

# Subcommander Marcos' Discourse on Mexico's Intellectual Class\*

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## ABSTRACT

This paper traces the trajectory of Subcommander Marcos' attitude toward Mexico's intellectual class as revealed in a discourse spanning almost three decades (1980-2009). It argues that Marcos' attitude was neither sweepingly anti-intellectual, nor static: rather, it was nuanced and embodied continuities and progressions. Marcos' approach toward intellectuals is shown to have been influenced not merely by his personal attitude but also by external political developments. This paper also engages with the question of to what extent Marcos himself can be deemed an intellectual, and contextualizes him within a tradition of intellectuals who have concerned themselves with the role of the intellectual in society.

**Key Words:** Subcommander Marcos, intellectuals, discourse, Mexico, EZLN

## INTRODUCTION

Over a decade ago, James Petras (1999, 37) noted how "The relationship between the EZLN and the intellectuals, both in Mexico and overseas, is complex and changing".<sup>1</sup> More recently, Jorge Volpi (2004, 355) has commented that "The Subcomandante's relationship with the intellectuals represents, without a doubt, one of the most problematic, fascinating and complex chapters of the zapatista uprising". In the pages that follow, I concentrate on Subcommander Marcos' relationship with Mexico's public

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1 Petras (1999, 36f) provides a brief outline of the interaction between Mexican intellectuals and the Zapatistas up to August 1996.

intellectuals as a class, showing how this too was both complicated and fluid. More specifically, by tracing the trajectory of Marcos' attitude toward Mexico's intellectual class as revealed in a discourse which spans almost three decades (1980-2009), I intend to illustrate that such an attitude was neither indicative of what Carlos Monsiváis calls "the traditional anti-intellectualism of the political left",<sup>2</sup> nor static: rather, it was more nuanced and embodied both continuities and progressions. Furthermore, I will demonstrate how Marcos' approach toward Mexico's intelligentsia was influenced not merely by his personal attitude but also by external political developments, as he courted Mexico's intellectuals during the initial years of the rebellion (pp. 13-18 below), then distanced himself from them following the "failure of the indigenous law" in 2001 (pp. 18-20 below), and subsequently incurred the displeasure of many of them through his criticisms of Andrés Manuel López Obrador during the latter's presidential campaign in 2006 (pp. 21-30 below). Finally, I will also briefly engage with the question of to what extent Marcos himself can be deemed an intellectual, and attempt to set the Subcommander within a tradition of intellectuals who have concerned themselves with the role of the intellectual in society.

A question that naturally arises at this point is why does Marcos' discourse on intellectuals merit study? The most immediately apparent answer is that Marcos' discourse in general is important as he is by far and away the most prominent Latin American revolutionary since Che Guevara; is a Mexican icon of major import; is one of the leading luminaries of the anti-globalization movement; and has been dubbed "the best Latin American writer today", a "prominent figure of Mexican letters", and "an essayist of the first order".<sup>3</sup>

However, another reason poses itself, one which relates to Marcos' role as military commander and spokesperson of the Zapatista movement, and one which has wider implications related to how social movements and subaltern peoples can effectively confront the state. Since it rapidly became evident that the Zapatistas could not defeat the Mexican state militarily, an alternative strategy was needed, one more in keeping with the Gramscian political-philosophical currents then circulating among the Latin American Left: to take the battle to the arena of hegemony, waging a "war of position" by undermining the ideological underpinnings of

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2 In EZLN 4 (2003, 24).

3 By, respectively, Régis Debray (1995), Juan Pellicer (1996, 199), and Ilan Stavans (1997, 481). The latter included one of Marcos' communiqués in his edited collection of *The Oxford Book of Latin American Essays*.

the State through the forging of a counter-hegemony by means of discourse.<sup>4</sup> However, in order to succeed on this new front, the Zapatistas needed to foster what Gramsci termed “organic intellectuals”,<sup>5</sup> in contradistinction to “traditional intellectuals” who either pride themselves on their independence from politics, shunning direct involvement in social movements, or worse, become mouthpieces spouting the regime’s ideology thereby helping the ruling elite to exercise hegemony. Marcos’ discourse on intellectuals thus critiques intellectuals who are complicit with the ruling elite in manufacturing hegemony, while also engaging those who hold themselves aloof from the struggle in an attempt to make them organic to the movement by calling for their active participation in it. A further complexity is added to Marcos’ discourse by the need, when courting these intellectuals, to stipulate that they must connect organically with the Zapatistas but on the movement’s own terms, and not try to hijack or lead it thereby transforming it. In short then, the Subcommander’s discourse on intellectuals is important because it both attests to the importance of intellectuals in any “war of position” undertaken through the production of a counter-hegemony, and because it reveals concretely and in detail the discursive strategy employed by the movement that has thus far enjoyed most success in challenging the Mexican state both theoretically, by undermining its ideological underpinnings, and practically, through the creation of autonomous communities.<sup>6</sup>

This having been said, it is perhaps best to state clearly the limitations of the present study. First, it focuses exclusively on Marcos’ discourse on Mexico’s intellectual class, leaving aside completely discussion of his interaction and relations with individual intellectuals both inside and outside Mexico.<sup>7</sup> Second, and most significantly, the exploratory nature of this

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4 On the considerable influence Gramsci exercised over the Latin American Left and the continent’s social movements, see Arnaldo Córdova ([1987]1991), José Aricó (1988), Anne Showstack Sassoon (1988), and Evelina Dagnino (1998).

5 Gramsci (1971, 5) argued that “every social group, coming into existence [...] creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals”, and that these organic intellectuals can perform the opposing functions of either maintaining the status quo through the formation of hegemony or forging a counter-hegemony that challenges this.

6 For Gramscian interpretations of the Zapatista movement and its struggle, see (in Spanish) the collected volume edited by Dora Kanoussi (1998); and (in English), most notably, Kathleen Bruhn (1999), Adam David Morton (2000) and (2007, 171-200), and Nicolina Montesano Montessori (2009, 87-89, 136, 274, 287), but also Chris Gilbreth and Gerardo Otero (2001, 19), and Richard Gilman-Opalsky (2008, 254). For Gramsci providing inspiration for the Zapatistas, see Daniele Di Piramo (2010, 107). Ben V. Olguín (2002, 172-173) goes further than any, stating that “Subcomandante Marcos [...] is a model of the Gramscian ‘organic intellectual’”.

