies neoliberalism in its conquest of the planet is old and moss-covered. The “*American way of life*” which accompanied the Northamerican troops in Europe during World War II, and in Vietnam during the 60's and more recently, in the Persian Gulf War, now goes hand in hand (or hand in computers) with the financial markets.

This is not only about material destruction of the material bases of the National States, but also (and in a very important and rarely-studied manner) about historic and cultural destruction. The dignity of indigenous history of the countries of the American continent, the brilliance of European civilization, the historic wisdom of Asian nations, and the powerful and rich antiquity of Africa and Oceania, all the cultures and histories which forged nations are attacked by the model of Northamerican life. Neoliberalism in this way imposes a total war: the destruction of nations and groups of nations in order to homogenize them with the Northamerican capitalist model.

A war then, a world war, the IV. The worst and cruelest. The one which neoliberalism unleashes in all places and by all means against humanity.

But, as in all wars, there are combats, winners and losers, and torn pieces of that destroyed reality. In order to construct the absurd jigsaw puzzle of the neoliberal world many pieces are necessary. Some can be found among the ruins this world war has left on the planetary surface. At least 7 of these pieces can be reconstructed and can fan the hope that this world conflict not end with the death of the weakest rival: humanity.

Seven pieces to draw, color, cut, and arrange, next to others to form the global jigsaw puzzle.

The first is the double accumulation, of wealth and poverty, at the two poles of global society. The other is the total exploitation of the totality of the world. The third is the nightmare of the migrant part of humanity. The fourth is the nauseating relationship between crime and Power. The fifth is the violence of the State. The sixth is the mystery of megapolitics. The seventh is the multi-forms of pockets of resistance of hu-

manity against neoliberalism.

FIRST PIECE

The concentration of wealth and the distribution of poverty.

The first figure can be constructed by drawing a dollar sign.

In the history of humanity, different social models have fought to hoist the absurd as a distinctive world orders. Surely, neoliberalism will have a place of privilege at the time of the awards, because its “distribution” of social wealth does no more than distribute a double absurdity of accumulation: the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few, and the accumulation of poverty in millions of human beings. In the actual world, injustice and inequality are distinctive characteristics. Planet earth, third of the solar planetary system, has 5 billion people. Of them, only 500 million live with comfort while 4 1/2 billion live in poverty and levels of subsistence.

Doubly absurd is the distribution among rich and poor: the rich are few and the poor are many. The quantitative difference is criminal, but the balance between the two extremes is secured with wealth: the rich supplement their small numbers with millions upon millions of dollars. The fortune of the 358 wealthiest people of the world (thousands of millions of dollars) is superior to the annual income of 45% of the poorest inhabitants, something like 2 1/2 billion people.

The gold chains of the financial watches are converted into a heavy chain for millions of beings. Meanwhile the “total number of transactions of General Motors is larger than the Gross National Product of Denmark, that of Ford is larger than the GNP of South Africa, and that of Toyota far surpasses the GNP of Norway” (Ignacio Ramonet, In LMD 1/1997 #15). For all workers real salaries have fallen, in addition to having to survive the personnel cuts in companies, the closing of factories and the relocation of workplaces. In the so-called “advanced capitalist economies” the number of unemployed has arrived at a total of 41 million workers.

Little by little, the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few and the distribution of poverty among many begins to trace the profile of modern global society: the fragile equilibrium of absurd inequalities.

The decadence of the neoliberal economic is a scandal: “The world debt (combining that of all companies, governments and administrations) has surpassed 33 trillion dollars, or 130% of

the global GNP, and grows at a rate of 6 to 8% per year, more than 4 times the growth of the global GNP” (Frederic F. Clairmont. “Ces deux cents societes qui controlent le monde”, in LMD, IV/1997.

The progress of the great transnationals does not imply the advancement of developed Nations. To the contrary, while the great financial giants earn more, poverty sharpens in the so-called “rich nations”.

The chasm between the rich and poor is brutal and no tendency appears to the contrary, indeed it continues. Far from lessening, we won’t say eliminating it, the social inequality is accentuated, above all in the developed capitalist nations: in the United States, 1% of the wealthiest Americans have conquered 61.6% of the total national wealth between 1983 and 1989. 80% of the poorest Northamericans share only 1.2% of the wealth. In Great Britain the number of homeless has grown; the number of children who survive on social welfare has gone from 7% in 1979 to 26% in 1994, the number of British who live in poverty (defined as less than half of minimum wage) has gone from 5 million to 13,700,000; 10% of the poorest have lost 13% of their purchasing power, while 10% of the richest have gained 65% and in a period of the past 5 years the number of millionaires has doubled (statistics from LMD,IV/97).

At the beginning of the decade of the 90’s “...an estimated 37,000 transnational companies held, with their 170,000 subsidiaries, the international economy in its tentacles.” Nevertheless, the center of power situates itself in the most restrictive circle of the first 200: since the beginnings of the 80’s, they have had an uninterrupted expansion through mergers and “rescue” buy-outs of companies.

In this way, the part of transnational capital in the global GNP has gone from 17% in the

middle of the 60’s to 24% in 1982 and more than 30% in 1995. The first 200 are conglomerates whose planetary activities cover with distinction the primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors: great agricultural exploitation, manufacturing production, financial services, commercial, etc. Geographically, they are divided amongst 10 countries: Japan (62), the United States (53), Germany (23), France (19), United Kingdom (11), Switzerland (8), South Korea (6), Italy (5), and others (4)”. (Frederic F. Clairmont, Op.Cit.).

\$\$ Here you have the symbol of economic power. Now paint it the green of the dollar. Don’t worry about the nauseating odor, the aroma of manure, mud, and blood which it carries since its birth...

SECOND PIECE

The globalization of exploitation

The second piece is constructed by drawing a triangle.

One of the fallacies of neoliberalism is that economic growth of the companies brings with it a better distribution of wealth and a growth in employment. But this is not so. In the same way as the growth of political power of a king does not bring as a consequence a growth of political power of the subjects (to the contrary), the absolute power of financial capital does not better the distribution of wealth nor does it create major employment for society. Poverty, unemployment and instability of labor are its structural consequences.

