

Marcos Responds to Left Critics; A Penguin in the Selva Lacandona

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(The Zapatista struggle is just a little house, perhaps the smallest, on a street called "Mexico," in a *barrio* called "Latin America," in a city called the "World.")

You're not going to believe me, but there's a penguin in the Ezeta Headquarters. You'll say "Hey, Sup, what's up? You already blew the fuses with the Red Alert," but it's true. In fact, while I'm writing this to you, he (the penguin) is right here next to me, eating the same hard, stale bread (it has so much mold that it's just one degree away from being penicillin), which, along with coffee, were my rations for today. Yes, a penguin. But I'll tell you more about this later, because first we must talk a bit about the Sixth Declaration.

We have carefully read some of your doubts, criticism, advice and debates about what we posited in the Sixth. Not all of them, it's true, but you can chalk that up, not to laziness, but to the rain and mud that's lengthening the roads even more in the mountains of the Mexican Southeast. Although there are many points, I'm only going to refer to some of them in this text.

Some of the primary points of criticism refer to the so-called new intercontinental, to the national Mexican nature of the Sixth, and, along with this, to the proposal (it's still just that, a proposal) of joining the indigenous struggle with that of other social sectors, notably with workers in the countryside and the city. Others refer to the definition of the anti-capitalist left and to the Sixth's dealing with "old issues" or using "worn out" concepts. A few others warn of dangers: the displacement of the indigenous issue by others and, consequently, the Indian peoples being excluded as the subjects of transformation. The vanguardism and centralism that could arise in the politics of alliances with organizations of the left. The replacement of social leadership by political leadership. That the right would use zapatismo in order to strike a blow at López Obrador, in other words, at the political center (I know that those observations speak of AMLO's being on the left, but he says he's in the center, so here we're going to take what he says, not what they say about him). The majority of these observations are well intended, and they seek to help, rightly warning of obstacles in the path, or rightly providing opinions as to how the movement which the Sixth is trying to arouse might grow.

Concerning cutting and pasting

I will leave aside those who are lamenting that the Red Alert didn't end with the renewal of offensive combat by the EZLN. We are sorry that we didn't fulfill your expectations of blood, death and destruction. No way, we're sorry. Perhaps another time... We will also leave aside the dishonest criticisms. Like those who edit the text of the Sixth Declaration so that it says what they want it to say. This is what Señor Victor M. Toledo did in his article "Overweening Zapatismo: Sustainability, indigenous resistances and neoliberalism," published in the Mexican newspaper *La Jornada* (July 18, 2005). I believe one can debate the aims and methods posited by the Sixth Declaration without needing to be dishonest. Because Señor Toledo, utilizing the "cut and paste" method, has edited the Sixth in order to note that it lacks...what he cut. Toledo said: "It is surprising that (the EZLN in the Sixth Declaration) decided to join forces with *campesinos*, workers, laborers, students, women, young people, homosexuals, lesbians, transsexuals, priests, nuns and social activists, and that it does not make one single reference to the thousands of indigenous communities devoted to the search for sustainability."

Well, the parts which Señor Toledo edited out of the Sixth stated the opposite. For example, in the part which recognizes the existence of resistances and alternatives to neoliberalism in Mexico, and in first place in the enumeration of them, it notes: "And so we learned that there are indigenous, whose lands are far away from here in Chiapas, and they are building their autonomy and defending their culture and caring for

the land, the forests, the water." Perhaps Señor Toledo was expecting a detailed account of those indigenous struggles, but that is one thing, and it's another very different and dishonest thing to say that there was not one single reference. In the account made by Señor Toledo of the efforts of those with which the EZLN decided to join, he has cut out the first social group to which the Sixth refers, which says, verbatim: "And then, according to the agreement of the majority of those people to whom we are going to listen, we will make a struggle with everyone, with indigenous, workers, *campesinos*, etcetera." In addition, the first point of the Sixth precisely states: "1. We are going to continue to fight for the Indian peoples of Mexico, but now no longer just for them nor just with them, but for all the exploited and dispossessed of Mexico, with all of them and throughout the country." And, at the end of the Sixth, it says "We are inviting all indigenous, workers, *campesinos*...etcetera." In sum, I imagined there might be, among those irritated by our criticisms of López Obrador and the PRD, more serious, and honest, arguments for the debate. Perhaps they might be presented some day. We'll wait, that is our specialty.