7 For a brief inspection of the Subcommander’s relations with individual intellectuals,

paper requires emphasizing, for it does not aim at being definitive but rather is intended as an initial point of embarkation for further discussion on this hitherto neglected theme. Nonetheless, and at the very least, I believe that the following examination of the Subcommander's writings and utterances on Mexico's intellectuals reveals a degree of coherence, consistency and logical progression in his discourse that challenges José Rabasa's (2010, 57) cautionary observation that, "In addressing the subject positions of Marcos [...] we must keep in mind that 'he' is a series of communiqués, interviews, and speeches that have been recorded on video, and not some sort of coherent and consistent self behind the statements he utters".

I shall now proceed by providing some context to Marcos discourse on intellectuals; first by observing the interaction of Mexico's intellectuals with the nation's power holders during the twentieth century, and then moving on to examine their response specifically to the Zapatista uprising.

## **MEXICO'S INTELLECTUALS AND THE RULING ELITE DURING THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**

Jorge Volpi (2001, 144-145) argues that Mexico's intellectuals have typically colluded with those in power:

Like a quarrelsome old married couple who after years of living together can no longer find reasons to separate, intellectuals and the powerful in Mexico remain joined by habit and custom [...] in most cases intellectuals have preferred to seek prosperity in the uneasy balance between criticizing power, on the one hand, and yielding to power's seductions, on the other [...] If Mexican society has finally managed to complete its difficult divorce from the PRI party, then perhaps it is time for something similar to take place between Mexican intellectuals and political power.<sup>8</sup>

Nor was Volpi the first to voice this view. Roderic Ai Camp and Charles

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both foreign and Mexican, see: Petras (1999, 37), Anne Huffschmid (2004, 94-97, 251-263, 360, 421-426), Jorge Volpi (2004, 175-180), and Nick Henck (2007, 234-237, 305, 349). For the most recent and in-depth discussion of Marcos' relations with certain specific individual Mexican intellectuals, see Henck (2011).

8 Volpi (2001, 147) then lists specific intellectuals who had colluded with the political elite. Cf. Victoria E. Campos (2001, 59), who distinguishes between intellectuals from pre-1968 and those who came later, arguing that the former legitimized the regime whereas the latter critiqued it.

A. Hale (1991, 12) had previously observed that “Mexican intellectuals have fallen into two broad groups at any given historical juncture: those serving the State and those independent of it. Overwhelmingly, the former have been the norm in Mexico”.<sup>9</sup> So too, Sergio Zermeno (1993, 282), when surveying Mexico of the 1980s, had written that “the intellectuals [...] have put themselves at the service of the *núcleo duro* [i.e the state’s central core] in exchange for only limited influence but much personal prestige”.<sup>10</sup> More recently, Nicola Miller (1999, 44) asserted that “Mexico does, indeed, register the highest overall level of co-optation [by the State of intellectuals] among the five countries discussed in this book [i.e. Mexico, Argentina, Peru, Cuba and Chile]”, adding that “the most zealous policies of co-optation were not pursued until the 1970s”. Miller (1999, 53) continued: “[...] the one-party state sponsored the institutions that supported intellectuals, thereby maintaining a situation in which intellectuals saw sufficient advantages in co-operating with the state to ensure that the tacit alliance between the two proved remarkably durable”. Finally, Yvon Grenier (2001, 127) quotes Octavio Paz writing in *Hora Cumplida*: “[Contemporary Mexican] intellectuals are part of the system”. Grenier (2001, 131) then points out that Paz wrote, in his *Labyrinth of Solitude*, that in their desire not to sacrifice their material and ideological positions, Mexican intellectuals, “[h]ave made of compromise an art and a way of life [...] they have lost their independence, and as a result their critique has been watered down, by dint of prudence or Maquiavelianism”. Paz himself, it will be remembered, while far from uncritical of the government, was employed for 24 years (1944-1968) in the foreign service, culminating in his being appointed ambassador to India. Indeed, Ilan Stavans (1993, 115-116) has concluded that:

From antagonism to consent, today Paz is even portrayed by some as a sell-out, one with suspicious ties to the oligarchy [...] he is a personal friend of President Salinas de Gortari [...] He is seen as a tentacle of the state, a conformist who traded his dreams for institutional recognition [...] Paz had become a conservative, a right-wing supporter of the Mexican establishment. His present politics mirror those of Mexico’s ruling party [...].

Paz was not the only intellectual to be granted an ambassadorship by the state: as Miller (1999, 87) points out, “Carlos Fuentes was rewarded

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<sup>9</sup> See too, Roderic A. Camp (1985, 100), who has noted how “Among Mexican intellectuals, the most frequent full-time careers [...] have been government officials”.

<sup>10</sup> Zermeno (1993, 285, 295) describes how the government co-opted intellectuals.

for his staunch support of the presidency of Luis Echeverría (1970-1976) [...] by an ambassadorship to France (1975-1977)". Indeed, Miller (1999, 86) notes how "the policy of appointing intellectuals to diplomatic posts is perhaps most closely identified with post-revolutionary Mexico", but adds "although a close examination of the record shows that, even there, the strategy has been applied highly selectively, to famous intellectuals and usually at politically sensitive times".

That this pattern of Mexico's intellectuals being in the service of the government has continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> century can be shown by pointing to the examples of Adolfo Gilly and Jorge Castañeda. Gilly, an Argentine-born naturalized Mexican who is a professor at the UNAM [Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México], has been a visiting scholar at several U.S. Ivy League universities, and is the author of the classic *La revolución interrumpida*, in addition to several other books. He acted as Chief Advisor to the Office of Mexico City's Mayor, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, from 1997-2000. Castañeda, who holds a PhD in Economics from the Sorbonne, is the author of at least twelve books, and has taught at the UNAM and several Ivy League universities in the U.S. He first advised the left-of-centre candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas during his (failed) presidential campaign (1988), and then the right-of-centre Vicente Fox during his (successful) presidential candidacy (2000). Castañeda then served as Secretary of Foreign Affairs from 2000-2003, and subsequently attempted to run as an independent candidate in the presidential elections in 2006, but was barred from doing so by Mexican electoral law which does not allow independents to stand.