During the years of the decades of 1960 and 70’s, the population considered poor (with less than a dollar a day of income for their basic necessities, according to the World Bank) was about 200 million people. By the beginning of the decade of the 90’s this number was about 2 billion. In addition to this the “mainstay of the 200 most important companies of the planet represent more than a quarter of the world’s economic activity; and yet these 200 companies employ only 18.8 million employees, or less than 0.75% of the world’s labor force.” Ignacio Ramonet in LMD. January 1997, #15).

More poor human beings and an increase in the level of impoverishment, less rich and an increase in the level of wealth, these are the lessons of the outline of the First Piece of the neoliberal jigsaw puzzle. To achieve this absurdity, the world’s capitalist system “modernizes” production, circulation and the consumption of merchandise. The new technological revolution (the information revolution) and the new political revolution (the emerging megalopolis on the ruins of the National States). This social “revolution is no more than a

Country	Number of Companies	Businesses	Profit (billions)	% of Global Businesses	% of Global Profit
Japan	62	3,196	46	40.7%	18.3%
USA	53	1,198	98	25.4%	39.2%
Germany	23	786	24.5	10.0%	9.8%
France	19	572	16	7.3%	6.3%
U.K.	11	275	20	3.5%	8.0%
Switzerland	8	244	9.7	3.7%	3.9%
South Korea	6	183	3.3	2.3%	1.4%
Italy	5	171	6	2.5%	2.5%
UK/ *Lower Countries	2	159	9	2.0%	3.7%
*Lower Countries	4	118	3	1.3%	2.0%
Venezuela	1	26	3	0.3%	1.2%
Sweden	1	24	1.3	0.3%	0.3%
Belgium/*Lower Countries	1	22	0.8	0.3%	0.3%
Mexico	1	22	1.5	0.3%	0.6%
China	1	19	0.8	0.3%	0.3%
Brazil	1	18	4.3	0.2%	1.7%
Canada	1	17	0.5	0.2%	0.2%
Total	200	7,850	251	100%	100%
Global GNP			25,223		31.30%

readjustment, a reorganization of the social forces, principally the labor force."

The Economically Active Population on a global level went from 1,376 million in 1960 to 2,374 million workers in 1990. More human beings with the capacity to work, in other words, to generate wealth.

But the "new world order" not only rearranges this new labor force in geographic and productive spaces, it also re-orders its place (or lack of a place, as in the case of the unemployed and subemployed) in the globalizing plan of the economy.

The World Population employed by sector was substantially changed in the last 20 years. In fishing and agriculture it went from 22% in 1970 to 12% in 1990; in manufacturing from 25% in 1970 to 22% in 1990; while in the tertiary sector (commerce, transport, banking and services) it grew from 42% in 1970 to 57% in 1990; while the population employed in the agricultural and fishing sector fell from 30% in 1970 to 15% in 1990. (Statistics from "The Labor Force in the World Market in Contemporary Capitalism". Ochoa Chi, Juanita del Pilar. UNAM. Economy. Mexico, 1997).

This means that each time more workers are channeled towards the necessary activities to increase production or to accelerate the elaboration of merchandise. The neoliberal system operates in this way like a mega-boss, conceiving the world market as a single company, administered with "modernizing" criteria.

But neoliberal modernity appears more like the beastly birth of capitalism as a world system, than like utopic "rationality". "Modern" capitalist production continues to base itself in the labor of children, women and migrant workers. Of the 1 billion, 148 million children in the world, at least 100 million of them live in the streets and almost 200 million of them work. It is expected that 400 million of them will be working by the year 2000. It is said as well that 146 million Asian children labor in the production of auto parts, toys, clothing, food, tools and chemicals. But this exploitation of child labor does not only exist in underdeveloped countries, 40% of English children and 20% of French children also work in order to complete the family income or to survive. In the "pleasure" industry there is also a place for children. The UN estimates that each year a million children enter sexual trafficking (Statistics in Ochoa Chi, J. Op. Cit.).

The neoliberal beast invades all the social world homogenizing even the lines of food production "In global terms if we observe particularities in the food consumption of each region (and its interior), the process of homogenization which is being imposed is evident, including over those physiological-cultural differences of the different zones." ("World Market of means of Subsistence.

1960-1990. Ocampo Figueroa, Nashelly, and Flores Mondragon, Gonzalo. UNAM. Economy.1994).

This beast imposes upon humanity a heavy burden. The unemployment and the instability of millions of workers all over the world is a cutting reality which has no horizons and no signs of lessening. Unemployment in the countries which make up the Organization for Cooperation and economic Development went from 3.8% in 1966 to 6.3% in 1990. In Europe alone it went from 2.2% in 1966 to 6.4% in 1990.

The imposition of the laws of the market all over the world, the global market, have done nothing but destroy small and medium-size businesses. Upon the disappearance of local and regional markets, the small and medium-size producers see themselves without protection and without any possibility of competing against gigantic transnationals.

The results: massive bankruptcy of companies.

The consequence; millions of unemployed workers.

The absurdity of neoliberalism repeats itself: growth in production does not generate employment, on the contrary, it destroys it. The UN calls this stage "Growth without employment."

But the nightmare does not end there. In addition to the threat of unemployment workers must confront precarious working conditions. Major on-the-job instability, longer working days and poor salaries, are consequences of globalization in general and the "tertiary" tendency of the economy (the growth of the "service" sector) in particular. "In the countries under domination, the labor force suffers a precarious reality: extreme mobility, jobs without contracts, irregular salaries and generally inferior to the vital minimum and regimes with emaciated retirement benefits, independent activities which are not declared and have hit-and-miss salaries, in other words, servitude or forced labor within populations which are supposedly protected such as children" (Alain Morice. "Foreign workers, advance sector of instability." LMD. January 1997).

The consequences of all this translates itself into a bottoming out of global reality. The reorganization of productive processes and the circulation of merchandise and readjustment of productive forces, produce a peculiar excess: left-over human beings, not necessary for the "new world order", who do not produce, or consume, who do not use credit, in sum, who are disposable.

