

Letter to Don Fermín Hernández

Originally published in Spanish by the EZLN

Translated by irlandesa

Zapatista Army of National Liberation
Mexico

August 8, 2005

To: Don Fermín Hernández
From: SupMarcos

Don Fermín:

Greetings from all of us. We have read with interest and respect your letter which, along with others, *El Correo Ilustrado* of *La Jornada* published today. We would ask for your patience and nobility in reading these lines we're writing you, and, hopefully, which *La Jornada*, generous as always, will publish so that you and others, who, like you, are feeling disconcerted by what we're saying and doing, might be able to learn more about why we're doing what we're doing. Please note that I'm not trying to convince you to support us or to abandon your convictions (which I sense are deep and consistent), we are only asking you, you and others, to try to understand, to understand us.

There are, in effect, many *compas* who, like you, have supported the Zapatista struggle for indigenous rights and culture. Without being on the stage or having their pictures on the front pages, people like you made possible, first, for the war to be stopped; later, that we were listened to; later on you helped us in all the peaceful initiatives which we undertook over these last almost 12 years with the goal of recovering for the indigenous their place in this Nation. Not all, but many of those persons, like you, are in the PRD or sympathize with that political organization. In addition, they are now hopeful and determined that López Obrador and the PRD will win the Presidency of the Republic, and, with that, things will change in our country with a government of the left. There are some people like you (believe me, because of what I'm going to say further along, there are very few) who feel identified with the acronym of the PRD and, at the same time, with the EZLN's struggle, and they feel that both struggles should walk together or, at least, to agree on the basics. And they feel not only that it's not contradictory to be PRD and to support Zapatismo, but it's also logical. And not just to support Zapatismo, but to support any of those struggles, large or small, which are raised in our country for democracy, liberty and justice. Then they become angry, irritated or, in the best of cases (which I believe is your case, Don Fermín), they become disconcerted, and they ask what is going on. Well, Don Fermín, what happened, happened. Let me tell you:

In 1994 some leaders of the PRD, invited by us, came here. Don Pablo Gómez, for example, came. Today, Señor Gómez is coordinator of the federal PRD Deputies, and he has stated that the PRD could not have betrayed the EZLN because "we've never signed anything with Marcos, because he's never wanted any agreement" (similarly, AMLO's replacement in DF, Alejandro Encinas - while nervously awaiting the showing of the video in which he has the starring role - has said that there's no betrayal because we've never been allied - the PRD and the EZLN). Well, Don Pablo Gómez came then, and he spoke with us. He told us he supported the struggle of the Zapatistas, clarifying pointedly that he did not agree with the armed struggle. That our cause was just, and he would do whatever possible to see that our demands found a just and peaceful solution. Given what Señor Gómez is now saying, instead of believing in his word, we should have asked him to sign a paper with that commitment, because then he could argue, in effect, that he never committed himself to the fight for indigenous rights and culture (note: with that struggle, and not with the armed struggle), and, given that he never signed any document, you can't talk about betrayal.

And it was not only Don Pablo Gómez. Other individuals also came here. For example, Señor Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Solórzano (at that time PRD candidate for the Presidency of Mexico, and, for a long time, the natural and unquestioned leader of the PRD, in addition to being, then, a referent for the peaceful struggle

for democracy, liberty and justice for all Mexicans). We spoke with Señor Cárdenas, and he committed himself the same as Señor Gómez had done. We did not, of course, sign any paper with that commitment.

Many more came, almost the entire top brass of the PRD (the majority without having been invited, but as "gatecrashers" when Cárdenas Solórzano, whom we did invite, came), and they always said, stressing that they weren't in agreement with the armed struggle, that they would support the struggle of the Zapatista indigenous. In 1996, I don't remember what we were doing in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, but we were meeting then with Jesús Ortega and a few others who were accompanying him. They told us the same thing. No, they didn't sign anything either. Around that time we also met with López Obrador, who was then the president of the PRD, who told us the same thing and who didn't sign any paper.

