

Originally published in Spanish by the EZLN

Translated by irlandesa

Opening Remarks for the September 10 Preparation Meeting

Welcome *compañeros*, welcome *compañeras*, welcome all others:

First of all, we would like to thank the *compañeros* and *compañeras* of the village of “Javier Hernandez” which is receiving us, and we would like to congratulate them on one more anniversary of the recovery of these lands, which were previously in the hands of the *finqueros*. And, along with them, we also congratulate all the *compañeros* and *compañeras* who are now celebrating the same thing in the new villages which were born on the ruins of the haciendas.

For those who don't yet know, I'll explain the format of this meeting. First, we'll speak some words, then those who want to talk make a note of it, here at the *Rebeldía* table, and one by one you'll take your turn and we're all going to listen. There is no limit as to time or subject, but we all hope that the subject will be the Sixth Declaration and the “Other Campaign.” The *compañeros* and *compañeras* of *Rebeldía*, in addition to us, will be taking notes of your presentations in order to make a narrative that will be added to the ones from the previous meetings and which can be seen by those who have supported the Sexta and who have joined the “Other Campaign,” whether or not they've been able to attend one of the meetings.

I'm informing you that, as of September 5, we have:

- 51 political organizations
- 95 indigenous organizations
- 145 social organizations
- 395 non-governmental organizations, collectives and groups
- 1371 persons nationally
- 314 persons internationally

Compañeros and *compañeras*:

The Sexta and the “Other Campaign” present, for us, various challenges, discussions and definitions. Some have already been showing up throughout these now 6 preparation meetings and the sporadic debate which has taken place.

There is, for example, the debate about what it means to be of the left and what the work of the left means. There is also the debate about whether the grouping together of the left comes before, after or during the grouping together of a broader front. There is the debate about whether the elections should be confronted with a critical spirit or, on the contrary, to the drumbeat of the media and their polls. There is the debate about whether an organization of organizations or a movement should be built, a vertical and centralized structure or a horizontal network. There is the debate about concepts and slogans. There is the debate about times and places.

Now we would like to point out the challenge of words and ways. Because we have said that the “Other Campaign” proposes to listen and to build a space in order to listen. The Sexta assumes that the building of this listening is one stage which will be followed by others. But this first stage is also very unique, not just because it's so against the grain, but also because it starts from a commonality and moves towards something different in order to build a new, still undefined, collective identity, a “something else.”

In order to understand what's going on up above, you have to look at it like one of those television programs selling products, where some information is presented about the advantages of the product being advertised, its price and the sales offer to those who are being pressured to purchase it. Up above they talk and they promise, and that means that there are those who listen to the promises, who believe and hope and despair that what is promised will be fulfilled. The effect these promises seek to produce is to first

transform beliefs into votes, and then into passive waiting. They are seasonal offers for a clientele who first must convince themselves that their only option is to buy one product or the other, then that their only participation is in choosing who will take their place in making the decisions which will affect them, and, lastly, that they should organize their emotional states into two time periods: three years for being disillusioned and three years for looking for a new illusion.

In addition, they shouldn't question the fact that, as clients, they pay for promoting the product at a scandalously inflated price, especially if one watches the "debate" between the PAN "candidates" or the farce of the PRI's internal democracy, or the hysterical PRD clamor which shouts "thief, thief" while they maintain their ties. And they all shout warnings about the right, the unmentionable, populism. With so much shouting perhaps some ingenuous persons, who do exist, become confused and choose the least worst from the ads.

The client, the citizen, pays for a pretense. Up above they pretend there are different programs, they pretend there is competence, they pretend there is intelligence and knowledge. They pretend there will be changes, they pretend they will do something other than pretend.

Television rewards the lucrative profits they receive, and they celebrate the histrionics of the political class. The ridiculous ones of above put on their finest clothes, and Carlos Salinas de Gortari files down the runway, as do Roberto Madrazo, Vicente Fox, someone from PAN (he should have a name, but it doesn't seem to matter to anyone), the great moneyed ones with last names from the social pages and the rising stock market. The view of the now exhausted progressive intellectuals edits and erases another image and another name: Andrés Manuel López Obrador. Paying critical attention to his presence in the most perfect portrait of the "modern" Mexican political class would obviously be playing into the right. And when they recount the presence of *salinistas* embedded in the PRI and the PAN, they fail to point out their delegates in the PRD. Why? Perhaps by remaining silent about their existence and leadership roles they will simply cease to be and to act in that party which presents itself and holds its anti-*salinismo* as its only difference, given that there are no differences in programs and principles? No. Let the polls speak and analysis and debate be silent.