Each day, the great financial centers impose their laws to nations and groups of nations in all the world They reorder and readjust their inhabitants. And, at the end of the operation, they find they have "left-over" people. "They fire upon the volume of the ex-



cess population, which is not only subjected to the brunt of the most cruel poverty, but which does not matter, which is loose and separate, and whose only end is to wander through the streets without a fixed direction, without housing or work, without family or social relations-with a minimal stability—, whose only company are its cardboard and plastic bags" (Fernandez Duran, Ramon. "Against the Europe of capital and economic globalization". Talasa. Madrid, 1996).

Economic globalization "made necessary a decline in real salaries at the international level, which together with the reduction of social costs (health, education, housing and food) and an anti-union climate, came to constitute the fundamental part of the new neoliberal politics of capitalist reactivation" (Ocampo F. and Flores M. Op. Cit.).

THE THIRD PIECE

Migration, the errant nightmare

The third figure is constructed by drawing a circle.

We spoke beforehand of the existence of new territories, at the end of the Third World War, which awaited conquest (the old socialist countries), and of others which should have been re-conquered by the "new world order". In order to achieve it, the financial centers carried out a criminal and brutal third strategy; the proliferation of "regional wars" and "internal conflicts", which mobilized great masses of workers and allowed capital to follow routes of atypical accumulation.

The results of this world war of conquest was a great ring of millions of migrants in all the world "Foreigners" in the world "without borders" which the victors of the Third World War promised. Millions of people suffered xenophobic persecution, precarious labor conditions, loss of cultural identity, police repression, hunger, prison, death.

"From the American Rio Grande to the 'European' Schengen space, a double contradictory tendency is confirmed. On one side the borders are closed officially to the migration of labor, on the other side entire branches of the economy oscillate between

instability and flexibility, which are the most secure means of attracting a foreign labor force" (Alain Morice, Op. Cit.).

With different names, under a judicial differentiation, sharing an equality of misery, the migrants or refugees or displaced of all the world are "foreigners" who are tolerated or rejected. The nightmare of migration, whatever its causes, continues to roll and grow over the planet's surface. The number of people who are accounted for in the statistics of the UN High Commission on Refugees has grown disproportionately from some 2 million in 1975 to 27 million in 1995.

With national borders destroyed (for merchandise) the globalized market organizes the global economy: research and design of goods and services, as well as their circulation and consumption are thought of in intercontinental terms. For each part of the capitalist process the "new world order" organizes the flow of the labor force, specialized or not, up to where it is necessary. Far from subjecting itself to the "free flow" so clucked-over by neoliberalism, the employment markets are each day determined more by migratory flows. Where skilled workers are concerned, whose numbers are not significant in the context of global migration, the "crossing of brains" represents a great deal in terms of economic power and knowledge. Nevertheless, whether skilled labor, or unskilled labor, the migratory politics of neoliberalism is oriented more towards destabilizing the global labor market than towards stopping immigration.

The Fourth World War, with its process of destruction/depopulation and reconstruction/reorganization provokes the displacement of millions of people. Their destiny is to continue to wander, with the nightmare at their side, and to offer to employed workers in different nations a threat to their employment stability, an enemy to hide the image of the boss, and a pretext for giving meaning to the racist nonsense promoted by neoliberalism.

This is the symbol of the errant nightmare of global migration, a ring of terror which roams all over the world.

FOURTH PIECE:

Financial globalisation and the globalization of corruption and crime

The fourth figure is constructed by drawing a rectangle

The mass media reward us with an image of the directors of global delinquency: vulgar men and women, dressed outlandishly, living in ridiculous mansions or behind the bars of a jail. But that image hides more than it shows: the real bosses of the modern Mafiosi, or their organization, or their real influence in the political and economic regions are never divulged publicly.

If you think the world of delinquency is synonymous with the world beyond the grave

and darkness, you are mistaken. During the period called the "Cold War", organized crime acquired a more respectable image and began to function like any other modern company. It also penetrated the political and economic systems of the national States. With the beginning of the Fourth World War, the implantation of the "new world order" and its accompanying opening of markets, privatization, deregulation of commerce and international finance, organized crime "globalized" its activities as well.

"According to the UN, the annual global income of transnational criminal organizations are about 1000 billion dollars, an amount equivalent to the combined GNP of countries with weak income (according to the categories of the global banks) and its 3 billion inhabitants. This estimate accounts for the product of drug trafficking, the illegal trafficking of arms, contraband of nuclear materials, etc., and the profits of activities controlled by the Mafiosi (prostitution, gambling, black market speculation...). However, this does not measure the importance of investments which are continuously realized by criminal organizations within the sphere of control of legitimate businesses, nor the domination which they exert over the means of production within numerous sectors of the legal economy" (Michel Chossudovsky, "La Corruption mondialisee" in "Geopolitique du Chaos". Op. Cit.).

The criminal organizations of the 5 continents have made theirs the "spirit of global cooperation" and, associated, participate in the conquest and reorganization of the new markets. But they participate not only in criminal activities, but in legal businesses as well. Organized crime invests in legitimate businesses not only to "launder" dirty money, but to make capital for their illegal activities. The preferred business endeavors for this are luxury real estate, the vacation industry, mass media, industry, agriculture, public services and ... banking!

Ali Baba and the 40 bankers? No, something worse. The dirty money of organized crime is utilized by the commercial banks for its activities: loans, investments in financial markets, purchase of bonds for foreign debt, buying and selling of gold and stocks. "In many countries, the criminal organizations have become the creditors of the States and they exert, because of their actions on the markets, an influence over the macroeconomic politics of the governments. Over the stock markets, they invest equally in the speculative markets of finished products and raw materials" (M. Chossudovsky, Op. Cit.)

As if this were not enough, organized crime can count on the so-called fiscal paradises. There are all over the world at least 55 fiscal paradises (One of these, the Cayman Islands, has fifth place in the world as a banking

center and has more banks and registered companies than inhabitants). The Bahamas, the British Virgin Islands, the Bermudas, Saint Martin, Vanuatu, the Cook Islands, Luxembourg, Maurice Island, Switzerland, the Anglo-Normandy Islands, Dublin, Monaco, Gibraltar, Malta, are good places so that organized crime can relate with the great financial companies of the world.

