

# RESISTANCE AND REBELLION I, II, III

The Word of Subcomandante Insurgente  
Moisés



**Z A P**

**ZAPATISTA AUTONOMY PROJECT**  
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## Resistance and Rebellion I

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Good afternoon, *compañeros*, *compañeras*, brothers and sisters.

I am going to talk to you about how our resistance and rebellion are our weapons.

Before we begin talking about resistance and rebellion, I want to remind you that we are an armed group. We have our weapons, as one more tool in the struggle, that's how we explain it now. Our weapons are a tool of struggle, just like the machete, axe, hammer, pick, shovel, hoe, and other such things. Each of these tools has its function, but the function of a weapon, well, if you use it, you kill.

So in the beginning, when we rose up at the dawn of the year 1994, a movement of thousands of Mexicans from all over the country emerged, grew to millions, and pressured the government, the *pelón*—that's what we call him, Salinas *el pelón* —to sit down and dialogue with us, and at the same time urged us to sit down to dialogue and negotiate.

We understood the call of the people of Mexico. So we gave the order to retreat from violent struggle. It was then that we discovered, through the *compañeras*—because in combat our people died—but the *compañeras* were developing what we might call another way to struggle. Because the government, a month later, a year, two years later, wanted to buy us off, as we put it, they wanted us to accept aid and forget about struggle.

Many of the *compañeras* spoke and they asked why and for what our *compañeros* died that dawn of 1994. Just as our combatants, men and women, had gone to fight against the enemy, we had to see those who were trying to buy us off as our enemy as well. It was important not to accept what they wanted to give us.

So that was how it started. It was very difficult to make contact between the zones because the whole area was full of soldiers. Little by little, we were able to pass the word from *compañeros* in one zone to another about what the *compañeras* were saying, that we should not accept what the bad government was handing out. That just as our combatants had gone to fight the enemy that exploits us,

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I Resistance and Rebellion <<http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2015/05/26/resistance-and-rebellion-i-words-of-subcomandante-insurgente-moises-may-6-2015/>>;  
II Resistance and Rebellion <<http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2015/06/08/resistance-and-rebellion-ii-words-of-subcomandante-insurgente-moises-may-7-2015/>>;  
III Resistance and Rebellion <<http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2015/06/12/resistance-and-rebellion-iii-subcomandante-insurgente-moises/>>.

we as bases of support also had to fight this enemy by not accepting its handouts. And so little by little, in this way, this idea spread throughout all the zones.

Today we can give many different explanations for what rebellion and resistance are to us, because they are things that we discovered a little at a time, practicing through our actions, such that now we can actually, as they say, theorize these ideas. Resistance for us is to stand firm and strong, to respond to any attack from our enemy, the system. Rebellion for us is to be fierce in our response and our actions, according to what is necessary, to be ferocious and valiant in carrying out our actions or whatever it is that we need to do.

We discovered that resistance is not only resisting one's enemy, refusing its crumbs or leftovers. Resistance also means resisting the enemy's threats and provocations, even, for example, the noise of the helicopters. Just hearing the noise of the helicopters can make you afraid, because your head is telling you that they are going to kill you, so you start running and that is when they see you and shoot you down. So the key is to not be afraid, to resist, to be strong and firm and not run when you hear the noise. Because the fucking helicopter noise does, in fact, scare you, it alarms you, but the key is not to be afraid and to stay calm.

We realized this, that it isn't just about refusing [aid]. We also have to resist our own outrage against the system—and this part is difficult and good at the same time—we have to organize this resistance and rebellion. What is the difficult part? There are thousands of us who employ the weapon of resistance, thousands, and there are thousands of us also who know how to control our rage and convert it into struggle. These are both difficult, which is why I began by saying that in our form of struggle we find our weapons.

What we have seen is that organizing these two weapons of struggle helped us to open our minds and our way of looking at things. But this only works if resistance is organized— if one knows how to organize it and begins from a point of already being organized, because there is no resistance or rebellion without first having organization.

This requires a lot of political and ideological work, a lot of talking and guidance in the communities about resistance and rebellion. I remember an assembly of *compañeros* and *compañeras* where we were talking and the *compañeros* and *compañeras* were comparing peaceful political struggle to violent struggle. So some of the *compañeros* and *compañeras* asked, what happened to our brothers in Guatemala? Thirty years of violent struggle and what situation are our brothers in now?

Why does resistance within a peaceful political struggle have to be organized so well? Or why do we have to prepare our military resistance? Which will better serve us?

We realized in that discussion that what it is that we want is life, just as we said when Mexican civil society held that mobilization on January 12, 1994; they wanted our lives preserved, for us not to die. So how do we do that? What else do we need to do to resist and rebel?

There we realized that one thing we'd have to do was resist the mockery that people made of our form of governing, our autonomy. We would have to resist provocations from the army and the police. We would have to resist the problems caused by social organizations. We would have to resist the information that comes out in the media, all that stuff about how the Zapatistas are over, that they no longer have any strength, that the defunct Marcos is negotiating under the table with Calderón, or that Calderón is covering his health care costs because he is dying... well, he's dead already, he did die in the end, but not because he went to Calderón for a cure, but rather to give life to another *compañero*.

So all of these psychological bombardments, we could call them, are meant to demoralize our bases, and they make for a bunch of things that we have to resist.

Later we discovered the resistance in each one of us, because we began to take on various tasks and responsibilities, and problems do arise at home—maybe this doesn't happen to you all, or maybe it does, or maybe it's even worse for you—but problems arise and we have to learn to resist individually, and at the same time collectively.

All right then *compañeros* and *compañeras*, brothers and sisters, that was our participation for this session about resistance and rebellion. We leave it to you to see what is useful for you and what is not. And the first thing to do in order to achieve what you want to do, what we recommend, is that the first thing is to organize yourselves, because if there is not organization there isn't anything.

Thank you very much *compañeros*, *compañeras*.

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“what the municipal president says doesn’t matter, what counts is what we say,” there were also other communities that did go to the municipal president so that he would name their *comisariado*.

So at that time, there were these two types of communities. Since there were communities that were already in resistance, there it was a task of reinventing more forms of resistance.

So *compañeros, compañeras*, brothers and sisters, that is our experience. It is a small experience, like this little corn cob that the *compas* from the north gave us.

So, evaluate from where you are what makes for a good seed and which seed is not good and can’t be put into practice. Then decide what is the first thing you have to do, and then the second, and the third, and the fourth and so on.

There is one more thing I want to tell you because what we are saying here is real. I remember in the year 1985 the commander, the person in charge of the section I was with, got us together one day and explained: we are the Zapatista Army for National Liberation. Each section was made up of 4 people, so the 4 of us turned and looked at each other and said, “we are the Zapatista Army for National Liberation, the 4 of us.”

He told us: “here we have two options. We are going to work, and if we are going to work, it will have consequences, because we’re going to grow. We are going to convince the people, and there are going to be many many *compañeros* and *compañeras*, but for this we need to be very careful with security. Or, we are not going to work, that is, we are not going to do political work and we are going to be here getting very bored of each other’s faces month after month and year after year because we didn’t want to work. So one has to think carefully about which option they choose.”

And that is what we did. We began to work and by the year 1986 there were battalions of *insurgentes* and *insurgentas*. There were battalions of *milicianos* and *milicianas*.

But don’t forget *compañeros* and *compañeras*, brothers and sisters, if that is what you decide to do, that we start like this, small. But if we work, we grow, and if we don’t, then we are ever smaller and we die without really doing anything.

When we resist individually we think about the questions that come up about my dad, my mom, my wife, of “where are you?” “what are you doing?” “who are you with?” etc. Right? So one has to resist doing something bad, beating one’s wife who then abandons her work, and then later there are complaints, there isn’t any corn, or beans, the firewood isn’t gathered, there are problems with the kids, and all of these kind of things happen as a result. That is where resistance is individualized.