Then, in this regard, it could be said that all those who are now saying that the EZLN cannot talk about betrayal by the PRD because nothing was ever signed, are right. In any event, the error is ours, because we should not have believed in their spoken word. You see that one always learns. Now we have learned this: nothing matters to the PRD that hasn't been filmed...excuse me, signed.

Fine, but it so happened, as you will remember, there was a dialogue with the federal government, and accords were reached, the San Andrés Accords. At that time, those political parties with deputies and senators formed a commission that was called the "Commission of Concordance and Peace," the Cocopa. Fine, then, the Accords were signed, but they were not carried out. The Cocopa's work was to help secure an agreement between the EZLN and the federal government, and so it offered to prepare a legislative proposal that would fulfill those accords regarding constitutional reforms. In the Cocopa at the time were, among others, the current distributor in Chiapas for the laminate factory "Zintro Alum," Luis H. Álvarez and the current Secretary of Tourism, Rodolfo Elizondo, both from PAN. There were also, from the PRI, Jaime Martínez Veloz and Pablo Salazar Mendiguchía. For the PRD, there were the now deceased Don Heberto Castillo and Juan N. Guerra, along with other PRD members. For the PT there was José Narro.

I mention them in particular because they were the legislators with whom we had the most direct contacts and because, except in the case of Don Heberto Castillo, they can refute or confirm what I'm now going to tell you.

Well, the Cocopa members met, and then they did indeed hit a wall, because Zedillo didn't want to fulfill the accords, and the EZLN didn't want to return to negotiate what had already been agreed. They then thought a new proposal had to be made, one that was neither Zedillo's, nor the EZLN's. They met with us and presented us what would then become known as the "Cocopa Indigenous Law Proposal." They told us it was all they could do, and that if the EZLN and Zedillo didn't accept it, they just wouldn't be coming back anymore and, consequently, they would resign from the Cocopa. We accepted. Zedillo first said yes, and then no. What happened afterwards is already known, and I'm not going to repeat it, but it so happens that I found the original of that proposal here, and that document does indeed have the signatures of the PRD legislators. Perhaps Don Pablo Gómez, Alejandro Encinas and the bunch of jobs from the PRD hierarchy (at the time I'm sending this, I'm reading the statements from the pathetic Cota), who have been making statements left and right now disclaiming those signatures.

Look, Don Fermín, the PAN then backed out, and their legislators voted against the proposal - which they had already approved, you understand. After everything, that Right has increasingly betrayed the democratic principles which brought them into being as an electoral force. Their contempt for the indigenous (and all humble people in general) is so deep-rooted that it could be in their declaration of principles without contradicting any of them. As for the PAN and for the Right which finds within it a space for striking the history of Mexico over an anvil - one can only expect stupidity dressed in name-brand suits...and crimes concealed behind them. You'll see when the PAN candidate begins his campaign: Fox will look illustrious compared with that silly, babbling little man.

The fact that the PRI would go back on what it had agreed was nothing but a confirmation its history: the prostitution of politics; having created the sentence that "politics is crime perpetrated by other methods" and confirming it with the blood of their opponents...and their cohorts; Herod's law as a statement of principles; racism elevated to a constitutional level. Whether the PRI candidate is Montfel or Madrazo,

nothing will change of that party's "uses and customs": it will continue to be the political arm of organized crime...and those who graduate from the PRI then move on to the PRD, depending on how the polls go during the election campaigns and on who wins the election.

But for the PRD to betray its word was something we didn't understand then. We could have understood that they would have had no interest in keeping their word WHICH THEY SIGNED with the EZLN (they already clarified the fact that they didn't fulfill what they said they spoke), after all, we're just some "damn" uppity indigenous. But we didn't understand why they ignored the entire mobilization which took place concerning the Cocopa proposal, why they looked down on the Indian peoples and indigenous organizations (some of them close to the PRD) who had embraced the demand for the constitutional recognition of indigenous rights and culture.

We didn't understand, Don Fermín, but we hoped. Perhaps someone was going to go to the trouble of explaining to us and giving us some reason, even if they were absurd (something like that currently fashionable: "if we had recognized indigenous demands, we would have played into the Right and to Salinas, in addition to opening the door to the return of Madrazo and the PRI, that's why we didn't keep our promise"), but no.

