

Durito to Conquer Europe



In a letter to the Fifth European Encounter in Solidarity with the Zapatistas, which took place in Paris on January 26–28, 1996, Marcos warns NATO that Durito is still thinking about embarking on the conquest of Europe. His letter also contains the First Declaration of La Realidad calling for Continental Encounters in the spring of 1996 and then an Intercontinental Encounter against Neoliberalism and for Humanity in the summer to take place in the Zapatista autonomous communities. This letter was sent during the EZLN consultation with Zapatista base communities regarding the agreements reached at the San Andrés negotiations on Indigenous Rights and Culture.

To the Comité de Solidarité avec les Peuples de Chiapas en Lutte

To those attending the Fifth European Encounter of Solidarity with the Zapatista Rebellion, Paris, France

This sounded nonsense to Alice so she said nothing, but set off at once towards the Red Queen. To her surprise, she lost sight of her in a moment, and found herself walking in at the front door again.

First published January 30, 1996. Originally translated by irlandesa. Source: *EZLN Documentos y comunicados 3* (2 de octubre de 1995 / 24 de enero de 1997) (México, D.F.: Ediciones Era, 1997), 129–131.

A little provoked, she drew back and, after looking everywhere for the Queen (whom she spied out at last, a long way off), she thought she would try the plan, this time, of walking in the opposite direction.

It succeeded beautifully. She had not been walking a minute before she found herself face to face with the Red Queen, and full in sight of the hill she had been so long aiming at.

“Where do you come from?” said the Red Queen. “And where are you going? Look up, speak nicely, and don’t twiddle your fingers all the time.”

Alice attended to all these directions, and explained, as well as she could, that she had lost her way.

“I don’t know what you mean by *your way*,” said the Queen; “all the ways about here belong to *me*...”

—Lewis Carroll¹

Brothers and Sisters:

In the name of my *compañeros*, the men, women, children and elders who make up the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, I am writing you to greet you and to welcome the celebration of this Fifth European Encounter of Solidarity with the Zapatista Rebellion.

You should know that we have not been able to send any of our Zapatista *compañeros*, and no one will be representing the EZLN at this Fifth Encuentro. Currently we find ourselves in the process of internal consultation in the Zapatista indigenous communities in order to respond to the proposals of the accords reached at the dialogue at San Andrés Sacamach’en de los Pobres. That’s why it has been impossible for us to attend your Fifth Encounter. Nor have we been able to ask anyone (nor will we) to carry our voice to you. That is why we will again use the epistolary medium so that you can hear us.

Attached to this greeting you will find what’s known as the *First Declaration of La Realidad* that calls for the celebration of the First Intercontinental Encuentro for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism. We wish to ask you to read it and, if you are in agreement, to sign it, next to the EZLN, so that, united, we summon the people to this encounter to find humanity and each other.²

We know that you have many issues to deal with at your encounter, but we implore you to take some time for this matter of the encounter that Durito calls “intergalactic.”

Concerning this point, we wish to tell you the following:

We propose that the Organizing Assembly for the Intercontinental Encuentro for Humanity and against Neoliberalism of the European Continent

1 Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*, ed. Donald Grey (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1992), chapter 2: “The Garden of Live Flowers,” 123–124.

2 The First Intercontinental Encounter, held in Chiapas at the end of July 1996, was attended by over 3,000 activists from more than 40 countries.

be held the first week of April 1996 in Berlin, Germany.³

We also say to you that this is just a proposal, and, of course, we will accept if you choose another venue. In any case, be it in Berlin or some other place, we ask you to support the host group. We must begin to instill a new political culture where unity produces effects. And what better demonstration of that new politics than having that assembly (and those of the other continents) be the result of an international effort, and not just that of the host country. Is it not an attempt to form an international of hope? Well then, let us also smash the borders in another sense.

I would like to explain why we are proposing that the venue for the European organizing assembly be in Berlin. I could say that I plan to get the CCRI to send me as a delegate, or that I have always wanted to visit Germany, or that it is a narcissistic strategy for self-promotion (because of the *deutsche 'marks'*).⁴ This is all true, but it is not the fundamental reason.

As the First Declaration of La Realidad says, the powers have sold us a lie as a truth, the lie of our defeat. Without much caring about defeating us in fact, the powers have devoted themselves to making us believe that we are defeated. Who? We, you, all of us who believe that a world is possible and necessary where democracy, liberty and justice would leave their comfortable utopias and libraries, and would come to live (and to struggle, which is a splendid way of living) with us.

On top of the lie of our defeat, the powers have constructed the lie of their victory. And the powers have chosen the Berlin Wall as the symbol of their omnipotence and immortality. Upon the ruins of the Berlin Wall, the powers built a larger and stronger wall: the wall of despair.

The wall continues there, it is part of history, but it does not mean the defeat of hope, or the victory of cynicism. In Berlin there is a fragment of the broken looking glass that we inherit as history.

As Alice discovers, that in order to reach the Red Queen she must walk backwards, so too we must turn to the past in order to move forward and to be better. In the past we can find the paths to the future. And we, you, have no greater aspiration than the future. That is why the past is important. If something new is born, it is because something old is dying. But, in the new the old can extend itself and it can consume the future if we do not contain it, become familiar with it, speak to it, listen to it, in sum, if we cease to fear it.

A symbol? Yes, a symbol. Why not pull something up from the remains of the old? What do we have to lose? Nothing, other than fear, shame, regrets . . . and nightmares.

3 The proposed meeting became the First European Continental Encounter that, along with similar meetings in America and Asia, prepared the way for the Intercontinental Encounter later that summer.

4 This is a play on words; in Spanish, German marks are called *marcos*.

Why not begin with a symbol? Why not begin to walk once more there, in the symbol that the powers maintain as the end of history and the eternity of their mandate?⁵ Why not take that broken piece of the mirror in our hands? Perhaps we shall hurt our hands, but perhaps we shall manage to see, through one of the cracks in its reflection, the window that we seek, the one that we long for, the one that we deserve . . .

Berlin. The first week of April in the year 1996. Seven years later. Seven times seven walking to seven. Berlin. Why not?

Good, I repeat our greetings and wishes that everything goes well at your Fifth European Encounter in Solidarity with the Zapatista Rebellion.

Vale. Salud, and may we, together, encounter the Red Queen.

From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast
Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos

P.S. that alerts NATO.

Durito has not abandoned his idea of landing and beginning the conquest of Europe. He has invited me, but I have many reservations. The vessel he is preparing looks too much like a can of sardines. And besides, I'm afraid he wants to take me so that I can serve as oarsman, and, for me, any dampness that is not feminine makes me seasick . . .

* * *

5 Francis Fukuyama, a political science professor and senior researcher at the Rand Corporation, popularized the notion that with the fall of Soviet Communism humanity has arrived at the "end of history." See Frances Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *National Interest* 16 (1989), 3-18.