When we resist as a collective, it is done with discipline, that is, through agreement. We make an agreement regarding how we are going to deal with different types of problems. A recent example: in February, a group of people that aren’t Zapatistas were living on recuperated lands. We hadn’t said anything to them, but they got this idea that they wanted to be the owners of the land, so they started the process to legalize the land in their name.

And it became clear that Mr. Velasco was telling them they needed a certain number of people in order to do this, so these people started to look for others to be members of their village, and people began joining and they were armed. They grew to 58 people and then they started to invade the land that belongs to the *compas*, recuperated land. So the *compas* said, “we’re not going to allow this.”

“How many are there?”

“Well, close to sixty.”

“That’s enough to justify our going in with six hundred people, armed, and finish them off, given all the problems they’ve caused.”

They had poured a liquid over the *compas’* pasture that burns the grass, they killed a stud and destroyed some of the *compañeros’* houses. So the *compas* were already really pissed and rebellious, they had really had it. But this is when the other *compas* intervene:

“Remember, *compañeros*, we are a collective,’ they say to the six hundred that are gathered there.

“Remember the orange? What have we said about what happens if you poke a hole in a piece of fruit?”

“Ah yes. But do those assholes understand things like that?”

"No, we are not going to let the ways and times of those assholes be imposed on us. We have our own way and time."

So what happens to an orange or lemon if you poke a hole in it? It rots the whole barrel of fruit. And what does that mean in this situation? That whatever we do will affect the rest of our organization. That's the thing. So we have to ask the bases of support if we are going to respond with violence, or another way. Since we were already thinking about this, we were already practicing this idea that we're talking about now, our bases didn't permit a response like the one suggested above.

So we said to the *compas*: those people who are really rebellious, mad, really pissed off, they're not going in. Tell their representatives that they're not going because if they do they're going to kill somebody, so it's better that they don't go. Tell their representative so he knows and can inform them; making sure they know is his problem. Also, the people who are really scared are not going either. The only ones going are those who understand that they must go, not to provoke, but to work the land, to plow the cornfield, build a house and everything else. So at dawn, the 600 [*compas*] went to the land, unarmed. They coordinated among themselves to retake control of their land.

This is how we control both rage and fear. We gather, explain, talk, and make the issue clear, because the truth is that the great majority of *compañeros* are not going to allow that kind of violence.

We have been developing this resistance for 20 years. At the beginning it was difficult because we often face difficult situations and need to know how to resolve them. I'm going to give you an example of how hard it is to change things, okay? Under Salinas' government, they sponsored "projects," giving out cash or credit, and the *compas* were receiving these projects. Imagine, *milicianos*, corporals, sergeants, Zapatistas accepting these handouts. So a good half of this money goes to what? Bullets, for our weapons, and equipment, and the other half goes to buy a cow like it was supposed to. So they would buy what they were supposed to with just a part of the funds, which is why the government stopped giving them out, even to the brothers who are *partidistas* [political party followers or loyalists].

give them water anymore, because now they are no longer a part of us." And they went to suggest this to the *Junta de Buen Gobierno*, but the Junta said to the *compañeros*:

"No *compañeros*, water is life, so we cannot tell them that we are not going to let them have water, even though when we went to give water to you, our bases of support, the *perredistas* shot at us. But that is not how we do it. We are just going to invite them to take care of the water and to respect the trees that we have planted there, so that they grow and also protect the water."

There are a million things that I can tell you in this regard, of how they fuck with the communities, of how the political parties divide us, but this is how we combat that. Sometimes being humble works and sometimes it doesn't. Because what the *compañeros* did in that case, in letting the *perredistas* access the water, that was about humility.

It is through our resistance and rebellion that the *compañeros* of the *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* and the MAREZ made an agreement across all levels of authorities to carry out the sharing or the exchange. Because there was an internal exchange or sharing and that helped us to create, to invent among all of us, what became the Little School. This process gave us a lot of strength because the exchange that the *compañeros* held with all the MAREZ, the *Juntas de Buen Gobierno*, is what demonstrated that they are true teachers.

And this is where we see that what happened upon the arrival of the Zapatista Army for National Liberation in 1983 is real. Because at that time, the first *compañeros* *insurgentes* and *insurgentas*, well when they came they were very square or rigid, but upon arriving and through our interaction with the *compañeros* and *compañeras* of the communities, this rigidity was dismantled.

Because in the communities they were already in resistance. They lived in their communities and it was immediately clear that the *compañeros* and *compañeras* of the communities were already in resistance. For example, there were communities that named their own *comisariados* despite the fact that the municipal president demanded that he got to name that position. They weren't bases of support at that time in 1983, and even though some communities said

on the political terrain, the ideological, the economic terrain, and everything else.

Our resistance and rebellion exists because we are working on them, because we are organizing them. Because we are there alongside our people—struggling, supporting, orienting, improving. At the same time, our resistance gives us security and simultaneously helps us keep watch over ourselves, take care of ourselves. And like I told you, this resistance is alive and active because we are working on it. We really consider it one of our weapons of struggle. Because, for example, our actual guns have been resting for the past 20 years, but if we don't take care of those guns then they become useless. But we do take care of them, so they are just like they were in 1994. They are still useful because we are still taking care of them.

So our organization, our rebellion and resistance is what makes us, what allows us to take care of ourselves, what gives us safety and security. And we have to keep improving them as we are able through our work. Our resistance and rebellion has helped us see that if the political parties hadn't split us into many different parts, things would be a little different. Because the political parties divide us, and then so do the social organizations that are co-opted by the political parties, which are like the sharks or attack dogs of the political parties. Then those social organizations also divide and provoke, and they continue to do this. I'm going to give you an example here of how we confront this problem and what we have seen as effective.

You will remember, and if you don't I will remind you of Zinacantán, and what happened in Zinacantán, where the *perredistas*—members of the PRD—cut off the water supply to our *compañeros* who are bases of support. And when we went to take water to our *compañeros*, the *perredistas* attacked us with rocks, clubs, and bullets. What happened happened, and the *Junta de Buen Gobierno*, as a solution, bought a little piece of land where there is a water spring and gave it to the *compañeros* who are bases of support.

But here is the example of what I mean by the political parties dividing us, dividing our communities. Because what happened then was that a group of former *compas* left; they stopped being Zapatistas and so the *compas* bases of support said, "well we are not going to

So the *compas* came up with this idea, the one I have been telling you about, that we should agree on this practice of refusing stuff from the government. It was really hard, but the *compas* understood. They said yes, we're going to do this, we're going to resist. The downside of this was that sometimes when we are supposed to have a meeting, they say "ah no I can't come, I don't have any transportation money because I'm in resistance," which is really just an excuse, it's not that they don't have it, it's just a cover, a pretext.

But we started taking seriously this thing about refusing anything from the system, and we found that it meant that we had to work hard on our mother earth, doing the kinds of things that I have already told you about in these days we have been together here. That is where the *compañeros* began to see the fruits of their labor and they realized that it's better to work the earth and forget about that stuff the government gives out.

We began to see that resistance and rebellion gave our organization security and sustenance. We began to practice all kinds of things, like the example I have been telling you about, of not talking to the government; none of our bases talk to the government, not even when there is a murder. We discovered that with resistance and rebellion we could govern ourselves and with resistance and rebellion we could develop our own initiatives.

Each zone organizes its own resistance, on economic, ideological, and political terrains. Some have more possibilities in particular areas than others, so we experiment. For example, the *compañeros* of Los Altos [the highlands] have to buy corn most of their lives, they do grow some but very little, and they have to buy it. So what we have done is have other zones take their corn and sell it to the *compas* in Los Altos so that they don't have to buy it from the government store. So the money from the *compas* in Los Altos goes to another *Caracol* rather than to the government. Sometimes this works out well, other times it doesn't, but even when it doesn't work out, at least it's a bad thing that we produced ourselves. For example, the corn is transported in tons, so one time the *compañeros* in charge of collecting the corn weren't checking it and the *compa* bases of support, the bastards, put a bunch of rotten corn in the middle of the package,

and since the other *compas* didn't check it, it made it out and was transported. But when it got to its destination where it would be consumed, they checked it over and saw that *compas* were selling rotten corn to other *compas*.