If anything sums up the campaign of above it is the profound contempt they have for the people, contempt for their intelligence, but also for their dignity.

Above is the spectacle, and there is no longer any room for anything but spectators who are asked to not even imagine that something else is necessary and possible. Laziness as media offer: don't do, I'll do for you; don't speak, I'll speak for you; don't decide, I'll decide for you; don't think, I'll act as if I'm thinking for you.

The "we" that is growing more and more, below and to the left, wants something else, the "Other Campaign."

Below, with the "Other Campaign," we are trying to listen and to organize. Nothing less, but nothing more. Nothing more than listening and the opportunity to work, together, in doing what we decide, together, to do. No redemption is promised other than that of work and struggle, no compensation other than the satisfaction of having done one's duty. Positions are not being offered here, nor are budgets, but instead work and sacrifices. Neither influence, recommendations nor servility are asked for here, instead commitment, intelligence and imagination. Profits are not gained here, just *chingas*. Buying is not demanded here, just thinking. Here the calendar will be fashioned by looking, walking, listening, organizing, below and to the left.

And the words and ways are below and to the left.

And there are the words that mean different things according to who speaks them, to where they are spoken, when they are spoken, to whom they are spoken and the way in which they are spoken.

There is, for example, the word “sorrow,” and it is not the same when it is spoken by a Mexican when he’s crossing the border or when he’s detained on the other side by the Border Patrol or by the Minutemen project. When an indigenous sees how he is tricked simultaneously into being dispossessed of both land and culture. Or when a worker or retired person or pensioner sees social security being dismantled by decrees from those who say they are concerned about the workers.

Or a young person from the city or countryside being persecuted because of his clothes;

Or a *campesina* woman sitting at a table which abounds in nothing but deprivation;

Or a resident of one of the belts of abject poverty which are growing in modern Mexican;

Or a worker learning for himself about precariousness in the workplace;

Or an unemployed person scouring the newspapers and offices without finding work;

Or a street vendor being fleeced by the police, officials and “leaders”;

Or a lesbian, a homosexual or some other whose love is criminalized;

Or a democratic teacher being attacked by officials, corrupt leaders and the media;

Or an artist who refuses to produce garbage for the commercial circuit;

Or an activist in a political organization being repressed for sinful words like “democracy,” “liberty” and “justice”;

Or a mother, wife, daughter, parent of a disappeared person or political prisoner looking for answers and not finding them;

Or a fisherman confronting the harshness of nature, the coyotes and the large consortiums;

Or a woman who is persecuted, looked down upon and dispossessed for the sole crime of not being a man;

Or an activist in an NGO who risks life and reputation in his work;

Or a musician being marginalized for the lyrics in his songs;

Or a religious person who chose to walk below and to the left;

Or an indigenous person who is exploited threefold: as a poor person, as a woman and as an indigenous;

Or a man, a woman, a boy, a girl, in any of the many corners of the left of the Mexico of below who says: “sorrow.”

It is not the same, but it is equal. By saying “sorrow” they are speaking of different sorrows, but that sorrow finds the bridge that unites them in a system that produces that sorrow and produces those who suffer from it: the capitalist system.

The Sixth Declaration has chosen. It did not choose to hear with resignation and surrender in this life in order to receive compensation in the other life, which is what the right offers. Nor did it choose to hear with the impossible neutrality of a little here, another bit there, neither one thing or the other, which is being hawked by the center.

It chose to listen with the reproach and indignation of the left. It chose to listen to the sorrow, emphasizing the nature of exploitation, contempt and dispossession by what is responsible for that sorrow: the capitalist system.

The “Other Campaign” should listen to that difference in the word “sorrow” which is spoken below and to the left by those who rebel against that sorrow. And it should learn the way in which that “sorrow” is spoken.

But the “Other Campaign” should also build the bridge between that word and the different ones who give it name. Because those who are listened to in the “Other Campaign” will know that they name sorrow with others, and we will discover the equality of those differences in the rebellion and resistance which they provoke.

We shall discover that that sorrow is only eased through collective struggle, and it is only relieved through a new social relationship.

That bridge is the National Program of Struggle, of the left and anti-capitalist.

The “Other Campaign” proposes, then, to organize the listening, organize the bridge, organize the resistance, organize the rebellion, make it collective, and turn it into a movement of profound and radical transformation, with those of below, from below and for those of below.

The “Other Campaign” can be summed up in that self-evident sentence: “What’s missing is missing.”

And what is missing is another way of doing politics.

Welcome, then, to this attempt.

Thank you very much.

Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos