

Chiapas: The Thirteenth Stele

By Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos

(in which the formation of the Good Government Juntas are announced and explained)

Mexico, July of 2003.

Part One: A Conch

Dawn in the mountains of the Mexican southeast.

Slowly, with an unhurried but continuous movement, the moon allows the dark sheet of night to slip off her body and to finally reveal the erotic nudity of her light. She then reclines across the length of the sky, desirous of looking and being looked at, that is, of touching and being touched. If light does anything, it delineates its opposite, and so, down below, a shadow offers the cloud its hand while murmuring:

"Come with me, look with your heart at what my eyes show you, walk in my steps and dream in my arms. Up above, the stars are making a shell, with the moon as origin and destiny. Look and listen. This is a dignified and rebel land. The men and women who live it are like many men and women in the world. Let us walk, then, in order to look at and listen to them now, while time hovers between night and day, when dawn is queen and lady in these lands.

Take care with that puddle and the mud. Better to follow the tracks which, like in so many other things, are the most knowing. Do you hear that laughter? It is from a couple who are repeating now the ancient rite of love. He murmurs something, and she laughs, she laughs as if she were singing. Then silence, then sighs and muted moans. Or perhaps the other way around, first sighs and moans, afterwards murmurs and laughter. But let's continue on ahead, because love needs no witnesses other than glances turned flesh, and, since it is sunlight regardless of the hour, it also undresses shadows.

Come. Let us sit for a bit and let me tell you things. We are in rebel lands. Here live and fight those who are called "zapatistas." And these zapatistas are very otherly and they despair of more than one of them. Instead of weaving their history with executions, death and destruction, they insist on living. And the vanguards of the world tear at their hair, because, as for "victory or death," these zapatistas neither vanquish nor die, but nor do they surrender, and they despise martyrdom as much as capitulation. Very otherly, it's true. And then there is the one who is said to be their leader, one Sup Marcos, whose public image is closer to that of Cantinflas and Pedro Infante than to Emiliano Zapata's and Ché Guevara's. And it's a waste of time to say that no one will take them seriously that way, because they themselves are the first to joke about their being so otherly.

They are rebel indigenous. Breaking, thus, the traditional preconception, first from Europe and afterwards from all those who are clothed in the color of money, that was imposed on them for looking and being looked at.

And so they do not adapt to the "diabolical" image of those who sacrifice humans to appease the gods, nor to that of the needy indigenous, with his hand extended, expecting crumbs or charity from he who has everything. Nor that of the good savage who is perverted by modernity, nor that of the infant who entertains his elders with gibberish. Nor that of the submissive peon from all those haciendas which lacerated the history of Mexico. Nor that of the skillful craftsman whose products will adorn the walls of he who despises him. Nor that of the ignorant fool who should not have an opinion about what

is further than the limited horizon of his geography. Nor that of someone who is fearful of heavenly or earthly gods.

Because you must know, my blue repose, that these indigenous become angry even at those who sympathize with their cause. And the fact is that they do not obey. When they are expected to speak, they are silent. When silence is expected, they speak. When they are expected to move forward, they go back. When they are expected to keep going back, they're off on another side. When it's expected that they just speak, they break out talking of other things. When they're expected to be satisfied with their geography, they walk the world and its struggles.

Or it's that they're not content with anyone. And it doesn't seem to matter to them much. What does matter to them is for their heart to be content, and so they follow the paths shown by their heart. That's what they seem to be doing now. Everywhere there are people on paths. They are coming and going, barely exchanging the usual greetings. They are spending long hours in meetings or assemblies or whatever. They go in with frowning faces, and they leave, smiling in complicity.

Whatever it is, I am sure that many people will not like what they are going to do or say. In addition, as the Sup says, the zapatistas' specialty is in creating problems and then seeing later who is going to solve them. And so one shouldn't expect much from those meetings other than problems.