So we have been correcting these types of problem, to make sure that kind of thing doesn't happen. If we are going to be in resistance, the resistance has to be really well organized. A kind of exchange, like bartering as they say, didn't work for us, because we can't take tons of pears or apples from Los Altos to sell in the Jungle, and that's what the *compas* produce a lot of there, vegetables [fruits]. So that doesn't work for us, and now we are discussing how we are going to do this, we're about halfway through the process of organizing that.

I'm going to give you a series of examples.

In 1998, the government came in and dismantled the autonomous municipalities, that was when Croquetas[i]—Albores—was still governor. In [the municipality of] Tierra y Libertad, in the *Caracol I* of La Realidad, the judicial police came in and destroyed the building that housed the autonomous municipality's governing offices. The *compañeros milicianos*[ii] were the most emphatic in wanting to fight the judicial police—who were really soldiers disguised as police—and they were told that they couldn't fight them. It was the *compas milicianos* who were most enraged that they were destroying the building where we housed our autonomous government.

So we went to the communities to see what they thought, and the communities said: let them destroy it, our autonomy is here, we have it here among us, the building is just a building. So we had their support and with that on our side we gave the order that the *milicianos* should not respond and make the organization pay the cost of their rage, and the *milicianos* and *milicianas* responded "fucking authorities." But we began to see that sometimes the rage of the base doesn't help us get where we need to go, and sometimes it is the CCRI [Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee] or the regional authority, or others that end up paying the price.

and *compañeras*—because they think they understand what the people in the communities want—launch initiatives without telling the communities. I don't know if you understand what I'm trying to say here.

So let's take me as an example. Let's say the *compañeros* and *compañeras* have seen me, and they know and I know that I can hit upon exactly what the people want. And so because they have seen me, I start to think a lot of myself and I get a big head and I begin to launch initiatives that I think are good without consulting the communities. So the *compas* say we are not going to permit that, because for however much we may understand and really nail what is needed, we still have to go to our communities because if we don't, then we start to create a bad culture. We start to create a bad culture all over again. I started to think about this when the *compa* Zibechi was talking because it is true what he said. The ex-president of his country showed a nice face towards the outside but inside, who knows. Because as we Mexicans say, you can see the face but you can't see the heart, and well, he told us how it really was.

That's one of the things we have detected from within our resistance and rebellion and have said that we are not going to allow; that the people must be informed, the people must be consulted. So that's what our resistance and rebellion has allowed us. It gives us time to invent things, to create things, to imagine. We don't have an instruction manual and this is the truth. There is not a book for this. Our manual is evaluating our work to see how to improve it. Our manual is the actual problem that arises. It is how we have to resolve this problem; and that is how we advance, confronting those problems and resolving them with an imagination in our practice. So that's the thing about our resistance and rebellion. We don't give up. We are very stubborn. We don't just let something go. We have to resolve it. We have to find the solution. So we have to understand our resistance and rebellion as if the shots, the bullets were real. As if the bombs were real. That is, we have to understand it as a war in order to confront the enemy, meaning we have to take it seriously. Because this is one of the ways that we defeat the enemy, finding solutions for how to better our own self-government. What we mean by that is that the struggle, the fight, is not just with weapons and bombs, but also



the communities choose people. It's not because a given *compañero* or *compañera* runs their own campaign.

For example, how do the communities monitor or keep watch over their authorities. So the Vigilance Commission is in the caracoles at all times (inaudible). They monitor or keep watch over the authorities, but the *compañeros* and *compañeras*, they have in their head and heart the importance of the task of keeping watch over their authorities. Very recently, a member of the *Junta de Buen Gobierno* – because they have shifts – well this member had finished his shift and was in his community, and went, I don't know where, to make some purchases in the city and someone saw him there with a Tecate [a brand of beer] in his hand, but he was in the city. But so then that *compañero* or *compañera* who saw him notified the *Junta de Buen Gobierno* that so-and-so was seen with a Tecate, which is to say that our *compas* pursue their authorities wherever they go. They keep watch over them.

So for example, in democracy, how, even in the children's classes, do we go about teaching them this, so that they understand why their parents are in meetings?

The teachers say:

"Okay kids, our festival is coming up" -for example May 3. The community celebrates a festival on May 3, and so the teacher says "and you children, what are you going to do?"

"Well we want to have a *piñata* or we want to do a skit or a bit of theatre," the kids start to say and they consult with all the children about what they want to perform.

Dances, theatre pieces, *piñatas*, or whatever they want to do.

So the kids start to learn how to organize themselves. That is in addition to the fact that they accompany their moms and dads in the assemblies. Here one thing that we have learned in our resistance and rebellion is that we can't be afraid to go to the community and suggest our proposals – however difficult it may be. The *compañeros* of the *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* are learning this also; that however difficult it may be to do, we must go to the communities and make our proposal so that they talk about it, they think about it, and that they learn because we don't want a situation where the *compañeros*

Another example was when the army destroyed our first Aguascalientes. It was the same situation, we insurgents and *milicianos* were ready [to fight] because we knew that if they took a part of what we had, it would feel like total defeat—we thought very militarily then. Because in the military if you lose a battle, you're fucked and you have to recover lost ground, but it requires double the effort. So again, what guided us was this question:

"What do we want, death or life?"

"Well, life."

"Then let those assholes do what they're going to do; we're not going to kill them, but they're also not going to kill us."

"But what do we do if the ambush is already starting?"

"We have to send word ahead."

So we had to get out of the way, and in doing that we avoided a lot of death, on our side and also on that of the enemy. In one of the ambushes authorization was given for a response, and that's where General Monterola fell—he was a corporal then, but later we made him a General.

It also happened that way in the *Caracol* of Garrucha when the autonomous municipalities were dismantled, in the autonomous municipality of Ricardo Flores Magón. The same thing happened, the order was given not to respond to the violence that the enemy and the government wanted. That's also how we have managed to endure so many provocations from the *partidistas*—those who let themselves be manipulated.

This is what has happened to the *compañeros*, in the places where these attacks and provocations have been particularly harsh, the *caracol* of Morelia, the *caracol* of Oventik, of Garrucha, and of Roberto Barrios; the paramilitaries have been particularly cruel there in Roberto Barrios, Garrucha, Morelia, and Oventik.

For example, in San Marco Avilés, our bases of support are constantly harassed. What the paramilitaries do is try to force you to fall for a provocation, it's clear that they have been well trained by the government and the army, because they will frustrate you every possible way, taking your coffee, your beans, your corn, pulling up

whatever you plant, cutting down your plantain trees, carrying off the pineapple you grew; they just annoy you. Until one day our bases said enough is enough. The good thing is that this rebellion and resistance is organized collectively, so the *compañeros* and *compañeras* bases of support from San Marcos Avilés went to the *Junta de Buen Gobierno* [Good Government Council] to say: we have come to say that we can't take it anymore, we don't care if we die, but if we do we're going to take them with us.

So that's when the *Junta de Buen Gobierno* and the Clandestine Committee [CCRI] called the *compas* together and explained: we're not going to tell you no, we are first and foremost an organization; second, if any of you survive whatever happens, you're not going to be able to go home, you'll have to go into hiding because those assholes are not going to let you live, what they want is to finish off the bases of support. So what you have to do is create a document and a recording and we will get that to the government, so they know that their people there are going to die and so are we, and there you have it, whatever happens happens.

Later we tried to find one more way to deal with the problem. The *compañeros* and *compañeras* made their recording and we found a way to get it to the government, and it is still there, still valid. So the government, we know, I think gave money to the *partidistas* that are there, and they calmed down, because that's how the government works. For whatever they want to do, they provide a "project" or distribute a little bit of money, that's how the government has always worked. Who knows what they're going to do now because they're not going to have a government like that anymore.

