

## After the Storm Comes... the "Other" Storm

And by the strength of our weaknesses  
we will be the strongest of the world,  
of history and of the right struggles.  
- Roque Dalton

October of 2005.

I hope you are well. We are, more or less, recovering little by little from the shipwreck, and worried about the *compas* on the Coast and in all the affected states. Surely those supporters of the Sexta who are still dry will extend bridges below for that support which is owed between *compañeros* and *compañeras*. What is happening above is nothing but a publicity spot, and, when prime time is over, the histories of the omissions, lack of responsibility and inefficiencies of the state and federal governments which aren't even good for entertainment will remain buried (like under the water and the mud).

Behind the images and the sounds of the catastrophe the storm provoked down here, one can see the government program which, with different colors and initials, is being waged up above: turning our country into a huge disaster zone and the Mexicans into a large mass of victims, victims suitable for instantaneous media charity (because one doesn't have to exaggerate, they say, after all, the most important thing is still the election campaigns).

You know what? You can sense a certain desperation up there. As if the "respectable" public were increasingly reluctant to consume the plastic, transgenetic news stories that they're being offered one after another: a helicopter which fell or "was felled" and the habitual absence of an official whose death snuffed out that of Miguel Ángel Mesino M. and that of Tomás Cruz Zamora (the latter the Council of Ejidos and Communities Opposed to Parota - CECOP). In other words, there are deaths above and deaths below. Those of above deserve headlines, prime time, speculations. Those of below...well, what better example than the attitude of the Governor of Guerrero, Zeferino Torreblanca (who reached the position with the initials and colors of the PRD), who asked "that these crimes not be magnified." And then there aren't, as they then said, "favorable conditions": during the celebration of the sub 17 world victory, the rains came to ruin everything and to remind us that misfortune also has a class predilection and preferentially embraces those who have little and then lose it.

Fox already said that "after the storm comes the calm." The only thing he missed was asking "don't magnify these things." Now the news will go somewhere else, and in the devastated areas the networks of corruption and complicity, which will ensure that history repeats itself, will be rebuilt in silence. And the millions of victims? They will move from being a news item to being a campaign item: "if you vote for me, this won't happen again...because others will be the ones to profit from their misfortune."

But up above they don't see that after the storm the calm doesn't come, but instead an "other" storm, one that will go from below to above, which will shake this sorrow we call Patria and which will return to it what it once had: dignity. And, like a small and weak wind, perhaps just a little cloud, the "other" campaign will begin to raise up everywhere, from the irate Suchiate to beyond the Rio Grande.

You ask me about the problem of the *compas* from the IMSS, about the media campaign against them (one day they're "spoiled" workers and the next they're "anti-Semitic" nazis) and about the Other Campaign's role in this and in other movements.

Well, during the preparation meetings we heard from some persons (mostly women) who are engaged in that movement: they don't receive any pay whatsoever for their political work, they take time from their free moments in order to organize, study and struggle for their rights, they are more concerned for the generations of workers to come than they are for themselves (yes, like the student movement of 1999-2000), and we spoke with that camaraderie of those who know they are engaged in the same effort. They recently sent us some documents. As far as I understand what they wrote me (and without trying to replace

their voice) about the struggle of the IMSS workers, and at the risk of being too succinct, I can tell you the following:

- The premise of a state or para-state owned company is not the same as that of a private company. While the latter is only interested in profits at all costs (even extending to crime), the former is interested in social service, service to the community (or it should be). Private companies seek to benefit the businessman, the state and para-state owned ones seek (or should) to benefit the people, the workers, or however they want to be called.

- Leaving aside the issue of whether the existence of state or para-state owned companies are a palliative for social discontent, a means of control, or an achievement of social struggle (for us, it is, above all, the latter), those who are employed there are workers (with rights to win and to defend in the face of an owner (the State, in this case). Ergo, they have the right to organize in unions, union wings, collectives, groups, circles or however they want to call themselves and to operate.

- In present-day capitalism, the thirst for capitalist profits doesn't stop at the State boundaries. That is why they try to gain control of everything that does, or can, create profits, including state and para-state owned companies. This buying/selling of State property is one of the characteristics of neoliberalism, and it counts on the complicity of officials (who, being politicians, transform themselves into managers).

- The common premise of neoliberal governments is: take over a state or para-state owned company; team up with stupid and/or corrupt officials and corrupt and/or stupid union leaders, in order to loot the patrimony; make it inefficient and costly; argue that it has to be sold so it can deliver good service and be competitive; modify or violate the laws that prevent privatization; sell it; get rid of the workers and/or their organizations; declare that the country is making progress because direct foreign investment has increased, "which reflects the high level of confidence which Mexico has gained at the global level in an increasingly competitive world" (grammatical infamy, the responsibility of the current official).