Perhaps we might guess what it is about if we look carefully. The zapatistas are very otherly; I don't know if I already told you that ; and so they imagine things before those things exist, and they think that, by naming them, those things will begin to have life, to walk and, yes, to create problems. And so I am sure they have already imagined something, and they are going to begin to act as if that something already exists, and no one is going to understand anything for some time, because, in effect, once named, things begin to take on body, life and a tomorrow.

Then we could look for some clue. No, I don't know where to look. I believe their way is looking with their ears and listening with their eyes. Yes, I know it sounds complicated, but nothing else occurs to me. Come, let's keep on walking.

Look, the stream is turning into a whirlpool there, and in its center the moon is shimmering its sinuous dance. A whirlpool or a shell.

They say here that the most ancient say that other, earlier ones said that the most first of these lands held the figure of the shell in high esteem. They say that they say that they said that the conch represents entering into the heart, that is what the very first ones with knowledge said. And they say that they say that they said that the conch also represents leaving the heart in order to walk the world, which is how the first ones called life. And more, they say that they say that they said that they called the collective with the shell, so that the word would go from one to the other and agreement would be reached. And they also say that they say that they said that the conch was help so that the ear could hear even the most distant word. That is what they say that they say that they said. I don't know. I am walking hand in hand with you, and I am showing you what my ears see and my eyes hear. And I see and hear a shell, the "pu'y", as they say in their language here.

Ssh. Silence. The dawn has already yielded to day. Yes, I know it's still dark, but look how the huts are filling, little by little, with light from the fire in the stoves. Since now we are shadows in the shadow, no one sees us, but if they did see us, I am sure they would offer us a cup of coffee, which, with this cold, would be appreciated. As I appreciate the pressure of your hand in my hand.

Look, the moon is already slipping away to the west, concealing its pregnant light behind the mountain. It is time to leave, to shelter the journey in the shadow of a cave, there, where desire and weariness are

soothed with another, more pleasant weariness. Come, here, I will murmur to you with flesh and words: "And, ay, how I would wish to be/a joy among all joys,/one alone, the joy you would take joy in!/A love, one single love:/the love you would fall in love with./But/I am nothing more than what I am"/ (Pedro Salinas. "La voz a ti debida"). We will no longer be looking at each other there, but, in the half-sleep of desire, moored in a safe harbour, we will be able to listen to that activity which is stirring these zapatistas now, those who insist on subverting even time, and who are once again raising, as if it were an external flag, another calendarÉthat of resistance."

Shadow and light go. They have not noticed that in a hut a faint light has been kept up all through the night. Now, inside, a group of men and women are sharing coffee and silence, as they shared the word previously.

For several hours these humans with their dusk-colored hearts have traced, with their ideas, a great shell. Starting from the international, their eyes and their thoughts have turned within, passing successively through the national, the regional and the local, until they reached what they call "El Votan. The guardian and heart of the people," the zapatista peoples. And so, from the shell's most external curve, they thought words like "globalization," "war of domination," "resistance," "economy," "city," "countryside," "political situation," and others which the eraser has been eliminating after the usual question: "Is it clear or are there questions?" At the end of the path from outside in, in the center of the shell, only some initials remain: "EZLN." Afterwards, there are proposals, and they paint, in thought and in heart, windows and doors which only they see (among other reasons, because they still don't exist). The disparate and scattered word begins to make common collective path. Someone asks: "Is there agreement? There is," the now collective voice responds affirmatively. The shell is traced again, but now in the opposite path, from inside out. The eraser also continues the reverse path until only one sentence remains, filling the old chalkboard, a sentence which is madness to many, but which is, to these men and women, a reason for struggle: "A world where many worlds fit." A little bit later, a decision is made.

Now is silence and waiting. A shadow goes out into the night rain. A spark of light barely illuminates the eye. Once again smoke rises from his lips in the darkness. With his hands behind his back, he begins a coming and going without destination. A few minutes ago, there, inside, a death has been decided.