We mention this about how we resist, because we have tried... well, we ask ourselves why would we kill another indigenous person. This idea enrages us, if I told you exactly how we talk about it in our assembly, well its horrible, because we begin to insult the government every way we can think of. We are filled with rage because they are so incredibly manipulative; and also because, and pardon my language, because they are idiots, male and female, that let themselves be manipulated to go against their own people.

For example, these people from the ORCAO. One part of the ORCAO is now coming to realize that what they are doing is totally

was a mistake to have all young people in there because they haven't had the experience of being an older Zapatista; they don't know what it was like during the times of clandestinity; the effort, the sacrifices and everything that required; the incredible courage and everything it took to rise up in 1994. The young people haven't had that experience. Things have been very easy for them.

So the communities realized that this wasn't working and they began organizing the young people to have their own school that teaches them their work – their task, their duty, their obligation, what it means to be a Zapatista authority. But this school is for all of the communities. All of the men, women, and young people so that they understand what their task and their duty is when they are chosen to be an authority.

Within this democracy one of the ways that we experiment with how to do things and help the *compas* is, for example, and I don't know what to call this, if its direct or indirect or somewhat direct, you'll have to figure out which one it is; but for example let's say that here in this room we are the authorities and among ourselves we know everyone, we know which *compañero* or *compañera* is concerned about the work, is really interested in the work, who wants and is able to help and orient others. We see who doesn't just talk about those things and but is really able to practice them.

So, what we do here is propose that a *compañero* or *compañera* be a member of the *Junta de Buen Gobierno*, if that is what we are choosing someone for. Now we here are authorities and because we know each other we propose that particular *compañero* or *compañera*, but we don't decide that here. Rather, we have to take that proposal to the communities and that is where we explain that we, as assembly members, think that this *compañero* or *compañera* will be a good choice to do this work because we have seen this or that.

And then the communities say, because this is what the communities ask us, "is it true what you say about this person? Because it will be on your head." And that is where we as authorities have to be truthful about things; if we really have seen that the *compañera* is interested and concerned and has demonstrated that she can orient and support others, then that is how the authorities help

equipment and went to the communities. They organized themselves by municipalities or by regions and went to carry out these services. So in that process they were able to detect who had what kinds of problems – hernias, tumors, appendicitis and these kinds of things. So it was no longer just letting the doctors who support us know what was going on. And we were also able to support the doctors, because this way they would already know what the patients had. It would be there on the film or on the x-ray or on the ultrasound.

So this really is a new kind of health [or healthcare] for us because we are able to detect our *compañeras* and *compañeros*' health problems beforehand, before the doctor. And also of course the *partidistas*' health problems.

It is through our resistance and rebellion that the *compañeros* have the freedom to practice what they think at a local level. For example, there are communities that began to create what they call the BAC. So, we asked them what that was and it turns out that it is the Autonomous Community Bank. That is, it belongs to the communities; they themselves created it.

And it is through our resistance and rebellion that we are improving our communications media. That's what we call it. That includes the Zapatista autonomous community radio that the *compañeros* of the *Junta de Buen Gobierno* themselves run. They use these radio broadcasts to transmit what they want the Zapatista and non-Zapatista communities to know.

It is through our resistance and rebellion that we practice a new democracy. That is where the *compañeros*, the communities, and the authorities try new things altogether. Sometimes we fail on those things but we realize when it happens so that we can see how to improve them.

For example, and this is really important, one of the changes that we had to make in order to improve was the following. Before, we mentioned that there is a new education where the children really do learn how to read and write and do math, so these young 18 or 19 year olds are named as authorities because they have these skills. So when the assembly meets, all of a sudden its all young people. The municipal council and also the MAREZ, are all young people. But it

wrong, but there is another part that nobody is interested in, but that gets paid and keeps making threats. A month ago the *compañeros* from Morelia had to resist what the ORCAO was doing. The CIOAC? Well you can imagine, they're the ones behind what happened to the *compa* Galeano and what happened in Morelia, that's the same CIOAC Histórica. So, because we want life, and thanks to our forms of resistance, we have not fallen victim to the government's manipulation and resorted to killing each other.

We have also resisted those who come here—visitors come from Mexico City—and tell us or tell our people that we are reformists because we aren't waging armed struggle, or others who come and tell us that we are extremists. So who are we supposed to believe? No, one must resist this kind of talk, and our answer is: it's one thing to say things and another thing to do things, because saying them is very easy, I can stand here and yell about what to do, but once you're here on the ground it's something else altogether.

Thanks to our resistance, *compañeros* and *compañeras*, sisters and brothers, we don't say that weapons are no longer necessary, but we have seen that disobedience, if it is an organized disobedience, works; the government can't enter here, thanks to the *compañeros* and *compañeras*. We see that we are going to continue to be able to improve, to organize our resistance and rebellion even better, demonstrating that we do not ask permission of anyone.

Rather, we agree among ourselves about what it is that we have to do, and that is what encourages us, as does the generation that is now with us, those who are 20 years old, the young people of today. They say: we are firm and ready, but teach us how to do what is required, how to govern ourselves. So now the zones, through the organization of their resistance and rebellion, are training a whole generation of young people, men and women, so that they can truly carry out what we have already said here, that word that has been around for centuries and forever—and seems religious but isn't—rebellion. Because it really is for always and forever and thus we need the new generations to prepare themselves so that the grandson of those large landowners like Absalón Castellanos Domínguez or Javier Solórzano can never return here.

So we have a great task in front of us to improve this process. This doesn't mean, *compañeros* and *compañeras*, brothers and sisters, that we are renouncing our arms, but rather that with this political, ideological, and rebellious understanding that constitutes our perspective, we have to turn this resistance into a weapon of struggle.

The *compañeros* of the *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* are telling us that we need another body, so we asked among the *compas* of the CCRI, "why are they saying this *compañeros*, *compañeras*? And they said "now we understand why the *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* had to be born."

They talked to us about it, explained it. When the MAREZ, the Autonomous Zapatista Municipalities in Rebellion were only loosely organized together—we could say it that way, because some had projects [from outside groups] and others no, some had nothing at all – then the *Junta de Buen Gobierno* was formed and began to regulate the municipalities so that their access to projects would be equal, even. Now the *Junta de Buen Gobierno* is realizing that there is an unevenness again. Some have more projects because they are more easily accessible, near the highway or closer in general and others are very far away and so don't receive anything. But we as the *Junta de Buen Gobierno*, they say, can't decide to create a new body, we have to follow the will of the assembly, and during the exchange between the zones they have to discuss if in fact this is the moment to create another body. Because we are also right now organizing this resistance and rebellion against the storm that is coming. And the *compañeros* are also saying: this is the moment, this is the time for a new body, because we are going to have to begin to act in resistance and rebellion on an inter-zone level. The thousands of Zapatistas have to fight together in their resistance and rebellion, so they have to be organized. But it is thanks to this terrain of struggle of resistance and rebellion that we have some guide for how we will carry this out. And that will be our tool, because we are not going to ask anyone for permission. For us, that era in which they [above] refused to recognize the Law on Indigenous Rights and Culture is over, we're done with that. If they do not want to respect that, well that reality becomes our tool.

cultural realms work in that time? Because now we *compañeros* and *compañeras* know about capitalism, now about neoliberal capitalism, and now we can describe how the political, ideological, economic and social realms work.

So that's why I'm telling you that with our resistance and rebellion we have a new form of education, a new form of health care. It is our resistance and rebellion that have taught us how to do these things, but we also have failures.

Look, before when we hadn't yet suggested or clarified to the NGOs what I explained to you the day before yesterday, we built things like clinics, or mini-clinics, because they provided funds to do so. And what was understood was:

"Ah a clinic. How great! Now we're going to have healthcare."

But about four or five years ago, we realized this wasn't true, because it implied organization and when the *compañeros* wanted to organize themselves... well, why am I telling you about this? Because, well imagine that we have here the clinic or the mini-clinic. And the communities are here five to six hours a day trying to get this clinic running. And the health *promotores* or *promotoras* come in shifts to attend the clinic. But at the same time we had started the work of what we call the three areas: which are medicinal plants [also midwifery and bone-setting]. And the *compañeros* and *compañeras* were learning what plants work for what kinds of things – cough, flu, parasites, pain, diarrhea, vomiting – all of these kinds of things. So, pure and simple, we weren't going to the clinic. So the *compañeros* and *compañeras* began to say:

"What is the purpose of the health *promotor* going to the clinic? We'll just have to feed them. But that's not actually working for us. What is working for us is the *promotora* who works with medicinal plants.