Concerning we don't want you in this *barrio*

There are also those criticisms, although more hidden, that the Sixth Declaration makes reference to some international issues and the manner in which they are addressed. And so some people criticize the fact that we refer to the blockade which the US government maintains against the people of Cuba. "It's a very old issue," they say. How old? As old as the blockade? Or as old as the resistance of the Indian peoples of Mexico? What are the "modern" issues? Who can honestly look at the world and pass over - "because it's an old issue" - an attack against a people who are doing what all peoples should do, that is, deciding their direction, path and destiny as a nation ("defending national sovereignty" they say)? Who can ignore the decades of resistance of an entire people against US arrogance? Who, knowing that they can do something - even if it's but little - to recognize that effort, would not do so? Who can ignore that that people has to lift itself up each time after a natural catastrophe, not only without the aid and loans enjoyed by other countries, but also in the midst of a brutal and inhumane siege? Who can ignore the US base of Guantánamo on Cuban territory, the laboratory of torture which it has been turned into, the wound it represents in the sovereignty of a Nation and say: "Go on, that's an old issue."

In any event, does it not seem natural that, in a movement which is primarily indigenous like the Zapatista, sympathy and admiration would be evoked by what the indigenous in Ecuador and Bolivia are doing? That they would feel solidarity with those who have no land and are struggling in Brazil. That they would identify with the *piqueteros* of Argentina, and they would salute the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. That they would perceive similarities in experiences and organization with the Mapuche of Chile and with the indigenous of Colombia. That they would warn of the obvious in Venezuela, namely: that the US government is doing everything possible to violate the sovereignty of that country. That they would enthusiastically applaud the great mobilizations in Uruguay in opposition to the imposition of "macroeconomic stability."

The Sixth Declaration does not speak to the institutions of above, good or bad. The Sixth is looking below. And it is seeing a reality that is shared, at least since the conquests made by Spain and Portugal of the lands which now share the name of "Latin America." Perhaps this feeling of belonging to the "*patria grande*" which is Latin America is "old," and it is "modern" to turn one's gaze and aspirations to the "restless and brutal north." Perhaps, but if anything is "old" in this corner of Mexico, of America and of the World, it is the resistance of the Indian peoples.

Concerning we don't want you on this street

There are also (I shall note and summarize some of them) those criticisms for trying to "nationalize and even internationalize" our discourse and our struggle. The Sixth, they tell us, falls into that nonsense. Therefore recommending that the EZLN remain in Chiapas, that it strengthen the Good Government Juntas and that it confine itself to the waterproof compartment that is their lot. That once that project is consolidated, and once we have demonstrated that we can "put into practice an alternative modernity to that of neoliberalism in their own lands," then we can set forth on the national, international and intergalactic arenas. In the face of those arguments, we present our reality. We are not trying to compete with anyone to see who is more anti-neoliberal or who has made more advances in the resistance, but, with modesty, our

level and contributions are in the Good Government Juntas. You can come, speak with the authorities or with the peoples, ignore the letters and communiqués where we have explained this process and investigate, first hand, what is happening here, the problems which are confronted, how they are resolved. I do not know before whom we have to demonstrate that all this is "putting into practice an alternative modernity to that of neoliberalism in their own lands," and who is going to characterize us *con palomita o tache*, and then, yes, allow us to come out and attempt to join our struggle with other sectors.