(To be [continued](#))

From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast.
Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos
Mexico, July of 2003.

Translated by irlandesa

Part Six: A Good Government

...In each one of the five "Caracoles" which are being created in rebel territory, they are working at top speed to see that everything is ready (well, like a compa committee member told me: "It's going to be a bit ready, but not nearly, but a bit enough"). With more enthusiasm than wisdom, they are constructing, painting (or repainting) buildings, cleaning, straightening up, reordering. A constant hammering-sawing-digging-planting is resounding in the mountains of the Mexican southeast, with background

music that varies from one place to the other. There, for example, are “Los Bukis” and “Los Temerarios.” Someplace else, “Los Tigres del Norte” and “El Duetto Castillo.” Over there, “Filiberto Remigio,” “Los Nakos,” “Gabino Palomares,” “Oscar Chávez.” Over that way, “Maderas Rebeldes” (which is a zapatista group which, surprisingly, has been climbing the local “hit parade” by leaps and bounds - but I haven’t found out if they’re climbing up or down).

And, in each “Caracol,” a new building, the “Casa de la Junta de Buen Gobierno” [House of the Good Government Junta] can be made out. As far as can be seen, there will be a “Good Government Junta in each region, and it involves an organizing effort on the part of the communities, not only to confront the problems of autonomy, but also to build a more direct bridge between them and the world. So...:

In order to counteract unbalanced development in the Autonomous Municipalities and the communities.

In order to mediate conflicts which might arise between Autonomous Municipalities, and between Autonomous Municipalities and government municipalities.

In order to deal with denuncias against Autonomous Councils for human rights violations, protests and disagreements, to investigate their veracity, to order Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Councils to correct these errors and to monitor their compliance.

In order to monitor the implementation of projects and community work in the Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities, making sure that they are carried out in the time frames and methods which were agreed by the communities; in order to promote support for community projects in the Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities.

In order to monitor the fulfillment of those laws which, by common agreement with the communities, are operative in the Rebel Zapatista Municipalities.

In order to serve and guide national and international civil society so that they can visit communities, carry out productive projects, set up peace camps, carry out research (ojo: those which provide benefits for the communities) and any other activity permitted in the rebel communities.

In order to, in common accord with the CCRI-CG of the EZLN, promote and approve the participation of compañeros and compañeras of the Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities in activities or events outside the rebel communities; and in order to choose and prepare those compañeros and compañeras.

In short, in order to see to it that, in rebel zapatista lands, governing, governing obeying, the “Good

Government Juntas” will be formed on August 9, 2003.

They shall be seated in the “Caracoles,” with one junta for each rebel region, and it will be formed by 1 or 2 delegates from each one of the Autonomous Councils of that region.

The following will continue to be the exclusive government functions of the Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities: the provision of justice; community health; education; housing; land; work; food; commerce; information and culture, and local movement.

The Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee in each region will monitor the operations of the Good Government Juntas in order to prevent acts of corruption, intolerance, injustice and deviation from the zapatista principle of “Governing Obeying.”

Each Good Government Junta has its own name, chosen by the respective Autonomous Councils: The Selva Border Good Government Junta (which encompasses Marqués de Comillas, the Montes Azules region, and all the border municipalities with Guatemala to Tapachula), is called “Hacia la Esperanza” [”Towards Hope”], and takes in the Autonomous Municipalities of “General Emiliano Zapata,” “San Pedro de Michoacán,” “Libertad de los Pueblos Mayas” and “Tierra y Libertad.”

The Tzots Choj Good Government Junta (which encompasses part of those lands where the government municipalities of Ocosingo, Altamirano, Chanal, Oxchuc, Huixtán, Chilón, Teopisca and Amatenango del Valle are located), is called “Corazón del Arcoíris de la Esperanza” [”Heart of the Rainbow of Hope”] (in local language, “Yot’an te xojobil yu’un te smaliyel”), and includes the Autonomous Municipalities of “17 de Noviembre,” “Primero de Enero,” “Ernesto Ché Guevara,” “Olga Isabel,” “Lucio Cabañas,” “Miguel Hidalgo” and “Vicente Guerrero.”