So this changed things for us. And this is where what we were talking about yesterday comes into play. We began to re-organize ourselves and at the same time re-educate ourselves. So what we did was that the *compañeros* that were the *promotores* carried out a campaign. They gathered things like the ultra sound machine, the equipment for pap smears, the lab equipment, and the dental

we need in social sciences here in our autonomous municipality. Here in our zone of rebellion. And I said, yes, good *compañeros* and *compañeras*. That's how we have to think about it. And they said:

"We want them to study history because in the SEP [the state school system], in the education that the government provides, they tell us that Mexico already had its revolution. That that's why Zapata died. So we want our kids to study the real history."

And I asked the *compañeros* and *compañeras*, well what do you mean by that? And they said:

"Well, we want our young people to wake up."

"But how?" I asked them again.

"Look," they said, "how do the different eras of modes of production or society function? These different things, like feudalism, slavery, capitalism, imperialism, and we don't know how many more."

And then the *compañeros* and *compañeras* said:

"In the time of slavery, how did politics work? How did ideology work? How did the economy work? What were the social and cultural realms like? How were things in that time? We need to know all of this to awaken children. So that they know."

And I answered the *compañeros* and *compañeras*: "I don't know. I didn't study that either. I didn't study at all *compañeros* and *compañeras*."

And they said: "So how should we do it?"

And I said: "Well, let's see who can help."

Here in Mexico there are a lot of students and sometimes they come down here, so we suggested this, that what we wanted to know about was how society and the mode of production worked in each of these eras.

"There's not a book about that. We don't know either." They responded.

Does anybody here know? Because that's what we want. What was the feudal era like? How did politics work in that time? How did ideology work in that time? How did the economic, social and

All right *compañeros*, we're going to continue later with this part about resistance and rebellion, with more examples, but throw some cold water on yourselves to wake up.

#### Notes:

[i] "Croquetas," or doggy biscuit, was the nickname assigned by the EZLN to Roberto Albores Guillén, whose bloody tenure as governor of Chiapas lasted from 1998-2000.

[ii] Member of the EZLN's civilian militia or reserves.

## Resistance and Rebellion II

May 7, 2015

Good evening, *compañeros*, *compañeras*, brothers and sisters.

It seems like a splash of cold water on our faces was indeed what we needed, because now we are definitely getting some thought-provoking ideas.

So we will need to translate this from Spanish to Tzeltal, Tojolabal, Tzotzil, and Chol, and from there a joint response will arise, because there are some things proposed by the *compañeros* at this table that we are interested in discussing.

We continue with our words of explanation and discussion on what resistance and rebellion mean to us as Zapatistas.

For us, as an organization that resists and struggles in rebellion, we first need to be clear on why one would resist and rebel. If we are not clear on the “Why?” the “For what?” and the “From what?” we simply cannot go forward.

For us, resistance and rebellion give us life. Why? Because we are clear on the “For what,” the “From what,” and the “For whom.” So we carry out what we’ve agreed upon and see if it brings us results, or better, if it brings us the results we wanted.

That’s how we are able to see that when resistance and rebellion are organized, they give life. And it is precisely because of resistance and rebellion that we are now here speaking with you. If it would have been otherwise, if ferocity had surpassed our sense of rebellion, we wouldn’t have paid attention to what happened next, the movement of January 12, 1994 [the civilian mobilizations calling for a halt to the war]. And if we hadn’t paid attention to that, who knows where our bones would be spread now; we wouldn’t be here speaking with you all.

So it is thanks to our rebellion and resistance that we were able to understand that movement, and that’s why we are here with you. But it’s also thanks to rebellion and resistance that we have been able to construct something for ourselves as Zapatistas, something small, tiny, like this [he holds up two fingers pressed together]. Can those in the back see this? Ah no? Well that’s exactly the point. This is how we

school take up the task of talking to the *partidistas*, saying why don’t we just run off the official teachers? Because look at my son, my daughter, she already knows how to read and write. She can already give a small speech. And look at yours, your son and your daughter—they don’t know how. So what are we going to do? Why would we be against the Zapatistas? So then they start to talk about it and the *partidistas* see that what the others are saying is true.

These are all things that our rebellion and resistance have created for us, have made possible for us. And I’m going to keep telling you about it because it is thanks to this resistance and rebellion that we are fighting. We’re demonstrating that one can take action without a gun. This is the important thing in these cases. But that doesn’t mean that we’re saying that the guns are not useful. One day they will be useful.

I want to repeat here *compañeros* and *compañeras*, brothers and sisters that there cannot be resistance or rebellion without first being organized. Because organization is people, it’s women and men, it is communities. So if there is no community, no people, if there aren’t men and women, then what do you have? Perhaps you have an artful way of speaking. Or you are good on the soapbox, as we say. But without people, that just vanishes into nothing.

So how do we make what a poet says into organization and practice? How do we put into organization and practice what a singer sings? How do we practice and create a new organization from what an artist illustrates? These are the questions, help me make a list of these things. This is the point. This is why we organize.

Because our resistance and rebellion (inaudible), it is with this resistance and rebellion that we have achieved our form of education.

That includes the program or the topics of study, let’s see, how do you say that? Who is a teacher here? The study materials. It is the *compañeros* and *compañeras* in the communities that have to decide what kind of education they want for their children. I remember a discussion with some *compañeros* who invited me to talk with them about what materials their young people were going to study. And one of the things they said was, well, in social science, the system says we’re supposed to talk about the bullet train. But what bullet train is going to come through here? No, what we have to think about is what

well let's go to the Zapatistas because if we go to the [state] officials, we'll need money.

So by doing justice within our resistance and rebellion, we are doing what we call *neutralizing*, because then those non-Zapatistas [who come for resolution of their problems in our justice system] do not act against us. But this is not because we're doing political work per se. We're just acting [on principle] and that is what they see.

Another thing that we do that has contributed to the construction of our resistance and rebellion is that we don't try to force people to be Zapatistas or bases of support. In our community practice, that is, in each community, we talk to others, those who aren't *partidistas*, because in the communities there are people who are *partidistas* and people who aren't *partidistas*. So we talk to them and if they want to join us in our school, which is part of the Zapatista education system, they can do so without paying.

All they have to do is fulfill the community agreement regarding how that community supports their education *promotor* or *promotora* [like teacher, literally *promoter*]. Each Zapatista community does this differently. The community may work in the *promotor* or *promotora*'s vegetable garden or cornfield to collect the fresh corn. They may collectivize and give beans to the education *promotor* or *promotora*. So the brothers who aren't Zapatistas but want to send their kids to our schools can do so as long as they fulfill this community determined requirement. Those brothers who aren't *partidistas* can then send their children to the Zapatista autonomous school.

The result of this work is that when the *compañeros* and *compañeras* have a celebration in the communities, for example November 17, which is the anniversary of the creation of the Zapatista army in 1983, during those celebrations, the Zapatista children and the little boys and girls whose parents are not *partidistas* participate all together. They recite their poems or give small speeches or performances so their parents can watch.

During these parties the *partidistas* don't participate, unless they happen to play the keyboard. But their children don't participate. So then the parents whose children are in the autonomous Zapatista

began—small—so small you can't see it, but if that resistance and rebellion is organized, it starts to multiply.

When this thing was that small, we used to say amongst ourselves, "One day, we're going to speak with all Mexicans, with brothers and sisters, *compañeros* and *compañeras* from all over the world." Well, here it is. That now exists in reality. But for this to happen, one must resist and rebel.

