

**In January 1996**, two years after the uprising, the Zapatistas sent an invitation to social movements on every continent to hold regional gatherings in preparation for what they called the “First Intercontinental Meeting for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism” planned to take place deep in the heart of the Lacadón jungle at the end of July.

They didn't expect many people would want to make the arduous journey to the jungle of Chiapas, endure the military checkpoints with their strip searches and interrogations, and brave the mud and the mosquitoes just to attend a meeting. But the response was overwhelming. On 27 July 1996 over 3,000 grassroots activists from more than 40 countries spanning five continents gathered in five hand-built conference centres, beautifully carved out of the jungle, each hosted by a different autonomous indigenous community.

Berlin squatters sporting green mohawks exchanged tactics with Mayan rebels in ski masks; the mothers of the disappeared of Argentina swapped stories with French strikers; and Iranian exiles listened to Rage Against the Machine. It was a hallucinating mixture of cultures. “Next time we will have to invite the Martians,” Subcomandante Marcos quipped. This was the beginning of the movement as a global entity, a movement that was about to radically redefine the political landscape. Despite the multitude of differences, everyone agreed on a common enemy: neoliberal globalization and the desire, as the initial invite stated: “not to conquer the world but simply to make it anew”.

Many dared to hope that the scattered pockets of resistance that had gathered here in the Mexican jungle would link up and grow, but no-one quite knew what was going to follow this extraordinary gathering. This is an extract from Subcomandante Marcos' closing remarks on the last night of the Encuentro, held in the Zapatista outpost community named “La Realidad,” which means reality.

## Tomorrow Begins Today: invitation to an insurrection

by Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos

Welcome to the Zapatista reality. Welcome to this territory in struggle for humanity. Welcome to this territory in rebellion against neoliberalism.

When this dream that awakens today in La Realidad began to be dreamed by us, we thought it would be a failure. We thought that, maybe, we could gather here a few dozen people from a handful of continents. We were wrong. As always, we were wrong. It wasn't a few dozen, but thousands of human beings, those who came from the five continents to find themselves in the reality at the close of the twentieth century.

The word born within these mountains, these Zapatista mountains, found the ears of those who could listen, care for and launch it anew, so that it might travel far away and circle the world. The sheer lunacy of calling to the five continents to reflect clearly on our past, our present, and our future, found that it wasn't alone in its delirium. Soon lunacies from the whole planet began to work on bringing the dream to rest in La Realidad.

Who are they who dare to let their dreams meet with all the dreams of the world? What is happening in the mountains of the Mexican southeast that finds an echo and a mirror in the streets of Europe, the suburbs of Asia, the countryside of America, the townships of Africa, and the

houses of Oceania? What is it that is happening with the peoples of these five continents who, so we are all told, only encounter each other to compete or make war? Wasn't this turn of the century synonymous with despair, bitterness, and cynicism? From where and how did all these dreams come to La Realidad?

May Europe speak and recount the long bridge of its gaze, crossing the Atlantic and history in order to rediscover itself in La Realidad. May Asia speak and explain the gigantic leap of its heart to arrive and beat in La Realidad. May Africa speak and describe the long sailing of its restless image to come to reflect upon itself in La Realidad. May Oceania speak and tell of the multiple flight of its thought to come to rest in La Realidad. May America speak and remember its swelling hope to come to renew itself in La Realidad.

May the five continents speak and everyone listen. May humanity suspend for a moment its silence of shame and anguish.

May humanity speak. May humanity listen.... Each country, each city, each countryside, each house, each person, each is a large or small battleground.

On the one side is neoliberalism with all its repressive power and all its machinery of death; on the other side is the human being.

In any place in the world, anytime, any man or woman rebels to the point of tearing off the clothes that resignation has woven for them and cynicism has dyed grey. Any man or woman, of whatever colour, in whatever tongue, speaks and says to himself, to herself: "Enough is enough! – ¡Ya basta!"

For struggling for a better world all of us are fenced in, threatened with death. The fence is reproduced globally. In every continent, every city, every countryside, every house. Power's fence of war closes in on the rebels, for whom humanity is always grateful.

But fences are broken. In every house, in every countryside, in every city, in every state, in every country, on every continent, the rebels, whom history repeatedly has given the length of its long trajectory, struggle and the fence is broken.

The rebels search each other out. They walk toward one another. They find each other and together break other fences.

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and World Bank. Filemán Escobar of the Bolivian miners' federation points out: "The Andean world was born with the coca leaf thousands of years ago and the coca leaf and coca chewing are part of our culture... The transformation of coca leaf into cocaine is a problem of the industrialized countries who discovered that cocaine could be extracted. Yet we Bolivians are the victims."

>> **April 5-6** >> More than 150,000 Indians protest

in New Delhi against the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) treaty which will become the World Trade Organization. The police react to the demonstrators shooting arrows, and throwing stones and sandals by attacking with water cannons and tear gas. 80 people are injured, including several police officers with arrow wounds.