Besides, we had the premonition that those criticisms would be praise...if the Sixth had declared its unconditional support of the political center represented by López Obrador. And if we were to have said that "we are going to come out in order to join with those citizens' networks in support of AMLO," there would be enthusiasm, "yes," "of course you have to leave, you don't have to stay shut away, it's time for Zapatismo to abandon its hideout and join its experiences with the masses devoted to the one-in-waiting." Hmm...López Obrador. He just presented his "Alternative National Project" to the citizens' networks. We are suspicious, and we don't see anything more than plastic cosmetics (and which change according to the audience) and a list of forgettable promises. Whatever, perhaps someone might tell AMLO that he can't promise "the fulfillment of the San Andrés Accords," because that means, among other things, reforming the Constitution, and, if my memory serves, that is the work of the Congress. In any event, the promise should be made by a political party, noting that its candidates will fulfill it if they are elected. The other way there would have to be a proposal that the federal executive would govern above the other branches or ignore them. Or a dictatorship. But it's not about that. Or is it?

In the politics of above, the programs seek, during election periods, to add as many people as they can. But by adding some, others are subtracted. Then they decide to add the most and subtract the least. AMLO has created, as a parallel structure to the PRD, the "citizens' networks," and his objective is to add those who aren't members of the PRD. AMLO has presented 6 persons for those citizens' networks who are going to coordinate, at a national level, all those non-PRD *lopezobradoristas*. Let's look at two of the "national coordinators."

Socorro Díaz Palacios, Under Secretary of Civil Protection in the Carlos Salinas de Gortari government. On January 3, 1994, while the *federales* were perpetrating the Ocosingo market massacre, he stated (I'm citing the Department of Government Press Bulletin): "The violent groups which are acting in the state of Chiapas display a mix of national as well as foreign interests and persons. They demonstrate affinities with other violent factions which are operating in Central American countries. Some indigenous have been recruited, pressured by the chiefs of these groups, and they are also undoubtedly being manipulated as regards their historic claims which should continue being dealt with." And further on: "The Mexican Army, for its part, will continue acting with great respect for the rights of individuals and of peoples while giving a clear and decisive response to the demand for order and security...blah, blah, blah." In the days that followed, the Air Force bombarded the indigenous communities south of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, and the federal army detained, tortured and assassinated 3 indigenous in the community of Morelia, at that time in the municipality of Altamirano, Chiapas, Mexico.

Ricardo Monreal Ávila - In January of 1998, just a few days after the Acteal massacre, the then PRI deputy and member of the Permanent Commission of the Congress of the Union "commented that the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) is a paramilitary group, the same as those who killed the 45 Tzotzil indigenous on December 22, 1997 in Chenalhó, Chiapas. 'Because everything that acts like an Army without being one and arms itself as civilians is paramilitary. They all must disarm, because they have all contributed to this unnecessary, unjust and stupid violence which has had all Mexicans in mourning,' he stated" (*El Informador* of Guadalajara, Jalisco. 3/1/98). Days later, after moving to the PRD because the PRI didn't give him the candidacy for governor of Zacatecas, he was to state (I am citing the note by Ciro Pérez and Andrea Becerril in *La Jornada*, 1/7/98) that the Chenalhó episode (referring to the Acteal massacre) was indeed planned, "but not by the one stated by the white leader of the dark-skinned indigenous," he opined that the EZLN's position regarding the massacre had to do with "securing an preemptive justification for Marcos and for those interests he is protecting," and he finished by warning that the EZ serves foreign interests which seek "to obtain control of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec region, its resources and its strategic location, an objective which is suitably served by Marcos and the armies which are fighting for the indigenous flag." Hmm...it sounds like, like...yes, Point 28 of AMLO's program which

reads, verbatim: "We will link the Pacific with the Atlantic, in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, through the construction of two commercial ports: one in Salina Cruz, Oaxaca, and the other in Coatzacoalcos, Veracruz, as well as container shipment railways and the widening of the existing highway."

López Obrador has defined himself with those individuals. He has added some, and, with them, he has subtracted, among others, the "neozapatistas."

But, on another hand, why is there nothing in that program about the political prisoners and disappeared in the dirty war of the 70s and 80s? Nor about the punishment of former officials who enriched themselves illicitly. Nor about serving justice in the cases of the massacres of Acteal, El Bosque, Aguas Blancas, El Charco. I am afraid that, as to justice, López Obrador is offering "wipe the slate clean and start anew," which, paradoxically, is not new. Before returning to the criticisms of the statements the Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacandona makes on Mexico, Latin America and the World, allow me to tell you something:

That we are going to come out

We are going to come out. We are going to come out, and they had better get used to the idea. We are going to come out, and I believe, there are only 4 ways of stopping us.