In talking about resistance and rebellion, we're not saying that there's only one way. That's why we say not to copy, that it's not about copying. But for us, the Zapatistas, our self-government—that is, our autonomy to govern ourselves—is thanks to resistance and rebellion. If we would have dedicated our energy only to bombs and bullets, to military efforts, then *compañeros* and *compañeras*, brothers and sisters, we wouldn't be here right now, and that's the truth.

But because it was understood that resistance is also a weapon in the struggle, and that organizing resistance was important, we are able to be here today and you can see this in our actions; that's how we are battling capitalism. For us, resistance and rebellion has no end. That's how we understand it in practice, because through our resistance and rebellion we can meet our needs.

For example, we found an answer to the lack of education available to us, we found our own [education] *promotores*, and we figured out how to feed those *compañeros* and *compañeras*. And with the problem of health, we sought out and trained *compañeros* and *compañeras*. Then we found they needed more support and assistance because it's also a question of specialization in health, as it isn't always the same medicines that work; there are always new types of illnesses. So we had to resolve that issue also.

In each instance, with each step we take to resolve each problem, we have to again organize our resistance. As a joke we used to say, "Why was it again that we wanted autonomy?" So our answer to that was, and you have already noticed how we talk around here, "To fuck over capitalism!" And then, again how we talk here, "The thing is you have to work really fucking hard to build it!"

So that's why we say that it never ends. With each step that we take, we construct, and this is always accompanied by resistance and rebellion, organized, of course.

Resistance and rebellion guide our laws as Zapatistas. Through resistance and rebellion, we create and improve our laws and accords, always through assemblies in the communities, always through democracy. That is to say, through the thought and the voice of the people.

The justice we create is strengthened by our resistance. Here I want to give you some examples because it's really necessary to have resources. First, we are clear amongst ourselves what it is to create a justice that is different from the capitalist system, but in putting it into practice we start running into difficulties. For example, in the case of a murder: under our theory our law states that if I am the murderer, then I need to work not only to provide for my family but also to provide for the family of the person I murdered.

Once this actually happens the problems arise, because when you put the murderer to work you need to give him the tools. But then he might escape; some have in fact escaped. So you would have to kill him so that he doesn't escape, but we wouldn't do that. Why? What's the problem? Well, because there isn't a jail where all the work that would need to be done would be inside. That is, everything the murderer needed to work would have to be inside the jail, as well as some way to convert this work into maize, beans, everything that is necessary in order to eat and to distribute food to the family who suffered a loss and the family responsible for that loss. But this doesn't exist; there aren't the resources for that. So what's the system's problem? In some jails they do have these resources, but they are stolen by the same people who mete out justice, or who say that they mete out justice.

So what do we do when this type of problem arises? Because it has arisen in the past. What the *compañeros* do for now is mediate while the murder is being investigated. The authorities speak with the family that suffered the murder and the family responsible, and that is how the information is shared and communication carried out. While the investigation is going on, sometimes the family responsible for the damage might say, "We will give them 40,000 pesos," and then the

where there is a lockbox or whatever you call it there where the money is kept. They decided that the *Junta de Buen Gobierno* can't take money out of the box without the presence of the Vigilance Commission. The Vigilance Commission is made up of the community bases of support who are taking their turn there in the *caracol*. Every day, every month, every year you can find them there with the *Junta de Buen Gobierno* and the Information Commission, which is the *compañeros* and *compañeras* who are *comités* [Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee, CCRI] or who are *candidatos* or *candidatas* to be CCRI, or *suplentes* or *suplentas* to be CCRI.

So these two commissions accompany the process any time that the box is opened, not that box that holds the dead but that of the money. Then one of the two commissions asks:

"So let's see *compa* from the *Junta de Buen Gobierno*, how much do you need?"

"Well, I need 15,000 pesos."

"Let's see." They take out the 15,000 pesos and give it to the *compa*. "Count it so that later you can't say that it wasn't all there."

So the *compa* from the *Junta de Buen Gobierno* counts it and goes to buy what they need. Upon their return in the afternoon, they meet with the two commissions again and the *compa* from the Junta with the two commissions look together at the accounts. They check how any money has been spent, or whether there is anything missing.

So that is how we create trust in the accounts presented by the *Junta de Buen Gobierno*. This accounting and presentation of information happens every six months, every three months, and every year. But because the process is controlled, because the Junta is not just on their own, there are people who can confirm that the accounts are accurate.

It is through our resistance and rebellion that we have found a way to do justice. It is one part of how we... let's see, how could I explain it? By carrying out this process without doing politics, we could say, without giving political talks to the *partidistas*, but instead by resolving their problems, it's clear that we do not sell justice, that justice cannot be bought. And in doing justice there is no fee; people aren't charged for justice. So then the *partidistas* realize and decide,



launch any project or work without informing and consulting the thousands of men and women.

So *compañeros* and *compañeras*, brothers and sisters, if we say no to a given proposal or project, it is not necessarily because it is bad, but rather because we have our own processes. For example, regarding the work relations with some NGOs that are still working here, they think that if they ask me and I say no, it's just me saying no. And if they ask me and I say yes, then that's good enough. But the reality is that there are thousands of us, so it takes a long time to discuss the project, to decide whether we want to accept it or not, or how we want it to be. This takes awhile. And when the answer is given by our people and then the people from the outside who offered the project or proposal say well no, we can't offer it any more, the moment has passed, it's no longer possible, well then, that's that. That's what our resistance and rebellion is for. If there's no project from the outside, we will just continue working.

Within our resistance and rebellion, there are two things that the *compañeros* of the communities and their three levels of government never let go of, things that can't be bypassed. One, the progress on everything that has been agreed upon in the community has to be reported back to the community: how is it going? For whatever kind of work we do, health, education, agro-ecology, and all the other kinds of work, there has to be an account or report: What is happening? How is it going? Why is that happening? How did you resolve it? What are you doing now? At the same time, there must be reports on all of the funds that have come in and on what has been spent.

In the practice of our resistance and rebellion, the *compañeros* and *compañeras* have been innovative in the practice of accountability, where the *Junta de Buen Gobierno* or the MAREZ must provide clear accounts. The *compañeros* and *compañeras* asked how can we be certain that what the accounts say is true, even though it is *compañeros* and *compañeras* who are doing them, even though they carry the name of *Junta de Buen Gobierno*. But do we know that they're right?

So the *compañeros* and *compañeras* innovate. They get creative because there is a lack of trust, so they have to figure out how to create trust. So they created the rule for the *Junta de Buen Gobierno*,

authority says, "It's not up to me to accept. I will need to ask the family that suffered the damage because we as authorities can't put a price on a life."

So this is why the authority plays a mediating role. The authority goes and relays the offer to the family that suffered the damage and it goes back and forth until an agreement is reached. That's how it has worked and how we resolve things today. And it's there where resistance and rebellion come in—because as I was saying yesterday, it's not enough to have strength and rage in the face of the enemy, in the face of capitalism—there are also things that we know we cannot do, such as stealing. We know perfectly well why there is theft, and why there is violation of laws. Where do those problems come from? Because there are violations when there is theft.

So all of these things need to be investigated because a lot of times these problems arise with drugs and alcohol, with drunkards. So what the authorities do is carry out an intense campaign in the communities to prevent this from happening, to prevent violations committed by drunks or drug addicts by reminding them how difficult things will be for them if they commit crimes; this includes preventing them from killing as well. So where this does end up happening with is the *partidistas* [political party followers or members].

So then we end up having problems because it turns out that we end up taking care of the *partidista* murderers, feeding them and policing them to make sure that they don't escape. That's why we say that Zapatista justice is for everyone, no matter who you are. It's a nice thing to say but in practice it's not easy to do because now you're talking about taking care of someone for a week where you have to heal them, feed them. And watch out because his family might go complain that you're violating his human rights because you're not feeding him. So then this became a problem for us Zapatistas.

I tell you this, *compañeros* and *compañeras*, not so that you become discouraged or demoralized. It's so that you can take note that in order to govern yourselves you must organize yourselves, and recognize all it takes in order to govern yourselves.