The Selva Tzeltal Good Government Junta (which encompasses part of the land where the government municipality of Ocosingo is located), is called “El Camino del Futuro” [”Path of the Future”] (in local language: “Te s’belal lixambael”), and includes the Autonomous Municipalities of “Francisco Gómez,” “San Manuel,” “Francisco Villa” and “Ricardo Flores Magón.”

The Northern Region Good Government Junta (which encompasses part of those lands where the municipal governments of the north of Chiapas are found, from Palenque to Amatán), is called “Nueva Semilla Que Va a Producir” [”New Seed Which Shall Bring Forth”] (in Tzeltal: “yach’il ts’ unibil te yax bat’poluc”; and in Chol: “Tsi Jiba Pakabal Micajel Polel”), and includes the Autonomous Municipalities of “Vicente Guerrero,” “Del Trabajo,” “La Montaña,” “San José en Rebeldía,” “La Paz,” “Benito Juárez” and “Francisco Villa.”

Los Altos of Chiapas Good Government Junta (which encompasses part of those lands where the government municipalities of Los Altos of Chiapas are found and which extends to Chiapa de Corzo, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Berriozábal, Ocozucuatla and Cintalapa), is called “Corazón Céntrico de los Zapatistas Delante del Mundo” [”Central Heart of the Zapatistas in Front of the World”] (in local language: “Ta olol yoon zapatista tas tuk’il sat yelob sjunul balumil”), and includes the Autonomous Municipalities of “San Andrés Sacamch’en de los Pobres,” “San Juan de la Libertad,” “San Pedro Polhó,” “Santa Catarina,” “Magdalena de la Paz,” “16 de Febrero” and “San Juan Apóstol Cancuc.”

Among the Good Government Juntas’ first regulations are the following:

One. - Donations and help from national and international civil society will no longer be allowed to be earmarked to anyone in particular or to a specific community or Autonomous Municipality. The Good Government Junta shall decide, after evaluating the circumstances of the communities, where that help most needs to be directed. The Good Government Junta will impose the “brother tax,” which is 10% of the total cost of the project, on all projects. In other words, if a community, municipality or collective receives economic support for a project, it must give the 10% to the Good Government Junta, so that it can earmark it for another community which is not receiving help. The objective is to balance somewhat the economic development of the communities in resistance. Leftovers, charity and the imposition of projects shall, of course, not be accepted.

Two. - Only those persons, communities, cooperatives and producers and marketing associations which are registered in a Good Government Junta shall be recognized as zapatistas. In that way, persons shall be prevented from passing as zapatistas who are not only not zapatistas, but are even anti-zapatista (such is the case with some organic coffee producers and marketing cooperatives). Surpluses or bonuses from the marketing of products from zapatista cooperatives and societies shall be given to the Good Government Juntas in order to help those compañeros and compañeras who cannot market their products or who do not receive any kind of aid.

Three. - It is not unusual for dishonest people to deceive national and international civil society, presenting themselves in cities as “zapatistas,” purportedly sent “on secret or special missions” to ask for money for sick people, projects, trips or things of that nature. Sometimes they even go so far as to offer training in purported, and false, EZLN “safe houses” in Mexico City. In the former case, intellectuals, artists and professional persons, and not a few local government officials, have been deceived. In the latter, it has been young students who have been the victims of the lie. The EZLN is emphasizing that it does not have any “safe house” in Mexico City, and it does not offer any training whatsoever. These bad persons, according to our reports, are involved in banditry, and the money they receive, which they are supposedly requesting for the communities, is used for their own personal benefit. The EZLN has now begun an investigation in order to determine who is responsible for usurping their name and for swindling good and honest people. Since it is difficult to contact the Comandancia General of the EZLN in order to confirm whether such and such a person is part of the EZLN or their support bases, and whether what they are saying is true or not, now they will just have to get in contact with the Good Government Juntas (the one in the region where the “swindler” says he is from), and in a matter of minutes they will be told if it is true or not, and whether or not he is a zapatista. To this end, the Good Government Juntas will be issuing certifications and accreditations which should, however, still be corroborated.