One is with a preventative attack, so fashionable in this neoliberal period. The predictable steps are: accusation of ties with drug trafficking or with organized crime in general; invocations of the rule of law and rubbish to that effect; an intense media campaign; a double attack (against the communities and against the General Command); damage control (that is, distributing money, concessions and privileges among the "spokespersons of public opinion"); the authorities call for calm; politicians state that the most important thing is that the election takes place in peace and with social tranquility; after a brief impasse, the candidates renew their campaigns.

Another is taking us prisoners the moment we come out, or during the course of the "other campaign." The steps? Clandestine meetings among the leaders of the PRI, PAN and PRD in order to make agreements (like in 2001, with the indigenous counter-reform); the Cocopa states that dialogue has broken off; the Congress votes to overturn the Law for Dialogue; the PGR activates the arrest warrants; an AFI commando unit, with help from the federal army, takes the Zapatista delegates prisoner; simultaneously the federal army takes the rebel indigenous communities "in order to prevent disorder and maintain the peace and national stability;" damage control, etcetera.

Another is to kill us. Stages: a hired assassin is contracted; a provocation is mounted; the crime is committed; the authorities regret the incident and offer to investigate "to its fullest extent, regardless of outcome...." Another alternative: "a regrettable accident caused the death of the Zapatista delegation which was on its way to blah, blah, blah." In both: damage control, etcetera.

Another is to disappear us. I am referring to a forced disappearance, as was applied to hundreds of political opponents in the PRI "stability" period. It could be like this: the Zapatista delegates don't appear; the last time they were seen was blah, blah, blah; the authorities offer to investigate; the hypothesis is ventured of a problem of passion; the authorities state that they are investigating all leads, and they are not discarding the possibility that the Zapatista delegation has taken advantage of their departure to flee, with a quantity of bitter *pozol*, to a fiscal paradise; INTERPOL is investigating in the Cayman Islands; damage control, etcetera.

These are the initial problems which the Sixth could run up against. We have been preparing for many years to confront those possibilities. That is why the Red Alert has not been lifted for the insurgent troops, just for the towns. And that is why one of the communiqués pointed out that the EZLN could lose, through jail, death or forced disappearance, part or all of their publicly known leadership and continue fighting.

I was speaking to you about the critiques of the points made by the Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacandona concerning Mexico, Latin America and the World. Well, in response, allow me some questions:

Concerning there's no place for you in this world

What happens, for example, when, more than a decade ago, a little girl (let's say between 4 and 6 years old), indigenous and Mexican, sees her father, her brothers, her uncles, her cousins or her neighbors, taking up arms, a ton of *pozol* and a number of tostadas and "going off to war?" What happens when some of them don't return?

What happens when that little girl grows up, and, instead of going for firewood, she goes to school, and she learns to read and write with the history of her people's struggle?

What happens when that girl reaches youth, after 12 years of seeing, hearing and speaking with Mexicans, Basques, North Americans, Italians, Spaniards, Catalans, French persons, Dutch, German, Swiss, British, Finnish, Danish, Swedish, Greek, Russian, Japanese, Australian, Filipino, Korean, Argentinean, Chilean, Canadian, Venezuelan, Colombian, Ecuadorian, Guatemalan, Puerto Rican, Dominican, Uruguayan, Brazilian, Cuban, Haitian, Nicaraguan, Honduran, Bolivian and etceteras, and learns of what their countries, their struggles, their worlds are like?

What happens when she sees those men and women sharing deprivations, work, anguish and joys with her community?