Moreover, that Marcos himself was only too aware of this tradition of Mexico's intelligentsia colluding with power can be shown by his quoting, in a communique, of Carlos Monsiváis' observation that: "Throughout this century, intellectuals in Mexico have played various roles: luxurious courtesans of the acting powers, dissident voices (who are called, in order to institutionalize them, 'Critical Consciences'), privileged interpreters of history and of society, entertainment in themselves".<sup>11</sup> (Significantly, in the very next sentence of the same communique, the Subcommander went on to single out Octavio Paz as "The last great intellectual of the right in Mexico [who] conscientiously carried out the work entrusted to him by the Prince". In particular, Marcos noted how Paz had "wasted no words in discrediting the zapatistas and those who demonstrated

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11 In Marcos' communique entitled "Oxymoron! (The Intellectual Right and Liberal Fascism)" (April 2000), posted on the Internet at: [http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/czlan/2001/marcos/oxmoran\\_may.html](http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/czlan/2001/marcos/oxmoran_may.html)

sympathy with their cause (not for the form of their struggle)", adding "One of the best examples of Paz in the service of the Prince is in his writings and statements in early 1994. There [...] Paz did not skimp on accusations about progressive intellectuals: they were responsible for the 'climate of violence' which marked the year of 1994 (and all the years of modern Mexico, but the intellectual right has never been known for its historic memory), specifically, the assassination of the official candidate for the presidency of the Republic, Colosio".<sup>12</sup>

Given this tradition of collusion then, it may come as little surprise that, as we shall see from his discourse below, the Subcommander has frequently exhibited scant confidence in Mexico's intellectual class as a force for effecting revolutionary, or even progressive, societal change. As a result, Marcos' attitude toward intellectuals as a class has been complex.

## **THE FORMATION OF MARCOS' ATTITUDE TOWARD INTELLECTUALS**

In what I believe to be a revealing reminiscence contained in a communiqué dating to February 11, 1994, the Subcommander recalls:<sup>13</sup>

When I was young and beautiful, intellectuals tended to group themselves around a single publication, entrench themselves, and from there tell the truth to the ignorant world of mortals. In those days they were called "elite intellectuals" and there were many of them, since magazines and ideological tendencies were all the fashion. They were publications to be read by those who published them. "Editorial masturbation", says Lucha. If you, innocent earthling, wanted to touch their ivory towers, you had to go through a field of thorns.<sup>14</sup>

This recollection is significant for the insight it provides into experiences Marcos gained during his formative years that perhaps shaped his attitude toward intellectuals. For example, it is evident from the above statement that Marcos' youthful experiences certainly did not result in his being in awe of intellectuals; rather, he seems to have been singularly unimpressed

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12 See Volpi (2004, 261-265, 356-357), who argues that Paz harbored ambivalent feelings toward the Subcommander.

13 Translated in Subcomandante Marcos (1995, 130-131), whence this translation, and in Autonomedia (1994, 180).

14 Volpi (2004, 281) is one of very few to have commented on this passage, seeing in the Subcommander's statement a degree of paradox.

by what he clearly saw as their intransigence, their condescending demeanor, and their esotericism. Significantly, Marcos' comments here echo a passage from the UNAM undergraduate thesis he wrote in 1980 as Rafael Sebastián Guillén Vicente. In it, Guillén (1980, 17-18) lambastes "cafe Marxists":

[...] Worried about truly momentous things, such as "alienation", the philosophy of "praxis", the logical formalization of *Das Kapital*, the latest "trends" of the latest Marxists, they look upon political work with Olympian contempt. They nod their heads disapprovingly at the flyer which is handed to them and which talks about the struggle at some factory; about the settlers from there, about the campesinos over yonder. The collections, the rallies, the assemblies and the demonstrations mean little to them. No political activity should disturb their theoretical meditations; that is their work, not mixing with "agitators". While throwing three pesos into the red and black tin, he thinks to himself: "Poor things, they think that they are making a revolution with this, they don't know that Lenin said that etc., etc..." They criticize the errors of the different political parties. The adjectives "reformists", "revisionists", "Trotskyites", "Maoists" and other "isms" are an essential part of their vocabulary.

In this passage then, Guillén, while narrowing the focus of his critique to Marxist intellectuals, foreshadows the Subcommander in his lamenting of both their condescension and their distancing themselves from the wider public. Guillén also includes a further criticism: that of sectarian name-calling. It would thus appear that Guillén's encounters with "elite intellectuals" and "cafe Marxists" during his formative years while studying at the UNAM left him unsympathetic to both.

Furthermore, I would urge that his exposure to "elite intellectuals" and "cafe Marxists" may not have been the only encounters Guillén experienced at the UNAM that influenced his attitude toward intellectuals as a class. Guillén undeniably was strongly influenced by, and his thesis heavily indebted to, the writings of Louis Althusser, who had railed against the petty-bourgeois inclinations and tendencies of intellectuals.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, in an interview entitled "Philosophy as a Revolutionary Weapon", Althusser ([1968]1971) had stated:

Like every "intellectual", a philosophy teacher is a petty bourgeois. When he opens his mouth, it is petty-bourgeois ideology that speaks [...] You

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15 On Guillén's/Marcos' exposure to Althusser's works while at the UNAM, see Salvador Corro (1995) and Nick Henck (2007, 33-37, 44, and accompanying notes at 377 and 379). Guillén's thesis' bibliography contains more works by Althusser –seven single-authored works, plus two coauthored ones– than any other author.

know what Lenin says about “intellectuals”. Individually certain of them may (politically) be declared *revolutionaries*, and courageous ones. But as a mass, they remain “incorrigibly” *petty-bourgeois* in ideology [...].

As a mass, the intellectuals, including many Communist and Marxist intellectuals, are, *with exceptions*, dominated in their theories by bourgeois ideology [...] (italics in the original).

That Guillén was familiar with this work is shown by the fact that he cited it in a footnote in his thesis and that he included it as the second entry in his bibliography.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, that Althusser's interview exerted considerable influence on Guillén is illustrated by the fact that in an unpaginated preliminary page sandwiched between the contents page and the preface of his thesis, he closed by calling on philosophers to come up “with a manifesto of their own philosophical work: a new practice of philosophy: PHILOSOPHY AS A REVOLUTIONARY WEAPON” (capital letters in the original).

This brings us to my final point concerning Guillén's attitude toward intellectuals prior to his becoming Marcos. It is surely pertinent to examine why Guillén, a promising young man of proven intellect, rejected an academic life in favor of a guerrilla one.<sup>17</sup> Certainly, an academic career similar to the one enjoyed by his older brother, Alfonso Guillén Vicente,<sup>18</sup> seemed likely given that: Rafael studied in the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters at Mexico's prestigious UNAM; he completed his study within six semesters, as opposed to the stipulated ten; his undergraduate thesis won the Gabino Barreda Award, given in recognition of outstanding academic work; Alberto Híjar, Professor of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, who chaired Guillén's thesis committee, described both the thesis and Rafael's answers during the accompanying oral examination as “brilliant”; and Rafael had already secured a teaching post at a new public university in Mexico City, the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana [UAM], before

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16 Rafael Guillén (1980, 54, 116, respectively).

17 Volpi (2004, 121-122) writes: “Rafael Guillén followed a path similar to that of thousands of activists of the left in Mexico during the seventies and he could well have devoted himself to the academic life, or he could have become a government advisor or even a columnist along the lines of Carlos Monsiváis, like many of his contemporaries, but at some point he opted for another path, more uncertain and passionate, that of armed revolution [...] that is the Subcomandante, the intellectual who left theory aside and brutally immersed himself in the practical”.