These and other decisions will be taken by the Good Government Juntas (which are so called, I want to make clear, not because they are already “good,” but in order to clearly differentiate them from the “bad government”).

And so, “civil societies” will now know with whom they must reach agreement for projects, peace camps, visits, donations and etcetera. Human rights defenders will now know to whom they should turn over the denuncias they receive and from whom they should expect a response. The army and the

police now know whom to attack (just bearing in mind that we, meaning the EZLN, have already gotten involved there). The media which says what they're paid to say now know whom to slander and/or ignore. Honest media now know where they can go in order to request interviews or stories on the communities. The federal government and its "commissioner" now know what they have to do to not exist. And the Power of Money now knows who else they should fear.

...The noise and activity continue. Somewhere someone turns the radio dial and, suddenly, one can clearly hear: "This is Radio Insurgente, Voice of those Without Voice, transmitting from somewhere in the mountains of the Mexican Southeast," and then a marimba sounds the unmistakable rhythms of "The horizon can now be seen." The compañeros and compañeras stop their work for a moment and begin exchanging comments in indigenous language. Just for a moment. Once again the celebration of work resumes.

It's odd. It has suddenly occurred to me that these men and women do not appear to be building a few houses. It seems as if it is a new world which is being raised in the middle of all this bustle. Perhaps not. Maybe they are, in effect, just a few buildings, and it's been nothing but the effect of shadow and light which the dawn is extending across the communities where the "caracoles" are being drawn, which made me think it was a new world that was being built.

I slip away to a corner of the dawn, and I light my pipe and uncertainty. Then I hear myself, clearly, saying to myself: "Perhaps not...but perhaps yes..."
(To Be Continued...)

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CHIAPAS: The Thirteenth Stele Part Seven and Last: Postscript and Invitation

Here it is again! It's back! After a tragic period when it didn't delight us with its incomparable style! The much longed for! The.....Recurring.....Postscript! Yes!!!! Yippee!!!! Hurray!!!! Bravo!!!! Cheers!!!! (It may be assumed that at this point the audience is erupting in joyful applause).

P.S. Which Extends the Hand and the Word. - It's official: you are formally invited to the celebration of the death of the "Aguascalientes," and to the fiesta for naming the "Caracoles" and the beginning of the "Juntas of Good Government." It will be in Oventik, San Andre's Sacamch'en de Los Pobres Autonomous Municipality, Zapatista and Rebel Chiapas, on August 8, 9 and 10 of 2003. Or, as we say here, arrival is on the 8th, the fiesta on the 9th and departure on the 10th. There is a sign at the entrance to the Caracol of Oventik that reads: "You are in Rebel Zapatista Territory: here the people govern, and the government obeys" (I want to put a similar one up in our camps, but it would say: "Here the Sup governs, and everyone can do whatever they like." Sigh.).

P.S. Which Reveals Classified Information. - Attending the fiesta, as revealed by our intelligence services (who are, at the end of the day, not so intelligent, because they still haven't found my sock that I lost the other day), will be the Autonomous Councils of ALL the rebel zapatista municipalities, the

Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee- Comandancia General of the EZLN, and some thousands of support bases. There will be few speeches and many songs (there have been persistent rumors that zapatista musical groups will be there from various regions, and they will present a hyper-mega-magna-super duper concert for no reason other than the joy of continuing to be alive and rebel - compared to this, any techno concert would be nothing but a snack with a pi~ata, little hats and tiny packets of sweets.