What we did in order to resolve that problem was that we said to the *partidistas*, “You know what, Mr. *Comisariado* [local authority], we are going to resolve this case, we are going to investigate it and everything, but you all need to keep the murderer over there in your community, or take him to that government you believe in, the bad government.” So then the *partidista* family says, “No, we want to resolve the problem here because there [with the official government] we won’t know where they will hold him, we won’t know how they will violate the family’s rights, and we also don’t have money to go back and forth, and on top of that, there’s the money needed for an attorney.”

So what we say is that they will need to jail them and be responsible for them in their community, so that the *partidista* community realizes how much work it is, how many resources it requires, and what a problem the murderer is because you have to take care of him, you have to feed him, and this makes for a lot of work. And so we have educated the *partidistas* like this, and little by little we see them fighting drug addiction. Where this is really hard for them is in those places where this problem is really out of control; they even tell us, “We have already picked him up and taken him to the government maybe four or five times, but the bad government doesn’t know what to do with him either and just lets him go.”

It is in our resistance and rebellion, where we’re forging a path, where we’re seeing how to put into practice and improve implementation of our seven principles of lead by obeying, that we say that the people rule and the government obeys.

Here I want to give you all an example of what we experience with “the people rule and the government obeys.” For example, in a municipal assembly, which can be three or four regions—with each region having dozens of communities, which is why we call it an assembly of the autonomous municipality—the authorities of the MAREZ [Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities in Rebellion] put forward a proposal perhaps for a cooperative or a collective work project. Then it circulates among the communities and when the time comes to see what the people think, then the majority say, “Yes, we are in agreement,” and there are one or two communities that say, “We are not in agreement.”

When the municipal authorities or the *Junta de Buen Gobierno* launch or present their proposal in the assembly, the assembly of authorities, the way they do things goes like this. Pretend that we here are in what we call the maximum or highest-level assembly. Here is where we have the first round of discussion about the problem. When we feel we’ve gotten to the point where we can’t go any further, and we haven’t found a solution, we divide up into regions. So we would divide everyone here in this room into 10, 15, 20 regions in order to go discuss it. Then we come back to the assembly and talk again until we find a solution.

If we don’t find an answer through that discussion because it just couldn’t be determined here, we take the proposal to the communities—the discussion is extended to every single community. We have to find a solution and that solution can come from a community, from a particular group, or it can come from an individual – something that a *compañero* or *compañera* suggests – or it can come from a whole community. Then that word, that opinion, that thought goes all the way to the highest-level assembly until we decide which proposal is best for resolving this problem.

So you can see here that the autonomous authorities do not do what they do alone. That is, their work is discussed and considered by all of the *compañeros* and *compañeras* bases of support in the communities. For however good a government or *Junta de Buen Gobierno* they may be, they can’t just make their own policies. Rather, what they propose has to be approved by the people, by the communities. The communities thus know from the very beginning what it is that is being proposed, what it is that their authorities want to do, and how they intend to do it.

This way of doing things has meant that our authorities can’t just do whatever they want, whether that’s at the zone level, in the *Junta de Buen Gobierno*, the MAREZ, the Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities in Rebellion, or at the level of the local authorities. There are always assemblies locally in each community. No local authority can do something without the local assembly knowing about it. It is the same thing at the municipal level. They cannot launch any project without the community being informed. It is the same at the level of the *Junta de Buen Gobierno*. They cannot begin or

When I say that we need to watch over our government and that we need to be alert and all of that, we do this through our practice of struggle, of resistance and rebellion. We don't leave our autonomous governments to govern alone, we are very other in this sense. Of course, each one of us has responsibility in our work areas, so we learn that it isn't just the *compañero* and *compañera* authorities who have to be good at thinking through proposals, we all have to become good at this.

So the way it works is that our authorities have meetings, for example in one of the Autonomous Municipalities in Rebellion. And there may be 15-20 people in a meeting among the *compañeros* and *compañeras* from all the work areas: health, education, agro-ecology, commerce and these kinds of things. So one of the *compañeros* or *compañeras* in charge of a given area says, "I am having such-and-such problem," to the collective gathered there, that is, all of the rest of the authorities who are in charge of other areas. So they begin to discuss the problem among all of the authorities. That's why we call it collective government. And from there ideas begin to come out, proposals. But that doesn't mean that whatever they come up with is implemented directly.

They can't simply implement these ideas straightaway because first they have to go to the municipal assembly of authorities. That is where all of the *comisariadas* [local land authorities], *agentas* [local authorities], *comisariados* and *agentes* gather. There the *compañeros* present their proposal for solving the problem. Among them—the *compañeros* who are authorities, the assembly members, and the authorities of the communities, men and women—use our Zapatista law as their guide. There they might say, "oh we already know that's allowed because it has already been discussed; our communities have already accepted that before so we can decide here that this proposal can go forward." And the *compañeros* and *compañeras*, *comisariados*, *comisariadas* might then approve the proposal. But the *compañeros* and *compañeras* who are authorities know when to say "we can't decide here that we are all in agreement. We have to go consult our *compañeros* and *compañeras* in the communities."

So a discussion begins where we ask them to give us their reasons, and to see if it's clear what is meant by collective work and what the goal of collective work is. Then the communities that are not in agreement present their argument: "It's because we are very far away, we have a lot of expenses." And so from there the municipality, that is, the authorities and the communities that are in agreement, begin to think of a way to make collective work a closer possibility for those who say they don't agree. I'm not sure if you all understand me.

So then the discussion goes back over to the community that was not in agreement, and then the community authority comes back and says, "The community still doesn't want to." So then the assembly, the majority that does agree, asks him, "But why?"

– "Well, it's because the people rule."

And then the discussion begins once again and they reply:

– "You are mistaken, *compañeros* from X community, you are mistaken. You're understanding things backward. We who make up the majority here will rule because the majority of the municipality's communities are in agreement."

So then the authority returns to the community to say that the majority, the voice of the people, is what rules, and you all must obey. The authority has to explain it until they're finally convinced. The municipal authority has to go directly to the communities to explain things, and during the visit the authority observes many things. Sometimes when the municipal authority visits the community and speaks directly with the bases—complying with what our seven principles say about convincing the people, not defeating them—the municipal authority realizes that the community authority has not been explaining things well, because he's the one who doesn't want to do the collective work project. Then the community automatically punishes its authority because he was supplanting the community's voice.

That's why I was telling you all that about self-government, it's not that we can't do it, but that we must struggle a lot to do it. We have achieved it through our resistance and rebellion because we do a lot of political work, ideological work, a lot of explaining about how

we see capitalism, and a lot of evaluating of how we are doing as an organization.

That's where we realize that the only thing we can do is struggle with all of our will and a lot of enthusiasm, a lot of work, a lot of effort, and a lot of sacrifice. That is, a lot of resistance and a lot of rebellion. That's how we're going to be able to keep on struggling because we know full well that capitalism is not going to let us live in peace.

Our resistance and rebellion has given us the strength to put this into practice—to exercise collective freedom—because a lot of things that we come across on our path, in our governing process, we are figuring out how to resolve and improve from within our freedom. For example, there's what I was saying earlier about the zones training a new generation of young people because that's what allows us to understand things, but we don't stop with just understanding. We have realized over these last 20 years that if all we do is say things, then nothing will get done.

So once when we discover what is important, what is necessary, once the decision is made by the people to move forward on that work, we begin to put it into place. First we have to take into account the voice and the decision of the people, and from there we begin the work. Because we have to try it and see if it works out, kind of like experimenting; that's how we go about improving things.

That's why we say that our resistance and rebellion is what has helped us improve our practice of freedom in what we want to do. For example, the *compañeros* and *compañeras* of the communities have the freedom to replace an authority who does not comply with the community's rules, or to reprimand or punish an authority who doesn't comply with the rules.

Our resistance and rebellion have given us the freedom to create, invent, and imagine how to make our government work better in order to have a better life, and that is what is helping us figure out how to keep improving how we govern, how to keep improving the work of our autonomous governments.

