

On Bullfighting, Détente and Rock



In this communiqué, consisting almost entirely of postscripts, Marcos begins where they left off before Durito's trip to Mexico City, recounting how he and Durito el Cambario get down from the ceiba—with Durito continuing his display of matador moves. Other postscripts include Durito's outline of 13 government actions undermining peace negotiations and Durito's praise of Mexican rock music in the light of his participation in a recent rock concert.

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To the national weekly *Proceso*
To the national newspaper *El Financiero*
To the national newspaper *La Jornada*
To the local newspaper of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, *Tiempo*
May 24, 1995

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Here goes a self-explanatory letter. The May 10 fiesta at this camp was embarrassing. It is rumored that we have no ancestors, or their equivalent. Camilo, who is the best situated in this regard, has very few.

Vale. Salud, and may the “shipment” of hope travel a long distance.

From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast
Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos

P.S. that explains how, prior to Durito’s trip, we got down from the ceiba.¹

When Durito finished teaching the matador’s moves, he discovered that he did not know how to get down from the ceiba either. As we always do when we don’t know what to do, we lit our pipes. Durito began to hear a buzzing at one side of the ceiba, and he started imagining that a new adventure was drawing near.

“The sixth bull! The time and place to write a brilliant page in this uppity bullring!” Durito said, while walking to the center of the plaza. I picked up the carnation that sweet girl with the Guadalajara eyes had thrown to me at the beginning of the bullfight (“bullfight,” Durito will then say). (I already know the carnation was sent on April 19, and I didn’t receive it until the 23rd, but I can use the carnation however I wish. After all, it is my postscript).

“Ah, squire! Think about whistling a *pasodoble*,² and prepare your eyes and your pen, for what you are about to see merits a bullfighting chronicle like those that are at least as festive as the marvels which inspire them,” Durito ordered me.

“Pay attention to what you are doing, they could be wasps,” I warned him. But Durito was inciting the improbable bull. Nothing. The snub made him bolder, and he began hurling little branches at the tree across from him. The buzzing grew. Expectation was mounting among the spectators. I was not able to describe the magnificent image. Clumsy squire and worse chronicler, I could write nothing about the solitary and ungainly figure of Durito, who had abandoned his cape and secured two little branches that, he shouted to me, were

1 ‘Durito’s trip’ to Mexico City for the May Day parade was detailed in “Durito III,” and in “Durito’s May Day Postcard.” Prior to that trip, Marcos and Durito were up in a ceiba discussing bullfighting and Spanish poet Federico García Lorca.

2 A *pasodoble* is a two-step march played prior to the release of the first bull at the beginning of a bullfight.

banderillas.³ The Moon, amazed, had stopped to observe the denouement. A milky “Road to Santiago,” full of sandy light, parts the expectant night.⁴ Unable to stand the tension, a star lets itself fall in a faint, and traces a weak ray of light across the dark, nocturnal face. Durito begins running around and changes his pace; he raises two of his little hands, the *banderillas* glittering on high. The buzzing comes together, the zoom-zoom becomes ordered, consolidates and approaches. The drum rolls out a prophecy. Almost an instant . . .

Durito suddenly veers from his headlong rush, and, in a hurried and unattractive fashion, turns half-around and runs towards me with a shout:

“Bees!”

I had managed to write: “The bugle sounded the retreat,” when Durito arrives and is hanging from a braid that the moon left forgotten at one side of the ceiba. When I realized what had happened, I threw the bullfight chronicle and the pen down and leapt behind Durito. Killer bees were attacking. No *el muleta-zos* or anything else could stop them.⁵ They left my face with elephantiasis, and, most certainly, Camilo and My Other Self will not be running to Guatemala.

Durito consoled me (he was untouched):

“Let’s get down! No? I wish you had taken care to have brought the chronicle, without having to go up and get it.”

The pain I felt kept me from insulting him . . .

Section of postscripts in which a knight-errant (suspiciously resembling a beetle) gives, to a squire of legendary nose and imprudence, council and thoughts of the type that expand the spirit and strengthen one’s path.