18 Rafael's elder brother had graduated from the UNAM the year Rafael had arrived there (1977); co-authored a book with UNAM Professor Octavio Rodríguez Araujo in 1979; and later became a Professor at the Autónoma de Baja California Sur university.

he had completed his undergraduate thesis. We must suppose then that by the end of 1980, in possession of a teaching post at the UAM and an award-winning undergraduate thesis from the UNAM, Rafael stood with a choice before him: either to pursue an academic career or to reject this in favor of beginning a new life as a guerrilla. That he chose the latter and turned his back on the former speaks volumes. However, while in no way suggesting that Marcos had any regrets about his decision to reject an academic life, it could be supposed that he may have felt some ambivalence. The Subcommander himself has indicated that his decision to abandon academia for a guerrilla life was one extorted from him by his conscience. As he explained to one interviewer:

I imagine everyone has to choose at some point. We either kept living a comfortable life, materially comfortable, or we had to be consistent with a certain type of ideals. We had to choose and be consistent and so [...] here we are.<sup>19</sup>

In another interview, with Hermann Bellinghausen and Carlos Monsiváis (January 8, 2001), the Subcommander hinted at feeling some sense of regret at having turned his back on academia:

CM: Public intellectuals [...] appear, to many, to be an extinct species.  
 SCM: They have to organically reconstitute themselves, with all the burdens carried by the right and the left. They have to construct their cultural, historical and intellectual referents [...] We believe that the intellectual, progressive, leftist intellectual, still has a path to build. The challenge is great and very rich, how I envy it, how wonderful to face it [...].<sup>20</sup>

The question which naturally arises at this point centers on whether we can discern in Subcommander Marcos' discourse any retention of the misgivings toward intellectuals that may have derived from his exposure, as a young Rafael Guillén, to "elite intellectuals", "cafe Marxists", and the writings of Louis Althusser? In order to answer this question, and to throw into relief the continuity and change taking place within Marcos' discourse on intellectuals, I will examine, in chronological order, the Subcommander's subsequent pronouncements on this subject over the last seventeen years. Before doing so, however, let us turn to the question of how Mexico's intellectuals responded to the 1994 Zapatista uprising.

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<sup>19</sup> Published in *Autonomea* (1994, 146-147).

<sup>20</sup> Interview posted on the Internet at: [http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/2001/marcos\\_interview\\_jan.html](http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/2001/marcos_interview_jan.html)

## MEXICO'S INTELLECTUALS' RESPONSE TO THE ZAPATISTA UPRISING

During the crucial first few days of the January 1994 Zapatista uprising, when the government unleashed its counteroffensive, the survival of the rebels was secured in no small part due to intervention by Mexico's "civil society" which urged restraint and respect for human rights, and whose perspective on the rebellion had been shaped by a combination of press reports by journalists on the ground in Chiapas,<sup>21</sup> and the commentaries of intellectuals appearing in the media.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, Volpi (2001, 152) notes that, despite a prior tendency toward collusion with power, when it came to the Zapatista uprising, "With unprecedented enthusiasm, the intellectual class rose in mass to denounce the ruling powers and scrutinize their excesses."<sup>23</sup> Consequently, from extremely early on in the uprising Marcos sought the approval of urban (especially Mexico City) intellectuals because, as he explained, they were "opinion leaders" and "influencers of public opinion and civil society."<sup>24</sup> No doubt the Subcommander hoped that they would offer protection against any possible future government-ordered military offensive. It is within this context that: as early as February, Marcos expressed, in an interview, his respect and admiration for two of Mexico's leading public intellectuals, Carlos Monsiváis and Elena Poniatowska;<sup>25</sup> in July, he sent invitations to Carlos Fuentes, Carlos

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21 On the importance of the Press' coverage of the rebellion during the first few days, and Marcos' acknowledgement of the impact this had on the way society viewed the Zapatistas, see Nick Henck (2007, 218-219).

22 Initial commentaries on the Chiapas uprising in the Press by intellectuals can be found in *La Jornada Ediciones* (1994) and Raúl Trejo Delarbre (1994).

23 A cursory inspection of *La Jornada* in the two weeks following the Zapatista uprising reveals a plethora of intellectuals who wrote if not defending the Zapatistas, then at least contextualizing their rebellion within the framework of legitimate grievances issuing from government neglect, betrayal, and repression. See, for example, Octavio Rodríguez Araujo's two pieces published in *La Jornada* on January 3 and 6, 1994 – reprinted in *La Jornada Ediciones* (1994, 44-45, 138-139, respectively). Cf. Petras (1999, 36f) who claims that: "Initially, only a small group of Mexican intellectuals supported the EZLN uprising [...] Most of the others expressed outright hostility or reservations on the 'methods' (which were armed uprising)". Certainly Octavio Paz (1994, 109) adopted from the outset a hostile stance toward the rebels, but he, I would urge, is an exception.

24 The quotations are from "Entrevista del Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos con Elena Poniatowska 24 de julio de 1994", printed in *La Jornada* (July 30, 1994) and posted on the Internet at: [http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/1994/1994\\_07\\_24.html](http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/1994/1994_07_24.html)

25 The interview was printed in *Proceso* No. 903, February 21, 1994, pp. 7-15. A version of it can be found posted on the Internet at: [http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/1994/1994\\_02\\_21\\_b.html](http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/1994/1994_02_21_b.html); and translated into English and published in *Autonomea* (1994, 201). Marcos revealed himself to be "an avid reader of Carlos Monsiváis and

Monsiváis, Enrique Krauze and Elena Poniatowska to attend the Zapatistas' National Democratic Convention in Aguascalientes (6-9 August); and in October, he initiated a correspondence with Adolfo Gilly.

However, despite Marcos' appreciation of the Zapatista movement's indebtedness to Mexican "civil society" and Mexico's public intellectuals, he soon came to realize that there were strict limitations to the support that both of these would provide. Within a little over a year of the uprising Marcos had ceased attempting to convene and channel "civil society", and had even abandoned the phrase itself.<sup>26</sup> With regard to the nation's public intellectuals, James Petras (1999, 37) has commented:

The major weakness of the intellectual support was its "inorganic" quality: sporadic activity; occasional cultural meetings; signed statements, letters, and newspaper columns; but almost no success in organizing a national grassroots organization capable of sustained struggle and active solidarity [...].