In addition to the "laundering" of dirty money, the fiscal paradises are used to avoid taxes, so they are a point of contact between those who govern, CEO's and capos of organized crime. High technology, applied to finances permits the rapid circulation of money and the disappearance of illegal profits. "The legal and illegal businesses overlap more and more, they introduce a fundamental change in the structures of capitalism of the post-war era. The Mafiosi invest in legal businesses, and inversely, they channel financial resources towards the criminal economy, through the control of banks and commercial companies implicated in the laundering of dirty money or which have relations with criminal organizations. The banks pretend that the transactions are carried out in good faith and their directors ignore the origin of the funds deposited. The rule is to ask no questions, the bank secretary and the anonymity of transactions, all this guarantee the interests of organized crime, they protect the banking institution from public investigations and from blame. Not only do the large banks accept laundered money, in view of their heavy commissions, but they also concede credits to at high interest rates to the Mafiosi, to the detriment of productive industrial or agricultural investments." (M. Chossudovsky, Op. Cit.).

The crisis of the world debt, in the 80's caused the price of prime materials to go down. This caused the underdeveloped countries to dramatically reduce their income. The economic measures dictated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, supposedly to "recuperate" the economy of these countries, only sharpened the crisis of the legal businesses. As a consequence, the illegal economy has developed in order to fill the vacuum left by the fall of national markets.

In accordance with a report by the United Nations, "The intrusion of the crime syndicates has been facilitated by the structural adjustment programs with the indebted countries have been obliged to accept in order to access the loans of the International Monetary Fund" (United Nations. "La Globalization du Crime" New York, 1995).

So here you have the rectangular mirror where legality and illegality exchange reflections.

On which side of the mirror is the criminal? On which side of the mirror is the one who prosecutes the criminal?

FIFTH PIECE

The legitimate violence of an illegitimate power?

The Fifth Piece is constructed by drawing a pentagon.

The State, in neoliberalism, tends to shrink to the “*indispensable minimum*”. The so-called “*Benefactor State*” does not only become obsolete, it separates itself of all it was made up of as such, and it remains naked.

In the cabaret of globalization, the State shows itself as a table dancer that strips of everything until it is left with only the minimum indispensable garments: the repressive force. With its material base destroyed, its possibilities of sovereignty annulled, its political classes blurred, the Nation States become, more or less rapidly, a security apparatus of the megacorporations that neoliberalism builds in the development of this Fourth World War. Instead of directing public investment towards social spending, the Nation States, prefer to improve their equipment, armaments and training in order to fulfill with efficiency a duty that its politics could no longer carry out some years hence: control of society.

The “*professionals of legitimate violence*” as the repressive apparatus of the modern states call themselves. But, what is there to do if violence is already under the laws of the market? Where is the legitimate violence and where is the illegitimate? What monopoly of violence can the battered Nation States pretend if the free game of supply and demand defies that monopoly? Didn't the Fourth Piece demonstrate that organized crime, governments and financial centers are more than well related? Isn't it evident that organized crime counts on real armies which have no borders except the fire power of its rival? And so the “*monopoly of violence*” does not belong to the Nation States. The modern market has put it on sale. . .

This is taken into account because under the polemic between legitimate and illegitimate violence, there is also the dispute (false, I think) between “*rational*” and “*irrational*” violence.

A certain sector of the world's intellectuals (I insist that their duty is more complex than to simply be of the “*left or right*”, “*pro-government or opposition*”, “*good etcetera or bad etcetera*”) pretends that violence can be exerted in a “*rational*” manner, administered in a selective way, (there are those, also, who to something like the “*Market technology of violence*”), and can be applied with the ability “*of a surgeon*” against the evils of society. Something like this inspired the last stage of arms policy in the United States: precise “*surgical*” weapons, and military operations like the scalpel of the “*new world order*”. This is how the new “*smart bombs*” were born (which, as a reporter who covered Desert Storm told me, are not that in-

telligent and have difficulty distinguishing between a hospital and a missile depository. When in doubt, the smart bombs don't abstain, they destroy). Anyway, as the compañeros of the Zapatista communities would say, the Persian Gulf is farther than the state capital of Chiapas (although the situation of the Kurds has horrifying similarities with the indigenous of a country who praises itself as “*democratic and free*”), and so let us not insist on “*that*” war when we have “*ours*”.

And so the struggle between rational and irrational violence opens an interesting and lamentable path of discussion, it is not useless in present times. We could take for example what is understood as rational. If the response is that it is the “*reason of the State*” (assuming that this exists, and that above all, one would be able to recognize some reason in the actual neoliberal state) and then one can ask if this “*reason of the state*” corresponds to the “*reason of society*” (always assuming that today's society retains some reason and furthermore if the rational violence of the state is rational to the society. Here there is no point in rambling (idly), the “*rationale of the state*” in modern times is none other than the “*rationale of the financial markets*”.

But, how does the modern state administer its “*rational violence*”? And, paying attention to history, how much time does this rationality last? The time it takes between one election and another or coup (depending on the case)? How many acts of violence by the State, that were applauded as “*rational*” during that time, are now irrational?

Lady Margaret Thatcher, of “*acceptable*” memory for the British people, took the time to prologue the book “*The Next War*” of Caspar Weinberg and Peter Schweizer (Regnery Publishing, Inc. Washington, D.C. 1996).

In this text Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, advances some reflections about the three similarities between the world of the Cold War and that of the Post Cold War: The first of these is that the “*free world*” will never lack potential aggressors. The second is the necessity of the military superiority of the “*democratic*” states above possible aggressors. The third similarity is that this military superiority should be, above all, technological.

To end her prologue, the so-called “*iron lady*” defines this “*rational violence*” of the modern state by stating: “*A war can take place in different ways. But the worst usually happens because one power believes it can reach its objectives without a war or at least with a limited war that can be won rapidly, resulting in failed calculations.*”

For Mistrs Weinberg and Schweizer the scenes of the “*Future Wars*” are: North Korea and China (April 6, 1998), Iran (April 4, 1999), Mexico (March 7, 2003), Russia

(February 7, 2006), and Arabs, Latinos and Europeans. Almost the entire world is considered a “*possible aggressor of modern democracy*”.