What happens with that girl-then-adolescent-then-young-woman after having seen and heard "the civil societies" for 12 years, bringing not only projects, but also histories and experiences from diverse parts of Mexico and the World? What happens when she sees and listens to the electrical workers, working with Italians and Mexicans in the installation of a turbine in order to provide a community with light? What happens when she meets with young university students at the height of the 1999-2000 strike? What happens when she discovers that there are not just men and women in the world, but that there are many paths and ways of attraction and love. What happens when she sees young students at the sit-in at Amador Hernández? What happens when she hears what *campesinos* from other parts of Mexico have said? What happens when they tell her of Acteal and the displaced in Los Altos of Chiapas? What happens when she learns of the accords and advances of the peoples and organizations of the National Indigenous Congress? What happens when she finds out that the political parties ignored the death of her people and decided to reject the San Andrés Accords? What happens when they recount to her that the PRD paramilitaries attacked a Zapatista march - peaceful and for the purpose of carrying water to other indigenous - and left several *compañeros* with bullet wounds on just April 10? What happens when she sees federal soldiers passing by every day with their war tanks, their artillery vehicles, their rifles pointing at her house? What happens when someone tells her that in a place called Ciudad Juárez, young women like her are being kidnapped, raped and murdered, and the authorities are not seeing that justice is done?

What happens when she listens to her brothers and sisters, to her parents, to her relatives, talking about when they went to the March of the 1111 in 1997, to the *Consulta* of 5000 in 1999, when they talk about what they saw and heard, about the families who welcomed them, about what they are like as citizens, how they also are fighting, how they won't give up either.

What happens when she sees, for example, Eduardo Galeano, Pablo González Casanova, Adolfo Gilly, Alain Touraine, Neil Harvey, in mud up to their knees, meeting together in a hut in La Realidad, talking about neoliberalism. What happens when she listens to Daniel Viglietti singing "*A desalambrar*" in a community? What happens when she sees the play, "Zorro el zapato" which the French children from Tameratong presented on Zapatista lands? What happens when she sees and hears José Saramago talking, talking to her? What happens when she hears Oscar Chávez singing in Tzotzil? What happens when she hears a Mapuche indigenous recounting her experience of struggle and resistance in a country called Chile? What happens she goes to a meeting where someone who says he is a *piquetero* recounts how they are organizing and resisting in a country called Argentina? What happens when she hears an indigenous from Colombia saying that, in the midst of guerillas, paramilitaries, soldiers and US military advisors, her *compañeros* are trying to build themselves as the indigenous they are? What happens when she hears the "citizen musicians" playing that very otherly music called "rock" in a camp for the displaced? What happens when she knows that an Italian football team called *Internazionale de Milan* are financially

helping the wounded and displaced of Zinacantán? What happens when she sees a group of North American, German and British men and women arrive with electronic appliances, and she listens to them talking about what they are doing in their countries in order to do away with injustice, while teaching her to assemble and use those appliances, and later she's in front of the microphone saying: "You are listening to *Radio Insurgente*, the voice of those without voice, broadcasting from the mountains of the Mexican southeast, and we are going to begin with a nice *cumbia* called '*La Suegra*', and we're advising the health workers that they should go to the Caracol to pick up the vaccine." What happens when she hears at the Good Government Junta that that Catalan came from very far away to personally deliver what a solidarity committee put together for aid for the resistance? What happens when she sees a North American coming and going with the coffee, honey and crafts (and the product of their sale), which are made in the Zapatista cooperatives, when she sees that they haven't commanded any special attention despite the fact that they've been making them for years without anyone paying them any notice? What happens when she sees the Greeks bringing money for school materials and then working along with the Zapatista indigenous in the construction? What happens when she sees a *frentista* arriving at the Caracol and delivering a bus full of medicines, medical equipment, hospital beds and even uniforms and shoes for the health workers, while other young people from the FZLN are dividing up in order to help in the community clinics? What happens when she sees the people from "Schools for Chiapas" arriving, departing and leaving, in effect, a school, a school bus, pencils, notebooks, chalkboards? What happens when she sees Hindus, Koreans, Japanese, Australians, Slovenes and Iranians arriving at the language school in Oventik (which a "citizen" *compañero* has kept functioning under heroic circumstances)? What happens when she sees a person arriving in order to deliver a book to the Security Committee with translations of the EZLN communiqués in Arab or Japanese or Kurd and the royalties from their sales?

What happens when, for example, a girl grows up and reaches youth in the Zapatista resistance over 12 years in the mountains of the Mexican Southeast?

