

# History of a Zapatista village

*From the opening remarks to the third preparation meeting for the Other Campaign, held in Dolores Hidalgo, Chiapas on August 20, 2005.*

by Subcomandante Marcos

## How Campo Grande became Dolores Hidalgo

This place where we are was a finca by the name of Campo Grande. The history of this place forms a quick summation of the history of the Chiapas indigenous. And, in some parts, of all the indigenous of the Mexican southeast, not just of the zapatistas.

I'm going to tell you a story. Some parts of it were related to me by Zapatista compañeros and compañeras, and others I saw and lived. If there are any inaccuracies, let us leave their clarification to the historians. With their demonstrable facts, their legends, their inaccuracies and their empty spaces, this is part of our struggle, the history of the EZLN.

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Campo Grande lived up to its name: more than a thousand hectares of good and level land, with abundant water, roads specially made for taking out cattle and precious woods, landing strips so the owners wouldn't get dusty or muddy traveling by way of the dirt roads and so they could come in their light aircraft. Thousands of indigenous whom they could exploit, despise, rape, deceive, jail, murder. That is how the PRI agrarian reform, the institutionalized revolution, was realized in Chiapas: the good and level land for the finqueros; rocky ground and hills for the indigenous.

The owner of Campo Grande was Segundo Ballinas, known among the residents as an assassin, rapist and exploiter of indigenous, primarily of women, boys and girls. Later, the finca was divided up: one part was called Primor, and its owner was Javier Castellanos, one of the founders of the Owners Union of the Segundo Valle of Ocósingo, one of those associations the finqueros used to disguise their white guards. Another part was called Tijuana, and its owner was a Colonel in the Mexican Army, Gustavo Castellanos, who kept the people subjugated with his personal guard. And another part was the property of José Luis Solórzano, a member of the PRI and their candidate for different offices, known in the region for his unfulfilled promises, his brazen lies and his arrogant and contemptuous treatment of the indigenous. And so, the Powers in Chiapas in short: finqueros, army and PRI-Government. For this evil trinity, Chiapas could be a pasture for cattle; a hacienda for exercising droit de seigneur, even with girls; a firing range against human targets and one of the laboratories for the PRI's most modern "democracy": here it wasn't necessary to know the candidates, not even their names or their proposals, or for knowing the election date, or what the options were, or any identification. Hell, it wasn't even necessary to go to the polls.

During each election, in the municipal seat of Ocósingo, in the offices of the owners and ranchers associations, the job of stuffing ballot boxes was paid for with a sandwich and a drink. That "democracy" had its excesses, of course: in one election prior to 1994, the PRI got more than 100% of the vote. Maybe there were too many sandwiches and drinks.

During one August like this one when we are welcoming you here, but in the year 1982, the finqueros and their white guards violently evicted the residents of the Nueva Estrella village. They fired upon, beat up and took various male indigenous prisoners. Some were murdered. They separated the women and forced them to watch their houses being burned. They took everything away from them. After some time, they returned. When someone asked them why they returned in spite of everything they had done to them, they responded with this gesture (Marcos opened a hand with his fingers upwards, making it understood "por huevos").

In 1994, on the first of January, thousands of indigenous from this Tzeltal region, along with thousands more from the Tojolabal, Chol and Tzotzil regions, after more than ten years of preparation, covered their faces, changed their names, and collectively called the "Zapatista Army of National Liberation," rose up in arms. The finqueros fled, their white guards did the same, and they abandoned their weapons with which they had supported their domination. The zapatistas recovered the lands. Note: they did not "take" them, but they "recovered" them. This is what the compañeros and compañeras call this act of justice that had to wait dozens of years to be carried out. These lands which had belonged to the indigenous and which were usurped, are now indigenous once again. They have, therefore, been recovered. The lands were divided up. Hundreds of indigenous families, who had previously been crowded together in a space of 2 hectares, founded - along with other indigenous sans tierra from other villages in the region - this zapatista village which is welcoming us today. This village is now inhabited by, among others, those people who were attacked by the finqueros in 1982.

This zapatista village is called Dolores Hidalgo, and, as the founders, veterans of the 1994 uprising, tell me, the meaning of "Dolores" is the sorrow that we have from more than 500 years of resistance, and the name "Hidalgo" is for Don Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, who fought for independence.

Note that they said "500 years of resistance" and not "500 years of domination." That is, despite the domination, they have never stopped resisting it. And when we talk about domination, when we recount our history, we are also talking about

resistance. And now we are not talking about our history as the EZLN, but about our common history, the one we share with you, with your social organizations and your movements. Our common history, that one which, when they say "I rule and dominate," we and you say "I resist and I rebel."

But the zapatistas who founded Dolores Hidalgo are not referring just to the resistance. They are also naming its sorrow. The sorrow of the length of the path, the sorrow of exhaustion, the sorrow of those who betrayed along the way, the sorrow of defeats, the sorrow of errors, and, above all, the sorrow of continuing to move forward in spite of the sorrows.

You will tell us of your history as organizations and as movements, of your sorrows and your resistance and rebellion. We shall surely recognize ourselves in more than one of the stories. Many others will seem foreign to us. But in all of it we shall be learning from you. And we will tell you what we have told others: that we want to continue to learn. We shall learn with you, and with many others like you, to think well, to speak well and to feel well when we say "compañero, compañera."

Welcome compañeros, welcome compañeras.

Thank you very much.

Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos

Translation by Irlandesa..