Logic (at least in neoliberal logic): In modern times, the power (that is, financial power) knows that it can only reach its objectives with a war, and not with a limited war that can be won rapidly but with a total war, world wide in every sense. And if we believe the secretary of state Madeleine Albright, when she says: “*One of the primary objectives of our government is to ensure that the economic interests of the United States can extend itself to a planetary scale*” (“*The Wall Street Journal*”. 1/21/1997), we need to understand that all the world (and I mean everything, everything) is the theater of operations of this war.

We should understand then that if the dispute for the “*monopoly of violence*” does not take place according to the laws of the market, but is rejected and defied from the bottom, the world power “*discovers*” in this challenge a “*possible aggressor*”. This is one of the defiances (of the least studied and most condemned among the many it represents), launched by the armed indigenous rebels of the Zapatista National Liberation Army against neoliberalism and for humanity. . .

This is the symbol of North American military power, the pentagon. The new “*world police*” seeks that the “*national*” army and police only be the “*security corps*” that guarantee “*order and progress*” in the neoliberal magapolis.

SIXTH

Megapolitics and the dwarfs

The Sixth Piece is constructed by drawing a scribble.

We said before that Nation States are attacked by the financial centers and “*obligated*” to dissolve within the megalopolis. But neoliberalism not only operates its war “*unifying*” nations and regions, its strategy of destruction/depopulation and reconstruction/reorganization produces one or various fractures in the Nation State. This is the paradox of the Fourth World War: it is made to eliminate borders and “*unite*” nations, yet what it leaves behind is multiplication of the borders and a pulverization of the nations that die in its claws. Beyond the pretexts, ideologies and banners, the current world dynamics of the breaking up of the unity of

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the Nation States responds to a policy; equally universal, that knows it can better exert its power, and create optimum conditions for its reproduction, on top of the ruins of the Nation States.

If someone had doubts about characterizing the process of globalization as a world war, they should discard it when adding up accounts of the conflicts that have been provoked by the collapse of some nation states. Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, USSR are examples of the depth of the crisis that leaves in shreds not only the political and economic foundations of the Nation States but also the social structures. Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia in addition to the present war within the Russian federation with Chechnia as a backdrop, not only mark the outcome of the tragic downfall of the socialist camp in the forbidding arms of the "free world", all over the world this process of national fragmentation repeats itself in variable stages and intensity. There are separatist tendencies in the Spanish state (the Basques, Catalonia and Galicia), in Italy (Padua), in Belgium (Flanders), in France (Corsica), United Kingdom (Scotland, Galic peoples), Canada (Quebec). And there are more examples in the rest of the world.

We have also referred to the process of the construction of the megalopolis, now we talk of fragmentation of countries. Both processes are based upon the destruction of the Nation States. Is it about two parallel, independent processes? Two facets of the globalization process? Are they symptoms of a megacrisis about to explode? Are they merely isolated cases?

We think it is about an inherent contradiction to the process of globalization, one of the essences of the neoliberal model. The elimination of commercial borders, the universality of tele-communications, the information super highways, the omnipresence of the financial centers, the international agreements of economic unity, in short, the process of globalization as a whole produces, by liquidating the nation states, a pulverization of the internal markets. These do not disappear or are diluted in the international markets, but consolidate their fragmentation and multiply. It may sound contradictory, but globalization produces a fragmented world, full of isolated pieces (and often pieces which confront each other). A world full of stagnant compartments, communicating barely by fragile economic bridges (in any case as constant as the weathervane which is finance capital). A world of broken mirrors reflecting the useless world unity of the neoliberal puzzles.

But neoliberalism not only fragments the world it pretends to unite, it also produces the political economic center that conducts this war. And yes, as we referred to before, the financial centers impose their (laws of



the market) to nations and grouping of nations, and so we should redefine the limits and reaches pursued by the policy, in other words, duties of political work. It is convenient than to speak of Megapolitics. Here is where the "world order" would be decided.

And when we say "megapolitics" we don't refer to the number of those who move in them. There are a few, very few, who find themselves in this "megasphere". Megapolitics globalizes national politics, in other words, it subjects it to a direction that has global interests (that for the most part are contradictory to national interests) and whose logic is that of the market, which is to say, of economic profit. With this economist (and criminal) criteria, wars, credits, selling and buying of merchandise, diplomatic acknowledgements, commercial blocks, political supports, migration laws, coups, repressions, elections, international political unity, political ruptures and investments are decided upon. In short the survival of entire nations.

The global power of the financial centers is so great, that they can afford not to worry about the political tendency of those who hold power in a nation, if the economic program (in other words, the role that nation has in the global economic megaprogram) remains unaltered. The financial disciplines

impose themselves upon the different colors of the world political spectrum in regards to the government of any nation. The great world power can tolerate a leftist government in any part of the world, as long as the government does not take measures that go against the needs of the world financial centers. But in no way will it tolerate that an alternative economic, political and social organization consolidate. For the megapolitics, the national politics are dwarfed and submit to the dictates of the financial centers. It will be this way until the dwarfs rebel . .

You have here the figure that represents the megapolitics. You will understand that it is useless to try to find within it a rationality and even if you untangle it, nothing will be clear.

SEVENTH PIECE:

The pockets of resistance

The seventh figure can be constructed by drawing a pocket

"To begin with, I beg you not to confuse Resistance with political opposition. The opposition does not oppose power but a government, and its achieved and complete form is that of a party of opposition: while resistance, by definition (now useful) cannot be a party: it is not made to govern at its time, but to...resist."

Tomas Segovia. "Allegations". Mexico, 1996.

The apparent infallibility of globalization clashes with the stubborn disobedience to reality. At the same time as neoliberalism carries out its world war, all over the world groups of those who will not conform take shape, nuclei of rebels. The empire of financial pockets confront the rebellion of the pockets of resistance.

Yes, pockets. Of all sizes, of all colors, of the most varied forms. Their only similarity is their resistance to the "new world order" and the crime against humanity that the neoliberal war carries out.

Upon its attempt to impose its economic, political, social and cultural model, neoliberalism pretends to subjugate millions of human beings, and do away with all those who do not have a place in its new distribution of the world. But as it turns out these "disposable" ones rebel and they resist against the power who wants to eliminate them. Women, children, the elderly, the indigenous, the ecologists, homosexuals, lesbians, HIV positives, workers and all those men and women who are not only "left over" but who "bother" the established order and world progress rebel, and organize and struggle. Knowing they are equal yet different, the excluded ones from "modernity" begin to weave their resistance against the process of destruction/depopulation and reconstruction/reorganization which is carried out as a world war, by neoliberalism.