Even so, we thought, as they then said that the PRD bases - those who say they are also Zapatistas - were going to protest and to mobilize and demand, at the very least, the removal of those PRD legislators who had committed that larceny. But nothing happened, Don Fermín. It was said there was a tactical error, but the PRD continued legislating against the Cocopa Law. Still nothing happened. We thought no way, the "Zapatista" PRD bases certainly have their reasons for not doing anything.

We were left wounded then, with that sensation of having been mocked once again (that sensation which is known quite well below), frustrated, because we had concentrated all our energy into that effort...and we had asked many people, people like you Don Fermín, but you're not PRD, to do the same thing along with us. Then we thought we had committed an error, and never again were we going to count on anything from any State institution or from the political parties who fight to run them. As you know, we withdrew in order to strengthen our indigenous autonomy, and the Caracoles and Good Government Juntas were created.

And then what happened, happened: the PRD government of Zinacantán cut off the water to some support base *compañeros* in that municipality. The *compañeros* went to the Good Government Junta, and the Junta sought agreement through dialogue. The PRDs refused, and the Junta found a way to send them water. Look, Don Fermín: it wasn't decided to send a Zapatista military unit to defend them from the PRD government, it was decided to send them water. The PRDs mocked the *compañeros*, telling them they were alone, that no one paid them any attention, that for the PRD government what the Zapatistas were doing in making autonomy meant nothing to them. And so time passed.

Then the *compañeros* thought they would have a march to carry water and in order to demonstrate that the Zapatista support bases of Zinacantán were not alone and that they walked with the support of the entire EZLN. They consulted me, and I recommended strict vigilance so that none of the *compas*, who were now, as we say, "*caliente*," would get into a fight with the others. Just carrying water and saying they weren't alone. The march arrived, they delivered the water and made their speech (read about it, Don Fermín, you can find it in *La Jornada* on the days following the march, April 10, 2004, and say whether or not it was an invitation to reach agreements). As the *compañeros* were withdrawing, they found the road blocked with logs, and, as they were taking them away, the shootout began. The *compañeros'* order and discipline permitted a withdrawal, and prevented it from turning into a massacre, but several *compañeros* received gunshot wounds. None of the wounded, Don Fermín, were from Zinacantán, but from other Zapatista municipalities, and they were there in order to carry water to their brothers in struggle, not to attack PRDs. One of the wounded has a bullet in his head. Yes, he still has it there. One millimeter more to one side or the other, and he would have died. And that's not all. The doctors left the bullet, because even attempting to remove it could cause his death. The *compa* walks around like that, with a bullet in his head. But, do you know what? Don Fermín: that bullet wasn't fired by paramilitaries from the PRI or by the clandestine commandoes of the YUNQUE (or PAN), but by persons from the PRD, from the PRD government. Many

things were said at that time (the Chiapas government, demonstrating that stupidity isn't the prerogative of one political faction, said that the Zapatistas had staged a provocation), but nothing happened.

We waited to see if the Zapatista PRD bases were going to go and protest, but nothing happened. There was just one letter (it can be found in *El Correo Ilustrado* in *La Jornada* during those days), Don Fermín, from a PRD brother who condemned the incident, in addition to a lukewarm statement from the state PRD, and that was it. Nothing. The PRDs continued in the government in Zinacantán, they were candidates for the PRD in the last election, they continue in Power and they were the first to form one of the "citizens nets" in support of AMLO.

And do you know how that whole matter started in Zinacantán, why the PRD government cut the *compañeros'* water off? Well, because the Zapatista support bases didn't want to take the jobs the PRDs offered them, because, the *compañeros* said, explaining the rejection, "Zapatistas don't fight to become the government." It was in order to pressure them to take the jobs that they cut off the water. Yes, Don Fermín, the PRDs attacked us with gunfire because we didn't want government jobs.