With our resistance and rebellion, the Zapatista people, men, and women now have the right to speak their word, that is, they have

## **Resistance and Rebellion III**

**May 8, 2015**

Good afternoon *compañeros*, *compañeras*, brothers and sisters.

Perhaps by continuing our explanation of how resistance and rebellion are weapons for us you will better understand some of the things that our *compañeros* and *compañeras* here at the table have talked about.

Through our resistance and rebellion, we have come to understand that by putting resistance and rebellion into practice we confirm that we will not allow in our struggle what happened in 1910, when so many of our fellow Mexicans died. Who took advantage of that situation?

Our resistance and rebellion teach us that it was the carrancistas [followers of Carranza], the obregonistas [followers of Obregon] and the maderistas [followers of Madero], all landowners, who took advantage of the situation to govern, to put themselves into power. And that bunch of bastards who are in power now are the great-grandchildren of those same people, and so it is our resistance and our rebellion that tell us that we must govern ourselves.

But our resistance and rebellion also tell us that just because we, people of the same race, are the ones who govern, does not mean—and we have said this from the beginning—that just because we call it a *Junta de Buen Gobierno* [Good Government Council], does not mean that this government by its very nature is good. Rather that we must monitor it, take care of it, keep watch over it.

That is why I'm saying that what the *compañeros* and *compañeras* said is true. Even if we bring indigenous people to power, if the people are not organized below to monitor their government then we will get even bigger rats than before. Because a poor indigenous person has never seen the kinds of things, so many things, that he or she sees in that governing office. So that's what happens to us in that position. Thus it is important not to just trust. We have to actually be organized to monitor our government. That is why we say it is the people who rule.

hard time speaking Spanish.” And so we have to do what the *compas* say.

It’s our way of walking, working, struggling, with our resistance and rebellion. Because we think that this way, we who represent are not indispensable, that everyone must learn, practice, and carry out these tasks so that before one goes, before they return to where we all must go [the earth], they have confidence in the *compañero* or *compañera* who will take over. Like a doctor giving a medical consultation, we provide support by drawing on our own experiences. Because it’s not the same to have the *compañeros* and *compañeras* just sitting there and listening; when they take the microphone and talk, then you see it’s like the *compas* say—now his hand isn’t shaking, but just a little while ago it was. Because it’s true, it’s not the same thing.

So what is needed is for the *compañeros* to practice, and to have us there helping them because once we’re dead we can no longer be consulted. Or can we? So there it is. It’s not the same when you are next to them, tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, during the moments of your life and you can say, “Listen *compañero*, *compañera*, you think it’s okay how I have it here written out? You think it’s okay how I am going to explain it, discuss it, guide it?” And so that’s how we support each other, that’s how we help.

That’s why we say that we are very *other*. Because we move as if trying on a shoe, or clothes—you measure and see if it fits, try it on, and if not then you keep looking for the one that fits. That’s how we are *compañeros*, *compañeras*, brother and sisters, that is what our resistance and rebellion is about.

We’ll continue tomorrow.

the freedom of expression. And they have the right to be heard, whether they are in agreement or not, they still have the right to be heard.

But at the same time, the people, men and women of free expression, are also free to think and propose, free to present opinions on what they think is a good idea or not, free to make proposals on how things could improve or on a new way of doing things; they have the freedom to study, think, and present new proposals. They are free to analyze and then say if they agree or don’t agree, they are free to discuss in order to reach the best possible agreement, the one with the most advantages, And for that, things have to be thoroughly discussed. And finally, our people have the freedom to decide which ideas will be put into place.

Within our resistance and rebellion, we have discovered something thanks to the practices of the *compañeras*. When we speak of the three areas of health—midwifery, bone setting, and medicinal plants—it was the *compañeras* who said that we need to rescue that past culture where medical doctors weren’t necessary (because indeed, we had no access to them before), where the people lived with the help of plants, roots, leaves, and hulls. One day they said why are we going to throw our tears into the grave, packing the earth down over our dead, burying all their wisdom and intelligence there; we need to rescue it.

So we reflected on that and were able to understand it in the political sense. What was that sense? We said, “What happened in 1810? What happened in 1910? When Villa died, when Zapata died, the struggle ceased with them.” That’s what happens when things are concentrated in just one person, the rage, wisdom, intelligence, the *art*, the art of struggle, of fighting. We said, “Why is it just us, the political leadership of the clandestine committee?” And so we began to think about what to do.

So, from within our resistance and rebellion we said, “So that this doesn’t happen to us, we need to give our inheritance to our *compañeros*, that is, to the new generation. But this inheritance is not about land, a cow, or even a louse or a flea, right? No, it’s about struggle, about the organization—the EZLN, and about autonomy.”

And in the process of that experience, reflecting on the how and what and all that, one of our *compañeros* and *compañeras* said,

– “But we’re still missing something, *compas*.”

– “No, I think we’re ok.”

– “No.”

– “But what’s missing?”

– “We still need to know what the Sixth, the Other [the Other Campaign], will have as inheritance.”

We then begin asking, “What Other, what Sixth?” because there isn’t an organization that speaks for it. It’s not like the autonomy that already belongs to the communities and is their form of organization, where they govern themselves, women and men, and the EZLN as an organization is also there, keeping on. So then, what Other, what Sixth? Or who exactly from the Sixth? So the answer was, “We’ll have to get to that later, *compas*.”

So now as a collective we have started to see what to do. And with that resistance and rebellion we see that it’s true what the *compas* are saying: “What?” “How?”

We don’t have anything to give as inheritance, on the contrary. It is our *compañeros* and *compañeras* from the communities who have an inheritance to provide to the *compañeros* and *compañeras*, those from the Sixth who are willing to engage with the truth. That’s how the Little School was born, and that’s what I mean that it’s the *compañeros* and *compañeras* who provide the inheritance.

But before that all happened, before they became Little School teachers and *guardianes*, we had heard what I was telling you about the *compañeras*, where they said that we needed to rescue things and not bury them. And it’s true, we would cry for our family members when they died, but we buried their wisdom and intelligence with them. I don’t know, we said something about how we should not be selfish, that we have to teach the *compañeros* and *compañeras*. And we are not going to live forever, even if the enemy doesn’t kill us, even if we don’t die in an accident, the fact is that we are all going to have to leave sometime, we are all going to have to return [to the earth] sometime.

So then we started to reflect on why it’s always us with the microphone. “Why is it always me?” we asked ourselves. “Why are we going to be afraid of the people?” Just like how they are the ones who govern now, it should be the same with this issue. And if we’re going to provide an inheritance then it should be complete: they, the *compañeros* and *compañeras*, should be the teachers.

So we had to organize this and encourage them, and the truth is the *compañeros* from the communities are going to know what to do when we’re no longer here. That’s the point, you know, that we needed to give them the space to do it, and it turns out they know how to explain things better than we can, that’s the truth. I’m an insurgent, I’m in the encampment, I’m not in the community. They are the ones who live it daily, not me. I’m in the camp, giving the orders, of course.

It was through our resistance and rebellion that we understood how to resolve this problem of giving orders. The previous way of doing things wasn’t the fault of the *compañeros*, those who have carried forward these 20 years of governing, and it wasn’t our fault either, because it was necessary at the time, we trained and prepared ourselves to follow orders. In the military orders have to be followed and not debated. There is no democracy, and that’s how we prepared the *compañeros milicianos* and *milicianas*, that’s how we were able to control thousands of combatants; it worked not to argue over orders. But when the time came to construct autonomy, it was difficult to change our thinking, because governing is not about orders but about agreements.

But when we’re organized, we can create and undo, and this can be seen in actions. We had to do political and ideological work once again in order to make sure the *compañeros* understood. That’s why we say that each thing has its purpose, its function, and these are not the same. It can be done, but it requires organization.

Because we think and believe that...this is why I told you this morning that “I don’t like being up here.” But the way that we’re organized is that what our people ask us to do we have to do. We who have been many years here up in front, we want the *compañeros* to also be there, now that we have given them the space, we want them to take this place. But the *compañeros* say, “The things is that we have a