Moreover, not only did Mexican public intellectuals offer little in the way of concrete, practical, sustained support, they also placed constraints on the Zapatista movement by urging it first to engage in dialogue with a government which enjoyed a well-deserved reputation for co-opting would-be challengers and subsequently renegeing on its promises, and later to endorse (or at least not decry or disrupt) electoral politics in a nation that was famous for voter fraud.<sup>27</sup> Marcos may thus have felt ambivalent concerning Mexican intellectuals: on the one hand, they had proved a lifesaver in the first days of the rebellion; on the other, as time went on they proved less able to provide the movement with tangible support and even began to urge constraints upon it.

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remembers the first time he read *Días de Guardar*", while also specifically mentioning "Poniatowska's *La Noche de Tlatelolco*".

26 On Civil society's failure to deliver subsequent concrete gains for the Zapatistas, see John Womack Jr. (1999, 327). Petras (1999, 41) notes that as a result: "The EZLN has modified its approach, shifting away from diffuse appeals to 'civil society' (which has not led to 'self-organization') and toward increasing collaboration and coordination with specific active organized groups in Mexico that have a demonstrated capacity to resist the Mexican government". On the Subcommander dropping the term civil society in the *Third Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle*, see Womack (1999, 290). Cf. Alex Khasnabish (2010, 124), who postulates an alternative explanation for this omission.

27 See too, Petras (1999, 36): "As the peace process progressed, the bulk of the sympathetic intellectuals pressed the EZLN toward a political solution and renunciation of armed struggle".

## MARCOS' INITIAL DISCOURSE: 1994-2000

The Subcommander's first substantial comment on intellectuals appears in his "Carta a Gilly", in response to having been sent a copy by Adolfo Gilly of Carlos Ginzburg's 1979 essay "Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm". One hypothesis to explain Gilly's choice of this piece has been posited by Stephanie Jed (2001, 378-379), who argues that Gilly:

[...] sent Ginzburg's essay to Marcos in the hopes that they might share a revolutionary interest in Ginzburg's argument [...] that Marcos, upon reading Ginzburg's essay, will see himself engaged in a concrete and intuitive art of political knowing; that he will see the "problematic of the essay" as pertaining to the experience of all the Zapatistas and, in particular, his own [...] for Marcos [...] to make, via Ginzburg, a bridge between the life of a revolutionary and the life of an academic.

This seems plausible, and certainly, as his reply to Marcos' "Carta" makes clear, Gilly (1995, 55) at the very least was keen to know, "Does this Italian reflection [...] touch some part of your [i.e. Marcos'] experience?".

However, if this were Gilly's intention, he was to be disappointed: Marcos' reaction was, at best, lukewarm. The Subcommander dismissed Ginzburg's theory as "a tautology" and one which "makes me sleepy", and Ginzburg himself as being "perfectly singular for his obscurantism". Jérôme Baschet (2000, 8) observes that Marcos' criticism of Ginzburg's essay "sometimes [...] appears as if [it] refers not just to the individual case but rather turns into a broader critique of the Academy and its superficial fashions".<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, Marcos deliberately chose not to acknowledge, even less acquiesce in, Gilly's attempts to postulate convergences between the lifestyles and works of intellectuals and those of revolutionaries. Rather, he elected to emphasize the different conditions in which they live and labor by drawing attention to "a new incursion by a patrol of federal police" and the passing overhead of an observation airplane, which were forcing him to break-off his theoretical exchange with Gilly.<sup>29</sup> Thus, what Hermann Herlinghaus (2005, 54) calls "the Brechtian problem of the relationship between those who make history and those who write about it", Marcos elevated to an even starker dichotomy between those who fight the revolution and those who write the revolution.

Moreover, this dichotomy was perhaps sharpened by the reactions of

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28 Cf. Anne Huffs Schmid (2004, 262).

29 For more on this exchange, see Stephanie Jed (2001, 378-380).

intellectuals themselves to the Zapatista rebellion. Many expended considerable time and ink trying to categorize the movement –for example, as the first post-Communist revolution or the first post-Modernist revolution– while the Subcommander busied himself with getting on with the day-to-day task of waging the rebellion.<sup>30</sup> Others even went so far as to criticize the Zapatistas in general and Marcos in particular for not planting trees while trying to sustain a rebellion surrounded by right-wing paramilitaries and 60,000 Federal Army troops!<sup>31</sup>

In the autumn of 1995, Marcos, in a postscript to a communiqué entitled “Of Trees, Criminals, and Odontology”, which he sent to Carlos Monsiváis in grateful acknowledgment of the gift of a copy of the latter’s *The Rituals of Chaos*,<sup>32</sup> addressed “the problem of knowledge and intellectuals who produce and distribute that knowledge”. More specifically, the Subcommander took up the theme of Mexico’s intellectuals colluding with the government:

The process followed by some intellectuals is typical: from the critique of power to critique from a position of power.

With Salinas they showed that knowledge is ready to serve power.<sup>33</sup> Then they collaborated to give him theoretical substance. Their logic, no matter how you looked at it, arrived at the same result: power is not mistaken in analyzing reality, and if it is mistaken then it is a problem with reality and not power.

Machiavelli is now the head of a group of intellectuals who seek to give theoretical-ideological support to the repression to come [...] Oh well, these are the new kind of organic intellectuals in power [...] They represent the image of what the organic intellectual of neoliberalism aspires to be [...].

Four-and-a-half years later, in an April 2000 communiqué entitled “Oxymoron! (The Intellectual Right and Liberal Fascism)” which analyzes statements by Norberto Bobbio, Umberto Eco, Carlos Monsiváis, Manuel

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30 Daniel Nugent (1995) and Mark T. Berger (2001) outline various responses to the Zapatista movement by intellectuals.

31 See the Subcommander’s patient reply to journalist, writer and UNAM professor, Germán Dehesa, who had criticized the Zapatistas for not having done enough “to preserve the Selva Lacandona” and who pointedly asked “How many trees has Marcos planted?”, in “Marcos on Windows and Reality” (March 21, 2000); posted on the Internet at: [http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/2000/2000\\_03\\_21.html](http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/2000/2000_03_21.html) (in Spanish); and [http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/2000/marcos\\_preservjungle\\_march.html](http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/2000/marcos_preservjungle_march.html) (in English).

32 Subcomandante Marcos (2005a, 127ff). An alternative translation can be found posted on the Internet at: [http://struggle.ws/mexico/ezln/marcos\\_trees\\_nov95.html](http://struggle.ws/mexico/ezln/marcos_trees_nov95.html)

33 See Alma Guillermprietto (1994, 250-254) on “Salinas de Gortari’s bright young intellectuals” and his “house intellectuals”.