Fine, but it wasn't just the PRD vote against the recognition of indigenous rights and culture, nor just the attack in Zinacantán. It so happened that, months before, in another region, one we call the "Border Selva," and where La Realidad is located, an indigenous, who was not Zapatista, presented a *denuncia* for theft against someone else, who was also not Zapatista. The autonomous authority investigated and determined that the theft had occurred. The criminal, who admitted his guilt, was detained, and it was determined that he would remain imprisoned until he repaid the victim the amount that had been stolen. You can see, Don Fermín, in *La Jornada* of that time period, how it was: non-governmental human rights organizations went to La Realidad, and they confirmed that the detainee had not been tortured, he was found to be in good health and none of his rights had been violated. Well, it so happened that the PRD CIOAC of that region decided that what the Junta had done was bad. No, Don Fermín, they didn't go talk with the Junta. What they did was to kidnap several *compañeros* (some of whom were not Zapatistas but belonged to another organization), and they held them in a truck that belonged to the Junta. They tortured the kidnap victims, and they kept moving one of them, a Zapatista *compañero*, from one place to another ("so the EZLN wouldn't rescue him"), under humiliating conditions. No, it wasn't the police. No, neither was it the army. Yes, they were PRDs. They left them all beat up. Then the state government intervened and paid the amount that had been stolen. The detainee was freed, and the accuser's demand for justice was met. You know what Zapatista humor is like, and the *compañeros* changed the name of the truck (it's a custom to give names to vehicles), and now it's called "Kidnapped." What I'm telling you, Don Fermín, wasn't a matter of hours, but days. I could tell you of similar attacks and harassment by the PRD ORCAO in the municipalities of Ocosingo and Altamirano. Was there any statement from the PRD? Any protest by the PRD bases over what their party *compañeros* had done against us? No.

Let's add them up, Don Fermín.

Let's add up and face the consequences of everything that happened: the injustices; the silence in the face of arguments of "not playing into the Right"; looking the other way because, at the end of the day, "they're just damn Indians"; the tactical and strategic calculations of "everything goes" in order to reach Power, even though they do the same thing they say they're fighting. Ask yourself, Don Fermín, ask if the PRDs living inside Zapatista territories have been attacked with firearms, ask if they have been kidnapped and tortured. You will see they have not. You will see that we did not respond to those attacks with violence. We responded with patience. We waited.

You see now, Don Fermín, that to us you are not "a poor idiot," but a sincere, noble and constant person, who feels that there's something bad in all this that's going on. And, yes, something is bad, but it's not what's happening now. Perhaps now you'll see why we're mad, indignant, furious.

As for the rest, Don Fermín, you shall see that, if we're wrong, we shall apologize to you and to everyone we'll need to apologize to. You, and everyone, know that that is how we are, that when we're wrong, we say so quite clearly. Because perhaps we are wrong, and we should indeed be betting everything on one person, and even on a political party that has done everything to us that it has done to us. Perhaps we should keep

waiting for what we now think we have to build from below to come from above. Perhaps we were wrong to denounce that we have been deceived, attacked, mocked. If all this happens, you will see us state publicly that we committed an error, and we will apologize to all those we hurt with our word (and never with bullets, kidnappings and torture). But, meanwhile, we shall continue expressing the feelings of our peoples, the rage and indignation in the face of the PRD's cynicism and lack of memory. And so, excuse us, Don Fermín, we're going to continue being a nuisance.

Another thing, Don Fermín. We understand that some media, whenever we say anything, place more emphasis on what we say against the PRD and AMLO. And you know what? They want to rein in López Obrador. They don't like that he goes about so freely, rocking in his hammock while his accomplices cover for him. And, on the other side of the coin, AMLO wants to rein in the media, make them over in his own fashion. They both use what they have at hand: the media looking for the PRD's weak points (which, incidentally, are many), and López Obrador finding all criticisms to be a plot by Salinas de Gortari, the PRI and the Right. That's how it is. But you'll see that they'll end up getting it sorted, they always end up getting it sorted. Then you'll see that everything about the "other campaign" is no longer important news. It will end up on the "inside" pages, it will turn into a "little lost note" there, and then it will disappear completely, far from what someone called the "public." Then the "other campaign," and with it the Sexta, will continue in its determination to construct another way of doing politics, to build a national program of anti-capitalist struggle and to fight for a new constitution.