In Mexico, for example, the so-called "Program of Integrated Development for the Isthmus of Tehuantepec" pretends to construct a modern international center of distribution and assembly for products. The development zone covered an industrial complex which would refine the third part of Mexican crude oil and elaborate 88% of petrochemical products. The routes of interoceanic transit will consist of highways, a water route following the natural curve of the zone (the river Coatzacoalcos) and as an articulating center, the trans-isthmus railroad line (in the hands of 5 companies, 4 from the United States and one from Canada). The project would be an assembly zone under the regime of twin plants.

Two million residents of the place will become stevedores, assembly line workers, or railway guards (Ana Esther Cecena. "El Istmo de Tehuantepec: frontera de la soberanía nacional". "La Jornada del Campo", May 28, 1997.) In Southeast Mexico as well, in the Lacandon Jungle the "Program for Sustainable Regional Development for the Lacandon Jungle" begins operations. Its final objective is to place at the feet of capital the indigenous lands which, in addition to being rich in dignity and history, are also rich in oil and uranium.

The visible results of all these projects will be, among others, the fragmentation of Mexico (separating the southeast from the rest of the country). In addition to this, and now we speak of war, the projects have counterinsurgency implications. They make up a part of a pincer to liquidate the antineoliberal rebellion which exploded in 1994. In the middle stand the indigenous rebels of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN).

(A parenthesis is now convenient in the theme of indigenous rebels: the Zapatistas think that, in Mexico (attention: in Mexico) the recuperation and defense of national sovereignty is part of an antineoliberal revolution. Paradoxically, the EZLN is accused of pretending to fragment the Mexican nation. The reality is that the only ones who have spoke of separatism are the businessmen of the state of Tabasco (rich in oil) and the federal deputies of Chiapas who belong to the PRI. The Zapatistas think that the defense of the national state is necessary I view of globalization, and that the attempts to slice Mexico to pieces comes from the governing group and not from the just demands for autonomy for the Indian Peoples. The EZLN, and the best of the national indigenous movement, does not want the Indian peoples to separate from Mexico, but to be recognized as part of the country with their differences.

Not only that, they want a Mexico with democracy, liberty and justice. The paradoxes continue because while the EZLN struggle for the defense of national sovereignty, the Mexican Federal Army struggles against that defense and defends a government who has destroyed the material bases of national sovereignty and given the country, not just to powerful foreign capital, but to the drug traffickers).

But resistance does not only exist in the mountains of Southeast Mexico against neoliberalism. In other parts of Mexico, in Latin America, in the United States and Canada, in the Europe which belongs to the Treaty of Maastricht, in Africa, in Asia, in Oceania, the pockets of resistance multiply. Each one of them has its own history its differences, its equalities, its demands, its struggles, its accomplishments.

If humanity still has hope of survival, of being better, that hope is in the pockets formed by the excluded ones, the left-overs, the ones who are disposable.

This is a model for a pocket of resistance, but don't pay too much attention to it. There are as many models as there are resistances, and as many worlds as in the world. So draw the model you prefer. As far as this things about the pockets is concerned, they are rich in diversity, as are the resistances.

There are, no doubt, more pieces of the neoliberal jigsaw puzzle. For example: the mass media, culture, pollution, pandemics. We only wanted to show you here the profiles of 7 of them.

These 7 are enough so that you, after you draw, color and cut them out, can see that it is impossible to put them together. And this is the problem of the world which globalization pretends to construct:

the pieces don't fit.

For this and other reasons which do not fit into the space of this text, it is necessary to make a new world.

A world where many worlds fit, where all worlds fit...

From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast, Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos Zapatista Army of National Liberation Mexico, June of 1997.

P.S. Which tells of dreams that nest in love. The sea rests at my side. It shares with me since some time ago anguish, doubts and many dreams, but now it sleeps with me in the hot night of the jungle. I look at its agitated wheat in sleep and I marvel once again at how I have found her as always; lukewarm, fresh and at my side. The asphyxia makes me get out of bed and takes my hand and the pen to bring back Old Man Antonio as was years ago...

I have asked that Old Man Antonio accompany me in an exploration to the river below. We have no more than a little bit of cornmeal to eat. For hours we follow those capricious channels and the hunger and the heat press on us. All afternoon we spend after a drove of wild boar. It is almost nightfall when we catch up with them, but a huge mountain pig breaks away from the group and attacks us. I quickly take out all my military knowledge by dropping my weapon and climbing up the nearest tree. Old Man Antonio remains defenseless before the attack, but instead of running, goes behind a grove of reeds. The giant pig runs frontally and with all its strength against the reeds, and becomes entangled in the thorns and the vines. Before it is able to free itself, Old Man Antonio picks up his old musket and shoots it in the head, settling supper for that day.

At dawn, after I have finished cleaning my modern automatic weapon (an M-16, 5.56 mm. Caliber, with cadence selector and effective reach of 460 meters, in addition to telescopic sight, tripod and a 60 shot drum clip), I wrote in my military journal, omitting the above: "Ran into a pig and A. killed one. 350 m. above sea level. It didn't rain."

While we waited for the meat to cook I told Old Man Antonio that the part which I would get, would serve for the parties being prepared back at the camp. "Parties?" he asked as he tended the fire. "Yes" I said "No matter the month, there's always something to celebrate." Afterwards I continue with what I supposed would be a brilliant dissertation about the historic calendar and the Zapatista celebrations. In silence I listened to Old Man Antonio, and assuming it did not interest him, I settled in to sleep.

Between dreams I saw Old Man Antonio take my notebook and write something. I the morning, we gave out the meat after breakfast and each one took to the road. In our camp, I report to my superior and show him the logbook so he'll know what happened. "That's not your writing" I'm told as he shows me a page from the notebook. There, at the end of what I had written that day, Old Man Antonio had written in large letters:

"If you cannot have both reason and strength, always choose to have reason and let the enemy have all the strength. In many battles strength can obtain the victory, but in all the struggle only reason can win. The powerful can never extract reason from his strength, but we can always obtain strength from reason".