P.S. that continues to speak of the postcard received.⁶

Durito says goodbye, warning me to be careful with the capitulators, former opponents, former leftists, former revolutionaries, former guerrillas, former progressives, and those formerly in solidarity with the foreign revolution. “They make a religion of cynicism and end up serving the system they were criticizing yesterday. They fight rebellion with the ferocity of those who see in a mirror exactly what they are: thinking and prudent capitulators. They want to break the mirror, not for what it means, but because it shows them the uselessness of having become ‘crazy persons’ again.”

3 *Banderillas* are the two flagged sticks with barbed darts that are placed into the bull’s neck.

4 The “road to Santiago,” or “St. James Way,” is the pilgrimage path through Europe to Santiago de Compostella in Galicia, Spain. The road was called the “Milky Way” by pilgrims who saw their earthly road mirrored in the sky. In Mexico, the Church’s influence led to the celestial Milky Way—called the White Road in Mayan mythology—itself being called the “road to Santiago.” See *Popul Vuh: The Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life*, trans. Dennis Tedlock, 2nd ed. (New York: Touchstone, 1996).

5 *Muleta* literally means “crutch.” A matador uses a *muleta*, a large red flannel cape supported by a stick, for the final period of a bullfight in which he dispatches the bull. *Muleta-zos* are especially graceful and well-executed passes with the *muleta*.

71 See “Durito’s May Day Postcard.”

“Watch out,” Durito continues, “for people like that, you can find them everywhere. Excuse the paternal tone of these lines, but you are too ingenuous, Sancho.”

I remained, seeing the ending and thinking, “Sancho?”

I wanted to answer Durito, but my time had been given to correcting the errors of spelling, punctuation, and conceptual clarity in the text of the *El Supremo*'s “détente proposal.”⁷ I had been thinking of sending *El Supremo* his delegation's text with spelling corrections. I hope the government appreciates this détente measure; I am going to charge absolutely nothing for the spelling consultation. Although I doubt it's true, the government delegates appear to be busier with their “heroic” fight against the CONAI than they are in analyzing real détente measures.

Incidentally, I'm tempted to respond to *El Supremo*'s argument that “a great moment” for détente was . . . the ceasefire of January 12, 1994! It would appear they have not been informed that Salinas de Gortari is no longer president. Why do they claim as theirs a measure taken by another government? Will it be necessary to go on a hunger strike in order for the current government to not appropriate the good moves of the previous one, or to foist on them the errors of the present one?⁸ One could, for example, enumerate 13 government measures that have gone against the détente process and that have put the country on the edge of war. For example:

- a) Backing the imposition of Robledo Rincón on Chiapas⁹
- b) Madrazo's imposition in Tabasco¹⁰
- c) Harassment of the *avendañista* movement¹¹
- d) Displaced persons¹²
- e) The re-arming and sponsoring of the White Guards¹³
- f) The February 9 betrayal
- g) The attacks against civilians in the military campaign

7 *El Supremo* refers to President Ernesto Zedillo. The “détente proposal” was the proposal made by the government at the second round of peace talks at San Andrés Sacamach'en de los Pobres, May 12-15, 1995.

8 This is undoubtedly a reference to Salinas de Gortari's hunger strike. See note in “Durito II.”

9 Eduardo Robledo Rincón, PRI governor of Chiapas, took office in 1994 over widespread protests of election fraud.

10 Opposition to the corrupt regime and fraudulent election of Roberto Madrazo, the PRI governor of Tabasco, led to a protest march to Mexico City under the banner of “Exodus for Dignity.”

11 The *avendañista* movement emerged in support of Amado Avendaño's formation of a “Transitional Government in Rebellion” in protest to the fraudulent election of Robledo.

12 Zapatista communities were forced to flee in order to escape the brutality of the federal Army, judicial police and the paramilitaries. The day this communiqué was written, the National Commission for Human Rights, or CNDH (*Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos*), denounced the collaboration of the police and paramilitaries in the violent expulsion of people from their communities. See *La Jornada*, May 24, 1995.