In the unlikely event that you decide to attend and to share this joy with the transgressors of the law, you would do well to listen to the following recommendations:

P.S. Which Blows Its Own Horn Because It Says Still an Umbrella (For the Rain, You Understand). - In zapatista lands, the ground, in addition to being dignified and rebel, is cold, wet and muddy. The fiestas are generally so lively that the rain can't contain itself, and it has to participate, extremely heavily, right in the middle of dances and heartfelt words. That's why it wouldn't be a bad idea to bring, in addition to light feet for dancing, an umbrella, nylon, plastic, a raincoat (or, if lost, a magazine), in order to cover yourself from above and below. One of those horrid "sleeping bags" would be of great use to you if you wish to have the good fortune of being able to interpose something between you and the rain, and between you and the ground.

P.S. Which Makes the Sign of the Cross. - In zapato'n soil, the only roof which is guaranteed is the one that the supporter of the sky holds up (Old Antonio dixit), and, given what was explained in the previous postscript, it rains during these days and nights as if it were thirst, and not dignity, that abounded here. Because of that, you should be willing to sleep (ave Mari'a puri'sima!) with many and many more, under the same roof and in such promiscuity that would render Roman orgies mere "children's parties."

Or you should bring one of those tents (which are quite practical, because they're the first to become shipwrecked in the rain and the mud) in order to pass countless moments of silence and tranquility.

P.S. Which Is Preparing a "Marco's Special" Sandwich. - Under zapatudo skies, the only food which abounds and redounds is hope. Given that, according to scientific studies, a balanced diet is necessary in order to complete hope with calories, carbohydrates, vitamins, hydrocarbons, and other similar things, it would be good if you were to bring an adequate portion of canned food, junk food, rolls, biscuits and cookies (if they're "pancrema," they'll be seized), or something of that nature, because the only thing you're likely to find here is tortillas (and maybe not even that).

P.S. Which Tunes In. - If you have one, bring your short-wave radio (or "borrow" one, but don't buy it unless it's from a stall seller or a small shop - they work better than those from the big malls), because on August 9, at a time we still haven't decided, the first intergalactic broadcast of "Radio Insurgente" will be heard. Even if you decide to punish us with the whip of your disdain, wherever you are you will be able to tune us in. The exact band and frequency are: band of 49 meters, at 5.8 megahertz, on short-wave. Since it is to be expected that the supreme will interfere with the transmission, move the dial with the same swinging of hips like in a cumbia, and search until you find us.

P.S. Which Cheers. - During the momentous event, there will also be a hard fought basketball tournament. The best team will rise to the victory (note: any foreign team which dares to defeat the locals - the zapatistas - will be taken prisoner, forced to listen, completely, to the "Fox With You" program, and declared "illegal," therefore voiding his victory). Participate! Support your favorite team! (note: any demonstration of support or sympathy by the spectators towards any team other than the locals - the zapatistas - will be remanded to the closest assembly in order to be criticized and "looked at"). There will be teams from all over the planet (United States, Euzkal Herria, the Spanish State, France, Italy, UNAM, UAM, POLI, ENAH, "Civil Societies," "Absolute Chaos, S.A. of (i)R. (i)L, of C.V." and others, including the "dream team" of the "Primero de Enero de 1994 Rebel Autonomous

Zapatista Secondary School" (by the time they finish saying their name, the opposing team will already be asleep!). It's almost certain that the final will be between the EZLN and the EZLN (in order to guarantee it, generous portions of sour pozol will be distributed to the other teams). It has been rumored that there's been a fierce fight among the large multinational sports news consortiums for broadcasting rights, but it would appear that the Zapatista System of Intergalactic Television has the exclusive. It is also said that the betting in Las Vegas is 7 times 7 to 0.0001 (in favor of the zapatudos, of course).

Vale. Salud and, if you can't come, don't worry, you'll still be with us.

(No longer to be continued)

From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast.

Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos

Mexico, July of 2003.