I'm asking because, for example, there are two *insurgentas* doing sentry duty here for the Red Alert in the EZLN headquarters. They are, as the *compas* say, "one hundred percent indigenous and one hundred percent Mexican." One is 18 and the other 16. Or, in other words, in 1994, the one was 6 and the other was 4. There are dozens like them in our mountain positions, hundreds in the militias, thousands in organizational and community positions, tens of thousands in the Zapatista communities. The immediate commander of the two doing sentry duty is an insurgent lieutenant, indigenous, 22 years old, in other words, 10 years old in 1994. The position is under the command of an insurgent captain, also indigenous, who, as it should be, likes literature very much and is 24 years old, that is, 12 at the beginning of the uprising. And there are men and women all over these lands who passed from childhood to youth to maturity in the Zapatista resistance.

Then I ask: What am I saying to you? That the world is wide and far away? That only what happens to us is important? That what happens in other parts of Mexico, of Latin America and of the world doesn't interest us, that we shouldn't involve ourselves in the national or international, and that we should shut ourselves away (and deceive ourselves), thinking that we can achieve, by ourselves, what our relatives died for? That we shouldn't pay any attention to all the signs which are telling us that the only way we can survive is by doing what we are going to do? That we should refuse the listening and words of those who have never denied us either one? That we should respect and help those same politicians who denied us a dignified resolution of the war? That, before coming out, we have to pass a test in order to see whether what we have constructed here over the last 12 years of war is of sufficient merit?

We told you in the Sixth Declaration that new generations have entered into the struggle. And they are not only new, they also have other experiences, other histories. We did not tell you in the Sixth, but I'm telling you now: they are better than us, the ones who started the EZLN and began the uprising. They see further, their step is more firm, they are more open, they are better prepared, they are more intelligent, more determined, more aware.

What the Sixth presents is not an "imported" product, written by a group of wise men in a sterile laboratory and then introduced into a social group. The Sixth comes out of what we are now and of where we are. That is why those first parts appeared, because what we are proposing cannot be understood without

understanding what our experience and organization was before, that is, our history. And when I say "our history" I am not speaking just of the EZLN, I am also including all those men and women of Mexico, of Latin America and of the World who have been with us...even if we have not seen them and they are in their worlds, their struggles, their experiences, their histories.

The Zapatista struggle is a little hut, one more little house, perhaps the most humble and simplest among those which are being raised, with identical or greater hardships and efforts, in this street which is called "Mexico." We who reside in this little house identify with the band which peoples the entire *barrio* of below which is called "Latin America," and we hope to contribute something to making the great City which is called the "World" habitable. If this is bad, attribute it to all those men and women who, struggling in their houses, *barrios*, cities - in their worlds - took a place among us. Not above, not below, but with us.

A Penguin in the Selva Lacandona

Alright, a promise is a promise. At the beginning of this document I told you I was going to tell you about the penguin that's here, in the mountains of the Mexican Southeast, so here goes.

It took place in one of the insurgent barracks, a little more than a month ago, just before the Red Alert. I was on my way, heading towards the position that was to be the headquarters of the *Comandancia General* of the EZLN. I had to pick the *insurgentes* and *insurgentas* up there, the ones who were going to make up my unit during the Red Alert. The commander of the barracks, a Lieutenant Colonel *Insurgente*, was finishing up the dismantling of the camp and was making arrangements for moving the *impedimenta*. In order to lighten the burden of the support bases who were providing supplies for the insurgent troops, the soldiers in this unit had developed a few subsistence measures of their own: a vegetable garden and a farm. They decided they would take as many of the vegetables as they could, and the rest would be left to the hand of god. As for the chickens, hens and roosters, the alternative was to eat them or leave them. "Better we eat them than the *federales*," the men and women (most of them young people under the age of 20) who were maintaining that position decided, not without reason. One by one, the animals ended up in the pot and, from there to the soldiers' soup dishes. There weren't very many animals either, so in a few days the poultry population had been reduced to two or three specimens.

When only one remained, on the precise day of departure, what happened happened...