Anyway, that's what we're going to be up to, Don Fermín. The election campaigns are going to take place, and that's where we'll be. Perhaps López Obrador is going to campaign where you live. If you can, ask him if he's going to privatize the electricity industry, oil, water, social security, education. López Obrador is going to tell you he's not going to privatize. Of course, you're going to be happy, and you're going to think "Damn, Comanche, you're wrong." But don't stop there, Don Fermín, and keep on asking. Ask him what he's going to do then, and AMLO is going to respond that he's going to "promote investment." You're going to keep thinking, and you're going to be turning that little word over. Then you're going to investigate what "co-investment" means, and you're going to find out that that's what it's called when the State puts one part of the money into an industry, and private capital puts in the other part. But keep on, you'll also see that also means that one part of that industry is the property of the State, and the other part is private property. Then you're going to understand that it's not going to be privatized all at once, but piece by piece. In other words, one piece of the Patria is going to be sold, then another, and another, and another, until nothing is left.

Listen, Don Fermín, if you're able to approach AMLO, also ask him, if he says that all criticisms are coming from Salinas de Gortari, the PRI and the Right, why, then, is he surrounded by *salinistas*, ex-PRIs and Rightists. And ask the PRD leaders why they've turned the party into a recycling machine for the worst of the PRI, one more circus ring for those who jump to the beat of the budget. Ask AMLO why, if many people assume his program is leftist, his "Alternative Project for the Nation" is not. Ask him why he supports Marcelo Ebrard for the DF government if he's not leftist. Ask him why he's offering the gringos and the businessmen a centrist government, "facilitating private investment" (favoring the rich), and to the rest he's telling them that he's leftist (favoring the poor). Ask him, perhaps he might indeed respond to you - why, when we pointed all that out (and many other things), he responded that he was happy, sleeping in a hammock so he wouldn't be embarrassed.

Afterwards, the elections are going to be over, Don Fermín, and we'll be there. Perhaps the majority of the Mexican people will support López Obrador and the PRD with their votes. If they don't recognize the victory, you and many like you will mobilize, and, believe me, we will be by your side, shoulder to shoulder, fighting against that injustice and denouncing it, just like we did with the *desafuero*. But perhaps they'll win, and the victory will be recognized. Perhaps they'll make it to the Presidency of Mexico. Perhaps it will happen that López Obrador lied to the gringos and to the businessmen, and he's not going to carry out what was promised. Perhaps then a great transformation of the country will indeed be initiated, a transformation of the left. Then what can I tell you, Don Fermín, then there's going to be a lot of commotion, joy, fiesta. Perhaps then you might see there, in your town, a little poster with an invitation to a meeting for the "other campaign." And you're going to hear that there are men and women going about, asking the people what their struggle is like, how they organize, what they think of the world, of our

country, of their place. Perhaps you'll go see what it's about. Perhaps you'll see me there and stand in front of me and say to me "Comanche, I am Don Fermín of that letter." I'm going to look at you, and I'm going to smile. You're going to smile as well, and you're going to tell me: "Damn Comanche, you were wrong." And I'm going to tell you: "Damn Don Fermín, I was wrong." And neither you nor I are going to be offended by the "damn" stuff. And we're going to give each other a big hug, and we're going to smile, the both of us, together, and we're both going to be happy: you, because we were wrong, and we, also because we were wrong.

But listen, Don Fermín, is it true that if we are not wrong, you and those who are like you, are not going to remain silent if indigenous rights aren't recognized, if they attack us, if they kidnap us, if they torture us, if the PRD officials don't fulfill what they promised, if they continue selling our Patria, completely, or in pieces, if corruption and betrayals continue? Is it true, Don Fermín, that you're not going to just do nothing, arguing that you can't play into Salinas, the PRI and the Right? Is it true, Don Fermín, that you're not going to leave us alone again, like you've left us since 2001?

Vale. Salud and I'm not sending you an embrace because I know you're angry, and so it remains on hold.

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