- In Mexico, at least since the administration of Miguel de la Madrid, successive governments have made privatization the backbone of their economic program. The results are obvious: the quantity and quality of services decrease, unemployment grows and salaries fall, businessmen's profits increase and social well-being decreases. In sum: with this politics, more are increasingly worse off, and fewer are increasingly better off.

- For two decades the Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS) has been one of the principal objectives of neoliberal governments. On the one hand it has carried out a policy of looting and undercapitalizing the IMSS in order to justify its privatization. The idea isn't just to have the IMSS "run out" of funds, but to "transfer" them to the big capitalists. With the approval of the Reforms to the Social Security Law - in which pension funds were privatized by creating AFORES - a profit of 60 billion pesos has been created, which has gone into the coffers of big banks which today are already in the hands of international financial capital. The employer's contribution for illness and maternity insurance was reduced by 33%. In addition, instead of investing in the maintenance and modernization of equipment in the IMSS, they have put it into private hospital medical services such as ambulances, surgeries and clinical studies (in other words, private companies being financed with public money). In addition, there is the following: salary reductions of up to 70%; precariousness in employment; budget reduction; increase in salaries and benefits for top officials; the toleration of the extension and evasion of employer's contributions.

- When the Reforms to the Social Security Law were approved in 2004, the Federal Labor Law and the Collective Labor Contract were violated, because two labor regimens were established: one for those who had already been working prior to the reform and another for those who entered the workforce afterwards. There are worse provisions for retirement for the latter than for the former.

- All of this demonstrates to us a conscious policy by businessmen, politicians and union bureaucrats of the pro-management unions to undercapitalize the IMSS in order to deliver it the final blow and to carry out the privatization of public medical services.

- This is aimed not only at those who are working at the IMSS, but also at all workers and their families.

- The workers in the IMSS who are struggling against this plan of destruction are for: turning back the 2004 reforms; not allowing the existence of two kinds of labor relationships; making an audit of the IMSS finances in order to detect the dirty deals of successive boards; carrying out mobilizations in order to prevent pro-management unions from betraying the accords; defending the IMSS and the demands of its workers; preparations for a national strike if the neoliberal plan doesn't back off; wage increases of 10%; and earmarking 50% of surplus oil profits for financially strengthening the IMSS.

- The struggle of the IMSS workers is nothing less than the defense of health care, of social security, of labor rights, of collective contracts and of the unions.  
- As might be expected, this movement has been the object of a real slander campaign in the media. The common argument is that the IMSS workers, and the pensioners in the IMSS regimen, are "privileged" workers as regards pensions. A pensioner from the IMSS regimen receives close to 22,000 pesos per year (less than 2000 pesos a month), while the Fox government supports the truly "privileged" : the banks (during the administration of "change" close to one billion, 400,000 million pesos will be paid out for debt service); the ex-presidents (there are 4 of them, and they receive close to 45 million pesos each per year - or more than 2 million pesos a month); the ministers of the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation (more than 133 million pesos a year for each one of those living or for their widows - or more than 10 million pesos monthly).

In summary: these *compañeros* and *compañeras* of the IMSS have managed to raise an intelligent and dignified struggle in order to check the privatization offensive of above. On the other hand, pro-management unions don't have it easy: if they take the side of the workers, they will be of no use to management and the government; and if they take the side of management, they'll be of no use to the workers. And, looked at carefully, these movements are also useful for that: for demonstrating the uselessness of the *charros* [the term means both cowboys and also pro-management unions] for anything other than folklore for bewildered tourists.

And if the government does not stop, and it insists on imposing its privatization, then it will be confronting not just the IMSS strike, but also the support which the entire Other Campaign in general, and the EZLN in particular, will have to offer them as the *compañeros* we are.

As for the rest, what can I tell you: that the Other continues to grow (as of October 2 there are now 64 political organizations of the left, 118 indigenous organizations, 197 social organizations, 474 NGOs/groups/collectives and 1898 individuals), slowly but inexorably. The assessments of the Plenary are beginning to arrive, the opinions on the 6 points of definition and the proposals (some of them including weight loss diets) for "Agent X's" first trip.

We believe that the eagerness for self-purification when we've just begun will soon be overcome, and the stage of "*ismos*" (sometimes as praise and sometimes as insult) will pass when it becomes understood that to be of the left in the Mexico of today is to be, at the least, not in the center, but to the left of the right. I don't know very well what will happen, but, believe me, the results will not be a left agreeable to the right, it will be an "other left."

I'll say goodbye now. Be sure to write, since sometimes we also walk in words.

*Vale. Salud* and may the wind which we are continue to grow.

From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast.  
Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos.

Mexico, October of 2005