>> **April 15** >> The treaty establishing the World Trade

Organization (WTO) is signed in Marrakesh, Morocco. Trade representatives from 120 countries sign on, presumably having read its 22,000 pages which weighed in at 11,395 pounds.

>> **May** >> An entire street in London, Claremont Road, is squatted by activists in an attempt to halt the construction of the M11 motorway. Barricading the street transforms it into a car-free community in

In the countrysides and cities, in the states, in the nations, on the continents, the rebels begin to recognize each other, to know themselves as equals and different. They continue on their fatiguing walk, walking as it is now necessary to walk, that is to say, struggling....

A reality spoke to them then. Rebels from the five continents heard it and set off walking.

Some of the best rebels from the five continents arrived in the mountains of the Mexican Southeast. All of them brought their ideas, their hearts, their worlds. They came to La Realidad to find themselves in others' ideas, in others' reasons, in others' worlds.

A world made of many worlds found itself these days in the mountains of the Mexican Southeast.

A world made of many worlds opened a space and established its right to exist, raised the banner of being necessary, stuck itself in the middle of earth's reality to announce a better future. But what next?

A new number in the useless enumeration of the numerous international orders?

A new scheme that calms and alleviates the anguish of having no solution?

A global program for world revolution?

A utopian theory so that it can maintain a prudent distance from the reality that anguishes us?

A scheme that assures each of us a position, a task, a title, and no work?

The echo goes, a reflected image of the possible and forgotten: the possibility and necessity of speaking and

**“At times hidden by the clouds that floated in and out of the trees stretching beyond, mile after mile after mile, they sensed that they were part of a ‘historical event’ with no clear precedents; with the density; depth, and shape associated with turning points – with palpable far-reaching changes in movements that, starting small, can yet sweep over vast spaces of the world.**

**Who knows how this day will unfold into the unforeseeable future? Will it be analogous to the day the Luddites first smashed the machines of the Industrial Revolution? Or will this day mark one of the several small steps taken towards the demise of global neoliberalism?”** – Gustavo Esteva, describing the First

*Encuentro, 27 July 1996, Grassroots Postmodernism, Zed Books*

listening; not an echo that fades away, or a force that decreases after reaching its apogee.

Let it be an echo that breaks barriers and re-echoes.

Let it be an echo of our own smallness, of the local and particular, which reverberates in an echo of our own greatness, the intercontinental and galactic.

An echo that recognizes the existence of the other and does not overpower or attempt to silence it.

An echo of this rebel voice transforming itself and renewing itself in other voices.

An echo that turns itself into many voices, into a network of voices that, before Power's deafness, opts to speak to itself, knowing itself to be one and many.

Let it be a network of voices that resist the war that the Power wages on them.

A network of voices that not only speak, but also struggle and resist for humanity and against neoliberalism.

The world, with the many worlds that the world needs, continues.

Humanity, recognizing itself to be plural, different,

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resistance which lasts for six months. One hundred foot towers rise from the rooftops, a network of tunnels are built beneath, nets are hung across the street, junked cars are filled with plants and used as blooming barricades. When the \$3.3 million eviction takes place, 1,300 police and security guards work nonstop for four days to remove 500 residents and locked-down activists. Activists from this campaign go

on to form Reclaim the Streets.

>> **June** >> A World Bank delegation appraising the Kaeng Sua Ten dam in northeast Thailand is surrounded by 5,000 angry villagers, who demand that the World Bank leave. "There is no need for any more studies, because we oppose the project," they say. When several consultants return two days later, they are dragged from their car and beaten. No further delegations are sent.

inclusive, tolerant of itself, full of hope, continues.

The human and rebel voice, consulted on the five continents in order to become a network of voices and of resistances continues.

We declare: That we will make a collective network of all our particular struggles and resistances. An intercontinental network of resistance against neoliberalism, an intercontinental network of resistance for humanity.

This intercontinental network of resistance, recognizing differences and acknowledging similarities, will search to find itself with other resistances around the world.

This intercontinental network of resistance is not an organizing structure; it doesn't have a central head or decision maker; it has no central command or hierarchies. We are the network, all of us who resist.

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**Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos is the Zapatista's masked spokesperson**

**Resources:**

» **Zapatismo explained:** [www.ezln.org](http://www.ezln.org) & [www.flag.blackened.net](http://www.flag.blackened.net)

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>> **July 8-10** >> The G7 meet in Naples, Italy. The local communist mayor insists on having grand receptions for the heads of state and for participants in "The Other Economic Summit", part of the protests which have stalked the G7 summits since 1984. Seven activists from the poorest countries of five continents send the G7 a message: "Keep your wealth. Enjoy your consumer civilization. Withdraw completely your interest,