Vázquez Montalbán, and Alain Touraine on the role and function of intellectuals, and which is peppered with quotations from Jorge Luis Borges, John Berger, Régis Debray, Yvon Le Bot, Octavio Paz, Ignacio Ramonet and José Saramago, Marcos wrote a lengthy tract on intellectuals, arguing that “the work of the intellectual is, fundamentally, analytic and critical” and that therefore an intellectual is a “professional of critical analysis and communication”.<sup>34</sup> He continued:

[...] this professional of critical analysis and his communication would be a kind of uncomfortable or impertinent conscience of society [...] A dissenter to everything, to the political and social forces, to the State, to the government, to the media, to the culture, to the arts, to religion, to whatever etcetera the reader might add [...].

Thus we have the role of the intellectual as that of being a critic of immobility, a promoter of change, a progressive. This communicator of critical ideas is, however, inserted in a polarized society [...] fundamentally divided between those who use power so that things do not change, and those who are struggling for change [...].

The Subcommander here mirrors closely Edward W. Said (1996, xvii) in his *Representations of the Intellectual*:

[...] the intellectual's consciousness [...] is a spirit in opposition, rather than in accommodation, that grips me because the romance, the interest, the challenge of intellectual life is to be found in dissent against the status quo at a time when the struggle on behalf of underrepresented and disadvantaged groups seems so unfairly weighted against them.<sup>35</sup>

Marcos next moved on to draw a distinction between what he labeled “progressive and reactionary intellectuals’ [...] intellectuals ‘of the left and of the right’”:

Both of them remain engaged in the communication of critical analysis, but, while the progressives continue in their criticism of immobility, permanence, hegemony and the homogeneous, the reactionaries hoist criticism of change, of movement, of rebellion and of diversity. The reactionary intellectual “forgets” his intellectual function, he renounces critical reflection [...].

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34 Posted on the Internet at: [http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/2001/marcos/oxmoran\\_may.html](http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/2001/marcos/oxmoran_may.html)

35 Said (1996, 35) elaborates on this challenging of the status quo.

The Subcommander then turned to the question of “intellectual pragmatism”:

The progressive intellectual, as a communicator of critical analysis, becomes an object and an objective for the dominant power. An object to buy and an objective to destroy [...] The progressive intellectual “is born” in the midst of this environment of persecutory seduction. Some resist and defend themselves [...] Others, however, exhausted perhaps, look in their baggage of ideas and take out those which can simultaneously be alibi and reason for legitimizing the power [...].

In an age marked by two new paradigms, communication and market, the intellectual of the right (and formerly of the left) understands that being “modern” means upholding the slogan: adapt or lose your privileged positions!

Far removed from reflection, from critical thought, the intellectuals of the right have become pragmatics par excellence. They have banished the intellectual function [...].

Finally, Marcos returned to discussing “progressive intellectuals”, the subgroups into which they can be divided and the obstacles facing them:

[...] the most classic is that of the intellectual who denounces, where all attention is concentrated on criticizing the dominant system. The second type of intellectuals is identified with a particular struggle or a particular opposition force, and they become their organic intellectuals. The third believes in the existence, the conscience and the efficacy of the actors, while at the same time knowing their limits. The fourth are utopians, they identify with new cultural tendencies, of society or of personal existence. All of them [...] engage their efforts in understanding, critically, society, its history and its present, and they try to unravel the unknown of its future.

Progressive thinkers do not have it at all easy. They [...] must confront the neoliberal theology of the intellectual right, and behind them are the media, the banks, the large corporations, the States (or what is left of them), the governments, the army, the police.

That Marcos would continue to retain this distinction between “progressive and reactionary intellectuals”, and never succumbed to a sweeping anti-intellectualism not untypical of the far Left,<sup>36</sup> is evidenced by a

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36 Carlos Monsiváis, in EZLN 4 (2003, 24), writes that Marcos’ “interest in intellectuals is constant. He [...] wants to distance himself from the traditional anti-intellectualism of the political left”.

communiqué he wrote in December 2002, in which, for all the Subcommander's criticism of "the intellectuals of Power! Always striving to understand and absolve those from above and to judge and condemn those from below", he did not lose sight of the fact that:

[...] there are intellectuals in Mexico and the Iberian peninsula who avoid the traps set by Power. Just like the United States intellectuals who courageously denounce Bush's insane bellicosity, even though they are accused of sympathizing with Bin Laden.<sup>37</sup>

Marcos was perhaps thinking here of Noam Chomsky, arguably the world's most famous (and most cited) intellectual, and an ardent and vociferous opponent of the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, as well as other U.S. military interventions overseas. Significantly, Chomsky echoes some of Marcos' opinions on intellectuals. First, let us compare Marcos' statement quoted above, in which intellectuals' "logic, no matter how you looked at it, arrived at the same result: power is not mistaken in analyzing reality, and if it is mistaken then it is a problem with reality and not power", with Chomsky's ([1976]2006, 69) statement that:

[...] the intelligentsia in a society like ours [...] create the ideological justification for social practice. Look at the work of the specialists in contemporary affairs and compare their interpretation with the events, compare what they say with the world of fact. You will often find great and fairly systematic divergence. Then you can take a further step and try to explain these divergences, taking into account the class position of the intelligentsia [...].

Chomsky ([1976]2006, 71-72) adds that "[...] intellectuals often [...] disguise reality in the service of external power", before concluding "[...] the professional intelligentsia serve a useful and effective function within the apparatus of social control". Thus, both the Subcommander and Chomsky evidently concur that intellectuals produce a distorted image of what is really taking place in the world, and that this distortion derives from intellectuals' relation to power. Second, Marcos' distinction between those intellectuals who serve power and those who resist it, and his description of the function that these two perform in society, is mirrored by Chomsky (2000, 26), who writes:

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37 Posted on the Internet at: [http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/2002/2002\\_12\\_29.html](http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/2002/2002_12_29.html) (in Spanish); and at <http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/2002/marcos/intellectualDEC.html> (in English).

Commissars are the intellectuals who work primarily to reproduce, legitimate, and maintain the dominant social order from which they reap benefits. Real intellectuals have the obligation to seek and tell the truth about things that are important, things that matter.

The distinction Chomsky makes here, in a work published in 2000, between “commissars” and “real intellectuals”, resonates with Marcos’ above-cited April communiqué of the same year, in which the Subcommander discusses what distinguishes “‘progressive and reactionary intellectuals’ [...] intellectuals ‘of the left and of the right’”.

