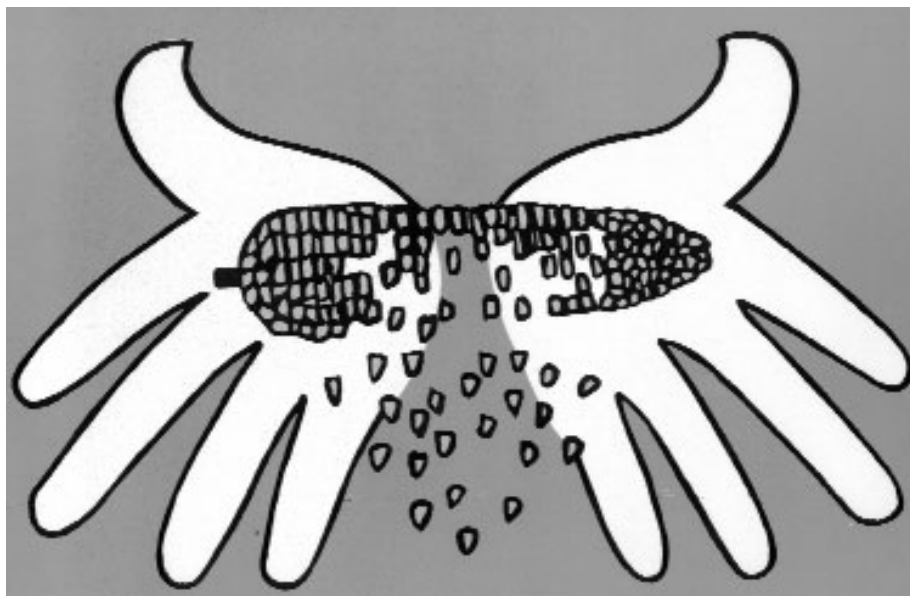


# Durito's Comment on Hunger



Writing to the National Campaign for Peace and Against Hunger, Marcos takes the opportunity to reaffirm the Zapatista commitment to struggle for peace and against the violence of the federal government. He also shares a brief dialogue with Old Antonio about hunger and hope. Durito appears at the end of this communiqué lightening the mood with a demand for a Campaign for Pecan Ice Cream for My Beetle.

June 1996

To: The National Campaign for Peace and Against Hunger, Grain for My Brother<sup>1</sup>

Brothers and Sisters:

We want to take advantage of your meeting to send you greetings and our appreciation of the concerns around which you have organized and gathered together.

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1 The Caravan, “*Un grano para mi hermano*” (Grain for My Brother), left Mexico City’s Zócalo with food and supplies for the communities of Chiapas on July 10, 1996.

A few weeks ago, in response to the government campaign that was hiding its interest in resuming the fighting—behind a so-called campaign against drug trafficking—our Indigenous leaders of the CCRI-CG of the EZLN decided to respond with the campaign “For Indigenous Peoples: No to Soldiers and War, Yes to Corn and Peace.” Since 1994, the EZLN has responded with peace initiatives to each war initiative made by the government. You are familiar with them. Time and again the Zapatista communities have declared themselves to be for a dignified peace; the government’s peace is synonymous with death or surrender. That is why we cannot reach an agreement. We rebel indigenous people have decided to resist, to not make war, but also not to surrender. We believe that our position is understood by many Mexicans and honest people in other countries. We also know that we are not the only ones who are resisting and who are rebels. Throughout the territory of the Mexican nation, points of resistance and rebellion exist that do not acquiesce to the Opposition, but long to build something new and better. Here, in the mountains of the Mexican southeast, thousands of Tzeltal, Chol, Tzotzil, Tojolabal, Zoque and Mam families resist, as they have resisted for hundreds of years, with patience and hope. You, through your efforts, make it possible that both patience and hope become strong and are healing.

Here there is a race between time and life. “This is the time of hunger. And, through hunger, time tries to kill man. Only hope relieves man from time’s wound,” Old Antonio said when, on an early morning in June ten years ago, he saw the corn barely rising up in the field. “There is no corn in the huts or in the fields. It is a time of hunger, of waiting. Look how the corn is beginning to paint the fields green, look how the rain is beginning to relieve the dryness and the hardness. The two, corn and rain, are telling us that we must wait, that one must resist, that one doesn’t have to die. The time will soon come when the corn reaches the huts and the tables of the true men and women, the time will come when the rains wash away the sorrow from the hard ground. But while the time of time is arriving, many will die because hunger and sorrow defeat them.” Old Antonio had just buried one of his children. “She didn’t make it,” Old Antonio said, after putting up the cross, bound with reeds that marked a little girl’s grave, the child whom Doña Juanita and he, Old Antonio, had brought to life.

“Hunger and man, man and hunger. That’s what those two opposites were named, that’s what the very first gods called them, those who gave birth to the world, to death and to life, *hunger* was called death, *life* was called man. There must be some reason . . .” Old Antonio said after seeing, with despair, how the corn was just a few centimeters above the ground. He lit his pipe and, now walking towards the hill, he invited me to accompany him to seek the edible roots used to distract death.

Yes, I know this memory of Old Antonio has nothing to do with your meeting, but it came to me when, on the hill facing me, I saw a newly sown cornfield and three helicopters staining the horizon. Those helicopters carry soldiers; they don’t carry corn. They promise hunger and death, they drive away peace and life.

For Peace and Against Hunger: Isn't that what your campaign is called?"

"That's what it's called," Old Antonio tells me (who is a good distance ahead of me now, since my clumsy way of climbing hills is now legendary in the mountains of the Mexican southeast). "Or what is the same thing: For Man and Against Death," Old Antonio says while he waits for me, as usual, that is, smoking. And, as everybody knows, no one can beat Old Antonio when it comes to translating struggles and hopes . . .

Yes, I know I wandered off the topic and I should limit myself to just thanking you and telling you that we are waiting here for you, but now you see how, rain, suffocation, sleeplessness . . . and Old Antonio appear in the dawn of June. Well then, here it is:

Thank you brothers and sisters. We are waiting for you here.

*Vale. Salud*, and may those who should win in the struggle against hunger, win, that is, the children.

From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast  
Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos

P.S. Durito wants to know when someone will think of having a campaign called "Pecan Ice Cream for My Beetle." I told him it doesn't rhyme, but Durito said that when faced with pecan ice cream, meter is allowed certain poetic license.<sup>2</sup> I gave him some tobacco. "It doesn't taste the same," Durito objects, but he refills and lights his pipe, and he continues writing. "What are you writing?" I ask him. "Ah! A surprise," he says as he shelters himself from the rain under a little leaf.

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2 "Un helado de nuez para mi escarabajo" is the original Spanish version of the slogan.