13 The White Guards are paramilitaries hired by ranchers to control local peasant labor forces.

- h) The slander against the CONAI
- i) Harassment and threats against journalists
- j) The lies in the media
- k) The lack of seriousness within the government delegation
- l) The racism and authoritarianism
- m) The taking of dozens of communities and thousands of indigenous as hostages

I could do so, but they say the number 13 is bad luck, so I better not . . .

P.S. that explains the relationship between good sense, rock, festivals, and life.

“Everyone raved about my slam dancing,” Durito boasts, while shining his shell, after having attended the “Serpiente 12” festival.¹⁴

“There is nothing more foolish in all of Mexico today than being indigenous or young or a rocker or a knight-errant or a beetle,” Durito says. “And so the most foolish of all Mexicans is your servant, because I am all five things, and a few more that have nothing to do with the postscript.”

“Mexican rock is an irreverent and reckless critique. Their songs have the sharp edge of those who cannot help but cut tracks. But, in addition, their songs, their work, their music-making find a reflection in, and of, the indigenous rebellion in the Southeast. Through that complicated play of mirrors that is Mexican life outside the circle of Power, the ski mask and a re-named peace come together in young people who have nothing in common other than their exasperation at immobility and their longing to be better. All the groups and solo acts that performed were foolish,” Durito says, who holds firmly to the thesis that good sense is like ties: an elegant garrote that changes with fashion. He explains that good sense turns love, music and life (“Yes, in that order,” Durito warns) into an instruction manual with abundant footnotes and produces loss of sexual appetite. “In addition to other sorrows we suffer, Sancho.”

P.S. that asserts, boldly, that a mirror can reflect everything, except itself.

“We are not all Marcos. It is obvious that Marcos, at least, is not Marcos,” writes Durito, who, as can be seen, studied dialectical materialism in the polyester manual.¹⁵

P.S. that responds to Lozano’s and de Alamilla’s threats:¹⁶

Now look here, you vulgar, lowborn wretches! [. . .] Tell me: what illiterate peasant signed an arrest warrant against a knight like me? What kind of ignoramus is

¹⁴ The Serpiente 12 Festival was one of a number of concerts organized by a Mexico City band for the benefit of the Zapatista communities.

¹⁵ A popular slogan at pro-Zapatista rallies has been “*Todos somos Marcos*,” “We are all Marcos.”

¹⁶ Antonio Lozano Gracia was the spokesperson for the PGR when it issued arrest warrants against the EZLN in February 1995. Genaro Alamilla Arteaga was bishop emeritus of Papantla who spoke out in support of the actions by the PGR and the Army.

he, unaware that knights-errant are exempt from the application of all laws and statutes, that for them law is their sword, statutes are their spirit, and edicts and proclamations are their will and desire? Tell me, I say, who was the idiot who had no idea that, on the day a man's dubbed a knight-errant and devotes himself to his rigorous profession, he acquires privileges and exemptions surpassing anything granted by charters of nobility? What knight-errant has ever paid taxes—rent-tax, king's wedding-tax, land-tax—or paid a highway toll or a ship toll? When did a tailor ever charge for making a knight's clothes? What warden, giving him lodging in his castle, ever charged a knight for his bed? What king ever denied him a seat at his table? What lovely maiden could keep herself from loving him and humbly surrendering herself to his will and his desire? And, finally, what knight-errant has there ever been or will there ever be, in all the world, without the spirit to deliver 400 blows, single-handed, against 400 policemen, if they happen to get in his way?"¹⁷

Vale once more. *Salud*, and remember that "virtue is more persecuted by the wicked than it is loved by the good."¹⁸

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17 Footnote by Marcos: "Chapter XLV — in which the investigation into the helmet and the saddlebag is concluded, along with other events of an equally veracious nature." See Cervantes, *Don Quijote*, 314. In the quoted passage, Don Quijote is threatened with arrest for having stolen a barber's basin that he believed was an enchanted helmet.

18 Footnote by Marcos: "Chapter XLVII — all about *Don Quijote* de la Mancha's strange enchantment, along with other celebrated events." See Cervantes, *Don Quijote*, 324.