

The Death of SupMarcos, a blow to revolutionary pride

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THE DEATH OF SUP MARCOS, A BLOW TO REVOLUTIONARY PRIDE

By: Raúl Zibechi

The illuminating farewell of Subcomandante Marcos



Artwork by Emma Gascó in Diagonal

The farewell communiqué of Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, read in the early morning of 25 May in the Caracol of La Realidad, in front of thousands of bases of support and people in solidarity from around the world, in which he announced his death and reincarnation (unburying, in the words of EZLN,) is one of the strongest and most powerful texts he has released in the twenty years since his public appearance on January 1, 1994.

The murder of the teacher Galeano in La Realidad on May 2, by members of the Independent Central of Agricultural Workers and Campesinos – Historic (CIOAC-H), an organization that became a paramilitary group thanks to the counterinsurgent social policies that buy people and whole groups, precipitated a **process of change that had been underway for some time**. The massive silent march of 40,000 Zapatista supporters on December 21, 2012 in the major cities of Chiapas, and the subsequent Escuelita of ‘Freedom according to the Zapatistas’ were some of the axes of these changes that we could appreciate.

The third part of the communiqué of May 25, titled *The Change of Guard*, recounts very briefly the four internal changes that have been in process during these two decades. The first one mentioned is generational, the most visible change, since half of the Zapatistas are less than 20 years old and “were young or were not born at the beginning of the uprising.”

The second is that of class “from the enlightened middle class to the indigenous campesino.” And the third is that of race: “from mestizo to a purely indigenous leadership.” These two changes have been manifested for some time with the constant and increasing emergence of comandantes and comandantas at various public appearances of the EZLN. But the appearance of Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés, with the same military rank as Marcos, undoubtedly marked a turning point that is now complete, leaving Moisés as the spokesperson of the movement.

Marcos’ farewell communiqué emphasized that the most important of the changes was in thinking: “from revolutionary vanguardism to ‘ruling by obeying;’ from the taking of Power from Above to the creation of power from below; from professional politics to everyday politics; from the leaders, to the peoples.”

Finally, there was the issue of gender, as women moved from marginalization to direct participation, and the whole movement passed “from mocking the other to the celebration of difference.”

As can be seen, **the anti-vanguardism goes hand in hand with the set of changes that can be summarized in the fact that the bases of the movement command and the commanders obey**. There is no longer any doubt over who are the subjects. Somehow, these changes reduced the visibility from outside of the preponderant role already played by Moisés, whose figure was already standing out in his communiqués linked to the escuelita, but who now takes on his full relevance.

The EZLN completes a long lasting turn towards the common people, of huge strategic depth.

Thus, at a complex juncture in which the national Mexican government and the government of Chiapas launched a major offensive against the Caracoles and Zapatismo as a whole, –as part of the recovery of state power from the autodefensas (self-defense forces) in Michoacán and the Community Police in Guerrero– the EZLN completes a shift to the common people, which is long lasting, and of huge strategic depth, showing what those from below are capable of doing.

The media figure of Marcos disappears, appealing to the middle class and the mass media, the prominent personality capable of dialogue with intellectuals from around the world and of doing so on equal terms, **being supplanted by the indigenous and campesinos, common and rebellious people**. It is a political and ethical challenge of enormous magnitude, which places the analysts, the old

left and the whole of the academic world against the wall. From now on, there will be no illustrious speakers but rather indigenous and campesinos.

“Personally –writes Marcos– I don’t understand why thinking people, who assert that history is made by the people, get so frightened in the face of an existing government of the people where ‘specialists’ are nowhere to be seen.” The answer he gives: “Because there is also racism on the left, above all among that left which claims to be revolutionary.”

Very strong! Very wise and very necessary! Zapatismo does not dialogue with the system’s politicians, or with those on the right or the left. It speaks to those of us who want to change the world, to those of us who aspire to build a new world and, therefore, decide not to walk the path of the institutions but to work below, with those from below. And we find that one of the major difficulties in these spaces is arrogance (pride), individualism, which it defines as perfectly compatible with vanguardism. **With this step, the Zapatistas set the bar very high, higher than any political force has ever set it.** Finally, individualism and vanguardism are two central expressions of Western culture; ways of doing things related to Colonialism and patriarchy, both of which we need to let go of in everyday life and in politics.

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