And below in smaller letters "Happy parties." It's obvious, I wasn't hungry anymore. The parties, as always, were very joyful. "The one with the red ribbon" was still, happily, very far from the hit parade of the Zapatistas..

Fair Trade Organic Coffee from Chiapas

In July of 2000, one bag (69 kilos) of green coffee beans from the Mut Vitz co-operative in Chiapas finally arrived in Ireland. It was roasted in Galway at the Galway Coffee Company and subsequently received much praise for its quality from all who tried it. Samples were given to various coffee sellers who are very interested in the coffee, but I found that it is very difficult to make a deal and sell something to somebody if you are not sure that you can supply the product. Importing coffee requires a lot of capital, and storage space.

It is hoped that there will be a constant supply available, at least in Galway. From this point we will be able to expand and follow up on the connections that were made this year.

Keith

Mut Vitz Coffee Co-operative

The communities which are linked together to make up the Mut Vitz co-operative live in the mountainous regions of the highlands of Chiapas, southern Mexico, in the following six municipalities: El Bosque, (Autonomous Municipality of San Juan de la Libertad) Simojovel, Bochil, Jitotol, San Andrés Sacam'chén Chenalhó.

There are around 1000 producers in the co-op with an annual estimate of total coffee production which exceeds 690 tonnes.

The Mut Vitz co-operative is made up of indigenous Tzotzil farmers. Mut Vitz is recognised under Mexican law and has recently acquired its export licence.

At this time, the producers are in a period of transition from traditional 'natural production' to 'organic certification', both being methods which place particular attention on sustainable practices for cultivation and development of coffee.

Mut Vitz co-ordinates a network of 48 organic promoters, working in 24 communities. They are involved in a participative process of transfer of 'know-how' of organic coffee production. The promoters have already made large advances towards consolidating their own organisational structure and local leadership.

Because of the governmental attacks suffered by the population of this mountainous zone, the producers have moved to create alternative social and economic structures to develop their communities.

A critical aspect in the creation of alternative economic models which help in the search for social ends for justice, democracy, sustainability, and also to cover the most basic necessities of the people; food, health, local infrastructure, is the sale of their coffee on the Fair trade Market.

Local Initiatives for sustainable Development

Co-ops like Mut Vitz are examples of the level of local initiative which exists, working in conditions which allow them to struggle for a change in relation to Indigenous rights and human dignity in Chiapas.

The principle objectives of the program for co-operative development and the betterment of production by organic practices include:

- Improve knowledge of appropriate

technology for organic production.

- Improve potential for selling at Fair Trade price on national and international markets.
- Improve the infrastructure of each member and collectively of the co-operative to guarantee strict quality control and lower cost of processing, transportation and care of the coffee.
- Improve the general and economic well being of each member and their families.

The producers of Mut Vitz continue to be enthusiastic, despite the political and economic challenges that confront them. The members of autonomous initiatives continually find themselves under threat of attack.

Since the beginning of 1995, starting with the invasion of the Lacandon Jungle by Mexican Federal Army and continuing with the current situation of 'low-intensity war' against the indigenous people of Chiapas. Organisations that maintain independence from the party in office live under constant intimidation, aggression and threats.

This has, of course created a series of obstacles to each and every proposal for community development. However, the members have not become disheartened with continuing to pursue their co-operative and economic goals.

This is why the self sufficient model, in respect to production by the indigenous community in

**FAIR TRADE
ORGANIC
COFFEE**

100% Chiapaneco Coffee - Caf_ **Mut Vitz**, grown by the people of the autonomous communities of the highlands of Chiapas, Mexico.

100% Arabica Beans. Grown in Chiapas. Roasted in Galway.

- Produced using traditional ecological methods with respect for the environment and the coffee itself.
- Direct from the producers. First hand fair trade certification.
- Buying this coffee will help support further imports to Europe, thereby aiding the Mut Vitz co-operative to combat the severe political and economic challenges that confront them.
- Available green, roasted, or ground from the Galway Coffee company in Galway, email enquiries to coffeeproject@nada.buz.org



resistance has drawn attention from the government, paramilitary groups and coffee plantation owners to the members of Mut Vitz.

19th September 2000, Solidarid Directa con Chiapas, Zürich, Switzerland.

Last year we followed with extreme worry, the wave of attacks suffered by the Mut Vitz producers. We feel the need to raise our voice to report the deaths of the following members of Mut Vitz:

13 January 2000

Martín Sánchez Hernández Chabajeval

1st February 2000

Rodolfo Gómez, Martín Gómez, Lorenzo Pérez Hernández, Chabajeval

16th February 2000

Manuel Nuñez Gómez Bochil, La Lagunita

25th July 2000

Pascual Sánchez Gomez, Chabajeval

9th September 2000

Marcos Ruiz Hernández, San Antonio El Brillante

We join in the pain of these communities, and we send them our support and love,

S26 - Zapatistas take Prague?

Under a sweltering sun in early Autumn, Czech riot police stand guard over a huge concrete roadbridge that looms over a valley in the ancient city of Prague. Grim-faced and probably sweltering in their black uniforms, the cops are facing off several thousand protestors who are determined to cross the bridge and force their way into the conference centre where the World Bank is holding yet another annual meeting/publicity stunt. Cameras flash routinely in their faces: this is a first-rate photo opportunity for the assembled journos from both the big TV stations and the self-proclaimed Indymedia. On September 26th 2000, this is the new and loveable face of global democracy. Behind the police is a line of tanks, then the rest of the bridge is blocked up with police transport buses. It's a long way across.

The valley below is filled with clouds of teargas where another strand of the many-headed demonstration has attempted to break through the lines. Prague has been turned into a battlefield again, although no shots have been fired on either side. This despite assurances that all of the police have been issued with live ammunition and are ready to use it.

Today is a Tuesday, but most of the demonstrators have been in the city since last Friday. Exchanging ideas at the counter-summit, where an impressive array of speakers from around the world have been brought together to bear witness to the new slogan of our times: "Our resistance is as global as your capital." From sociologists to musicians to webmasters to journalists, as well as dozens of contributions from the floor, this has been a barrage of new thinking from some of the best-informed people on the planet. Remarkable not only because of the wealth of experiences represented there, but also because of the convergence between them that grows from one hour to the next. There's something happening here. You'd have to be a rare cynic indeed not to sense it, though there are the inevitable ironies too. At the coffee dock in the counter summit people have been learning Czech because if you order in English, they give you Nescafe.