## **MARCOS’ DISCOURSE FOLLOWING THE LEGISLATIVE FAILURE: 2001-2004**

In 2001, the Indigenous Rights Bill which the Zapatistas had negotiated with the Zedillo government was sent to the Mexican legislature only to be “guttled”, being reduced to a shadow of its former potency. This betrayal by the legislature brought about an end to years of negotiation which had recently culminated in the “Zapatour” and a Zapatista delegation pleading their case before the Mexican Congress: it also brought about the Zapatistas turning their back completely on the institutional political path.<sup>38</sup> As Marcos would explain in 2005 in the *Sixth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle*:

[...] the politicians from the PRI, the PAN and the PRD reached an agreement among themselves, and they simply did not recognize indigenous rights and culture. That was in April of 2001, and the politicians demonstrated quite clearly there that they had no decency whatsoever [...] And then we saw quite clearly that [...] it was a waste of time for us to be talking with the politicians, because neither their hearts nor their words were honest. They were crooked, and they told lies that they would keep their word, but they did not [...] We saw that blood did not matter to them, nor did death, suffering, mobilizations, consultas, efforts, national and international statements, encuentros, accords, signatures, commitments [...].<sup>39</sup>

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38 See Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo (2006, 121): “The EZLN and the national indigenous movement considered the [...] Indigenous Law and Culture Act [...] a mockery of their demands and a betrayal of the San Andrés Accords. Although PRD deputies in Congress later tried to correct the mistakes of their Senate colleagues by voting against it, this ‘tactical error’ (as some called it) alienated many indigenous organizations from political parties”.

39 Posted on the Internet (in Spanish) at [http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/2005/2005\\_06\\_SEXTA.html](http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/2005/2005_06_SEXTA.html) and (in English) at <http://www.serazln-altos.org/eng/sixth.html>

The Subcommander would elaborate on the repercussions that this betrayal had on the Zapatistas' relations with intellectuals in a November 2007 interview with journalist Laura Castellanos (2008a, 53-54).

SM: Look, when we came out in 1994, we were free in many regards, we didn't have any debts to anyone, we did not have to mind our manners [...] we just said our words and saw what happened. At that time there was a rapprochement with the progressive intellectual sector of Mexico [...] Throughout that entire period, until the failure of the indigenous law of the San Andrés Accords, we insisted on that way and [...] we were in agreement with the progressive intellectuals who insisted on the political and institutional channel [...] Finally, after a lot of stress, the San Andrés Accords came about and they were not complied with. And from there we judged that the possibility of interlocution was broken, there was no sense whatsoever in talking with the political class, in its entirety. That was what most bothered many people, that we wiped the slate clean and we didn't make the distinctions or nuances that they wanted.

LC: By political class, you're referring to the intellectuals?

SM: Yes, they were the ones who were upset. The PRD, no, they are totally unaffected by everything. The intellectuals, yes, because they are committed to [...] the institutional political channel [...].

The above formed the backdrop to Marcos' May 2003 communiqué, one section of which, while primarily devoted to discussing the role of theory within the Zapatista movement, also touched on the subject of intellectuals.<sup>40</sup> In it the Subcommander wrote:

The intellectual [...] feels that he has the right to express his opinion concerning movements. It is not his right, it is his duty. Some intellectuals go further and become the new "political commissars" of thought and of action, handing out titles of "good" and "bad". Their "judgment" has to do with the position they are in and with the position which they aspire to be in.

We think that a movement should not "return" the judgments which it receives and classify intellectuals as "good" or "bad", according to how those intellectuals characterize the movement. Anti-intellectualism is nothing more than a misunderstood self apologia and, as such, it marks a movement as being "adolescent".

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40 The communiqué is entitled "The World: Seven Thoughts in May of 2003", and can be found on the Internet (in English) at: <http://www.cuestiones.ws/revista/n15/ago03-mex-eng-marcos.html>, and <http://nyc.indymedia.org/en/2003/06/29077.html>; and (in Spanish) at: [http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/2003/2003\\_05\\_b.html](http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/2003/2003_05_b.html)

Having once again been careful to avoid endorsing anti-intellectualism, Marcos continued:

Producing theory from within a social or political movement is not the same as producing it from within academia. And I am not speaking of “academia” in the sense of sterility or (nonexistent) scientific “objectivity”, but only in order to note the place of reflection and intellectual production as being “outside” of a movement. And “outside” does not mean that there are no “sympathies” or “antipathies”, but that that intellectual production does not take place within the movement, rather above it [...].

However, from this rather neutral commentary on the formulation of theory by academics outside a movement, Marcos then adopted a more critical tone:

Sometimes it so happens that certain academic analysts aspire to lead a movement, that is, that the movement should follow his directives. And so the academic’s basic reproach is that the movement is not “obeying” him.<sup>41</sup> That all of the movement’s errors are owing, fundamentally, to the fact that they are not clearly seeing what is obvious to the academic. Lack of memory and dishonesty are generally pervasive (not always, it’s true) among these armchair analysts. One day they say one thing, and they predict something, on the other the opposite happens, but the analyst has lost his memory and goes back to theorizing while ignoring what he said previously [...]. Hooked on the “today” of the media, the armchair theoretician seizes the opportunity to “forget”.

Other times, a movement replaces its spontaneity with the theoretical patronage of academia. The solution is usually more detrimental than the deficiency. If academia is wrong, it “forgets”. If the movement is wrong, it fails.

Marcos ended his section on theory by claiming that “Vanguards”, because they “feel the duty to direct something or someone [...] in this sense [...] demonstrate many similarities with academic theoreticians”, adding that: “Vanguards set out to lead and they work for that. Some of them are even willing to pay the price for errors and deviations in their political work. Academics do not”.

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41 Petras (1999, 37) writes “the fact that [...] Marcos is a committed intellectual who listens, takes notes, and is open to criticism and suggestions has not prevented some from raising doubts about his ‘manipulative’ leadership. This is a case of ‘political transference’ – attributing to Marcos behavior largely found in university faculties”.

## MARCOS' DISCOURSE FOLLOWING THE "OTHER CAMPAIGN": 2005-2009

Three years later, on March 21, 2006, the Subcommander, in a communiqué entitled "Marcos: An Other Theory?," returned to the theme of intellectuals. This communiqué was to be the first of three lengthy expositions –the other two taking the form of interviews– by Marcos on Mexico's intellectual class within a twenty-month period. The Subcommander's increased discourse on intellectuals took place within the context of the aftermath of the Mexican legislature having gutted the Indigenous Rights Bill, and the Zapatistas' consequent decision to abandon the institutional political route. The latter was a decision that would ultimately bring Marcos, as the Zapatistas' spokesperson, into conflict with much, though not all,<sup>42</sup> of Mexico's intellectual class in the run up to the 2006 presidential elections, when many of the country's progressive intellectuals, excited at the prospect of a first-time victory for a leftwing PRD presidential candidate, urged support for Andrés Manuel López Obrador, while Marcos advocated the utter rejection of both the political process and the political class, attacking all the presidential candidates. In June 2005, for example, the Subcommander, in his communiqué entitled "The (impossible) Geometry [?] of Power in Mexico" had denounced López Obrador as follows: "The central offer of AMLO's presidential plan is [...] 'macroeconomic stability', that is, 'increasing profits for the rich, increasing poverty and dispossessions for the dispossessed and an order which controls the discontent of the latter'".<sup>43</sup> Laura Castellanos (2008b, 35) notes how "Intellectuals who had previously been close to zapatismo but also supported López Obrador criticized Marcos, blaming him for dividing the left and thereby collaborating with the Calderón fraud".<sup>44</sup>