The last chicken began walking upright, perhaps trying to be mistaken for one of us and to pass unnoticed with that posture. I don't know much about zoology, but it does not appear that the anatomical makeup of chickens is made for walking upright, so, with the swaying produced by the effort of keeping itself upright, the chicken was teetering back and forth, without being able to come up with a precise course. It was then that someone said "it looks like a penguin." The incident provoked laughter which resulted in sympathy. The chicken did, it's true, look like a penguin, it was only missing the white bib. The fact is that the jokes ended up preventing the "penguin" from meeting the same fate as its *compañeros* from the farm.

The hour of departure arrived, and, while checking to be sure nothing was left, they realized that the "penguin" was still there, swaying from one side to another, but not returning to its natural position. "Let's take it," I said, and everyone looked at me to see if I were joking or serious. It was the *insurgenta* Toñita who offered to take it. It began raining, and she put it in her lap, under the heavy plastic cape which Toñita wore to protect her weapon and her rucksack from the water. We began the march in the rain.

The penguin arrived at the EZLN Headquarters and quickly adapted to the routines of the insurgent Red Alert. It often joined (never losing the posture of a penguin) the *insurgentes* and *insurgentas* at cell time, the hour of political study. The theme during those days was the 13 Zapatista demands, and the *compañeros* summed it up under the title "Why We Are Struggling." Well, you're not going to believe me, but when I went to the cell meeting, under the pretext of looking for hot coffee, I saw that it was the penguin who was paying the most attention. And, also, from time to time, it would peck at someone who was sleeping in the middle of the political talk, as if chiding him to pay attention.

There are no other animals in the barracks...I mean except for the snakes, the "chibo" tarantulas, two field rats, the crickets, ants, an indeterminate (but very large) number of mosquitoes and a *cojolito* who came to sing, probably because it felt called by the music - *cumbias*, *rancheras*, *corridos*, songs of love, of spite - which emanated from the small radio which is used to hear the morning news by Pascal Beltrán on Antena Radio and then "*Plaza Pública*" by Miguel Ángel Granados Chapa on Radio UNAM.

Well, I told you there weren't any other animals, so it would seem normal that "penguin" would think that we were its kind and tend to behave as if it were one more of us. We hadn't realized how far it had gone until one afternoon when it refused to eat in the corner it had been assigned, and it went over to the wooden table. Penguin made a racket, more chicken-like than penguin-like, until we understood that it wanted to eat with us. You should understand that Penguin's new identity prevented the former chicken from flying the minimum necessary for getting up on the bench, and so it was *insurgenta* Erika who lifted it up and let it eat from her plate.

The insurgent captain in charge had told me that the chicken, I mean penguin, did not like to be alone at night, perhaps because it feared that the possums might confuse it with a chicken, and it protested until someone took it to their tarp. It wasn't very long before Erika and Toñita made it a white bib out of fabric (they wanted to paint it [Penguin]with lime or house paint, but I managed to dissuade them...I think), so that there would be no doubt that it was a penguin, and no one would confuse it with a chicken.

You may be thinking that I am, or we are, delirious, but what I'm telling you is true. Meanwhile, Penguin has become part of the *Comandancia General* of the Ezeta, and perhaps those of you who come to the preparatory meetings for the "Other Campaign" might see it with your own eyes. It could also be expected that Penguin might be the mascot for the EZLN football team when it faces, soon, the Milan *Internazionale*. Someone might then perhaps take a picture for a souvenir. Perhaps, after a while and looking at the image, a girl or a boy might ask: "Mama, and who are those next to the Penguin?" (sigh)

Do you know what? It occurs to me now that we are like Penguin, trying very hard to be erect and to make ourselves a place in Mexico, in Latin America, in the World. Just as the trip we are about to take is not in our anatomy, we shall certainly go about swaying, unsteady and stupidly, provoking laughter and jokes. Although perhaps, also like Penguin, we might provoke some sympathy, and someone might, generously, protect us and help us, walking with us, to do what every man, woman or penguin should do, that is, to always try to be better in the only way possible, by struggling.

Vale. Salud and an embrace from Penguin (?)

From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast
Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos
Mexico, July of 2005