Not far from Wenceslas Square, where Jan Palach set himself alight in protest over 30 years ago, Jubilee 2000 have been holding their own meetings. A survivor of the Union Carbide accident at Bhopal in India invites us to join him in a minute's laughter at the very notion of the world's poorest people making debt repayments to the countries and the companies which owe them such a staggering ecological debt. An indigenous person from Colombia moves many of the audience to tears when he speaks of the relentless injustices that have been perpetuated on his people over the last five hundred years. It's an emotional time for us stiff-lipped Europeans, so unused to expressing ourselves

with anything other than the controlled voice of rational, male, enlightened logic. We have so much to learn from these people.

Tuesday's demonstration inevitably has its tears too, given the amount of gas the cops are slinging about, but there is laughter as well. Inexplicably, the area immediately



around the conference centre has been left poorly defended, and now a couple of groups have managed to break through and run up a grassy slope to the building where the delegates are assembled. A company of municipal police run headlong when chased by a huge fairy in a sequined pink dress brandishing a silver wand covered in tinfoil. Well what would you do?

Up on the bridge there is a final charge from a group of Italians dressed completely in white: the Tutti Bianchi. They form part of a group that calls itself "Ya Basta". It's not the first time I hear echoes of the Zapatistas in Prague...



"Ya Basta!" was the cry of thousands of indigenous peasant soldiers as they marched down through the towns of the state of Chiapas on January 1st 1994. This was the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), bursting onto the stage with a flourish on the very day the North American Free Trade Agreement came into effect. Few of these insurrectionaries carried modern weapons; many of them indeed had only painted wooden rifles to point at the soldiers. War had been declared on the Federal Army by some of the poorest people on the continent, on the very day Mexico had supposedly arrived in the "First World".

Five years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Zapatistas took the world very much by surprise. Commentators were soon dubbing them "the first postmodern revolutionaries" and they have had a major impact on political thinking over the last six - seven years. The CIA has conducted a hefty amount of research into their methods, considering their style of "netwar" to be a future trend among resistance groups. Indigenous groups around the Americas have been heartened by their ability to command respect from mestizo politicians. If the defeats suffered by the World Trade Organization and the Bretton Woods bodies at Seattle and Prague are really knock-ons from that rainy night in Chiapas seven years ago, then what's it all about? Have the old icons of Bolivar and Guevara been supplanted by a gang of beardless Indians?

First, let's take a look at the supposed postmodernity of the EZLN. Postmodern ideas are understood by most of us to be all about challenging the frameworks in which the old ideologies of progress - whether Left or Right - are developed. No way of thinking can be understood without reference to the culture that produced it as well as the medium through which we view it. Old certainties are swept aside. One man's meat is another man's poison. My solutions are your worst nightmares. The different languages of love and hate and human happiness are mutually exclusive, and any apparent similarities can be explained by the tinted spectacles our respective cultures impose upon



us. The notion of development is deeply problematic.

Much of this rings bells with the words of the Zapatistas, but it also sounds some very discordant gongs. Indigenism - a philosophy expressed in the writings of Native American intellectuals like Ward Churchill and in the struggles of indigenous peoples around the world - certainly goes against the grain of materialism, exposing it as a colonialist, oppressive mentality. Theirs is the voice that has been excluded throughout all of capitalist/Marxist modernity, and their notion that humans were born to live in harmony with nature rather than to exploit it confronts such thinking head-on.

The Zapatistas do not stop at this, however. The families which support the indigenous revolution in Chiapas are often the very ones that fled from arch-conservative, traditionalist communities in earlier decades. They believe that attempts to ignore change in the larger world can only lead to domination and eventual extermination. Zapatista networking is the obvious consequence of a philosophy that seeks to build links with very different groups around Mexico and around the globe. Even their spokesperson Subcomandante Marcos - a university-educated mestizo - is a kind of bridge to external cultures. It is a non-hierarchical relationship: as Marcos says, the Zapatistas speak "not as the one who imposes his will, but as one who desires a place where everyone fits, not as the one who is alone and feigns a crowd at his side, but as the one who is everyone even in the silent solitude of the one who resists."

The language is that of postmodernism, but the underlying idea is one of unity among all peoples, even at the moment when we are most different. Foucault's idea that

postmodernity is not a historical stage but rather a mood that is thrown up at critical times of flux when former ways of thinking no longer seem adequate, may help to explain the contradiction. Much of Marcos' postmodernism is taken from Cervantes' classic 'Don Quixote' - published in the very early years of the seventeenth century. It is a difficult book to comprehend, for Cervantes seems to sympathise most with his anti-hero even at the very moment he is splitting his sides laughing at him. Modernity within postmodernity?

The serried ranks of black-clad riot police on that bridge in Prague last September were there to defend more than a conference centre and a few thousand delegates from the wrath of a "mob". For the Zapatistas and their ideologues, they were defending the Single Way of Thinking, the model of development prescribed by the West and for the West, the tablets of stone handed down by the World Bank and the IMF and presented to the peoples of the earth as the only valid future. Among the protestors there were a thousand different ways of thinking, ecolo-

gists and feminists and socialists and liberals and anarchists, a thousand different colours and several dozen different languages, but everyone was trying to go pretty much the same place. Across the bridge.

1989 would appear not to have signalled the end of history after all, but perhaps Marx's dialectics have been subsumed into something broader and deeper.

The delegates at the annual conferences - most of whom had come just for the junket - decided not to turn up for the Wednesday, and Thursday was abandoned altogether. For a couple of days at least, the lights went off in the shop window.

Nick



News from Chiapas and the Irish Mexico Group

IMG News is a very low volume mail list of posts selected from the various Chiapas email lists. Most weeks it will only have two or so posts, at times of tension this may rise to 5 or 6. All posts are in English and are selected for accuracy and ease of understanding. All EZLN communiqués are also sent to this list. This is a news only list - there is no discussion.

To subscribe send an email to img_news-subscribe@yahoo.com

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