It is worth asking why the Subcommander's criticisms of the political class in general, and of the PRD and López Obrador in particular, should

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42 See the historian Carlos Montemayor: "[A]t this moment politics in Mexico is a matter of [...] elites. What is most notable about *Marcos*' call for another way of doing politics is that it is positing the possibility of imagining a better country in a dialogue with the bases". (Quoted in "Críticas de *Marcos* a López Obrador dividen a intelectuales de izquierda", *La Jornada* August 9, 2005; posted on the Internet at: <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2005/08/09/011n1pol.php>). So too, one of Mexico's most distinguished academics, Pablo González Casanova, supported Marcos' position.

43 "La (imposible) ¿geometría? del Poder en México"; posted on the Internet at: [http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/2005/2005\\_05\\_a.html](http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/2005/2005_05_a.html)

44 See too, "Críticas de *Marcos* a López Obrador dividen a intelectuales de izquierda", cited above, n. 42.

have caused some of Mexico's intellectuals to castigate him so emphatically, especially when one could quite reasonably argue that Marcos' role as a rebel spokesman and military strategist for a guerrilla army is not to follow the institutional political path. Surely if Marcos had believed that Mexico's problems could have been overcome purely through the electoral process, he would not have abandoned a comparatively comfortable teaching post at one of Mexico City's top universities in order to embark on the arduous life of a rural guerrilla. Indeed, as early as March 1996 the following exchange had taken place in an interview between Jorge Ramos (2006, 78-80) and the Subcommander:

JR: Is the PRD an alternative for you? If you were to vote, would you vote for the PRD?

SM: Not for the PRD, not for the PRI, not for the PAN, nor for the Labor Party, insofar as their political relationships, at the electoral level, are not fair.

JR: Do you not believe in anyone within the political system?

SM: We do not believe in the Mexican political system, and that is what we are fighting against [...] The problem is not whether Ernesto Zedillo is president, because they can remove him and put in another. Or rather, it is not a problem vis-à-vis one individual but vis-à-vis a political system.

A few years later, Marcos would reiterate his stance, pointing out to a reporter who had asked him whom he favored in the 2000 elections that "we didn't make this revolution to vote for a political party".<sup>45</sup> Finally, the "Other Campaign", which Marcos launched in 2006, was specifically conceived of as a genuinely democratic alternative to the presidential campaign then being waged, since its stated aim was to build a grassroots coalition of the country's underdogs to effect change that would directly benefit this massive but typically neglected constituency.

Furthermore, it was not as if Marcos was alone in his damning appraisal of Mexico's political class. Luis Hernández Navarro (2006, 73-75), for example, after having first noted how "The Mexican political class is about to exhaust its last reserves of credibility [...]", then summarized the various scandals that had befallen the PAN, the PVEM (Mexico's environmental party) and the PRD, before concluding:

More than two years ago the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional announced the collapse of the Mexican political class. To some people's

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45 Quoted in John Ross (2000, 324).

chagrin, it made no distinction between political parties and personalities, but its diagnosis has proved accurate. Any political regeneration in this country will come from below [...].

Similarly, with regard to Marcos' criticisms of Andrés Manuel López Obrador in particular, not a few of Mexico's intellectuals have also expressed misgivings about the PRD's presidential candidate and former Mexico City mayor, echoing the criticisms that the Subcommander had made concerning López Obrador merely representing a continuation of hitherto disastrous neoliberal reforms.<sup>46</sup> Laura Carlsen (2005, 25), for example, noted "[...] the zapatistas correctly pointed out that López Obrador has not taken a clear stand against capitalism, neoliberal globalization, or U.S. domination, and that for his campaign manager he chose the man who helped orchestrate the congressional counter-reform on indigenous rights". So too, Adolfo Gilly (2006, 81) has written:

The leadership of the PRD's presidential primary campaign, this new "in-group" that surrounds Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the contents of the 50 points of his campaign platform, his silence or evasion regarding the United States, NAFTA, Cuba, Latin America, and other issues critical to the present and immediate future of Mexico, and the sum total of his declarations lead me to conclude that what is being proposed is, again, a developmentalist project to stabilize the neoliberal reforms already in place. It is a proposal to be applied through public policies from the top, without any participation whatsoever of independent, autonomous organizations within society itself.

So too, Alejandro Álvarez Béjar (2006, 30, n.7) has asserted that: "A first assessment of Andrés Manuel López Obrador's service as mayor of Mexico City leads to the conclusion that nothing he did was particularly threatening to the neoliberal project".<sup>47</sup> Moreover, Álvarez Béjar (2006, 27) argues that the Zapatistas' criticisms (expressed through Marcos) of the PRD and its candidate are not only understandable, they are productive:

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46 See Marcos' "La (imposible) ¿geometría? del Poder en México".

47 Concerning the PRD as a whole, Álvarez Béjar (2006, 27) writes:

[...] the PRD's leadership proposes to overcome its crisis by riding on AMLO's popularity in the polls. Under these circumstances, what lies ahead is a deepening of the party's moral decomposition and corruption [...] it has reduced itself to little more than a vehicle for ambitious local and state economic elites [...] well satisfied with a PRD without activists, a left-wing option that is leftist in name only.

Given the situation, the systematic criticism of the PRD, its leadership, and its candidate by various groups, particularly the Zapatistas, is to be expected [...] The EZLN's criticism, meanwhile, has opened a national debate that is important for the Mexican left as a whole.

Again, one must ask why so many of the intelligentsia rounded on Marcos for his criticism of López Obrador when significant members of Mexico's intellectual class were voicing similar opinions.

This then was the context in which Marcos devoted considerable time between March 2006 and November 2007 to the subject of intellectuals. In his communiqué, "Marcos: An Other Theory?" (March 21, 2006), the Subcommander abandoned his previous binary division of intellectuals into "progressives" and "reactionaries", and instead attempted to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the intellectual function by categorizing them into three categories – "The Intellectuals of Above", "The Intellectuals in the Middle", and "The Other Intellectuals" – describing at length their respective characteristics.<sup>48</sup>

Concerning "The Intellectuals of Above", Marcos compares their function to that of the police, the army and the legal system in maintaining an unjust status quo; or, in other words, as forming part of what the Marxist classics term the State Apparatus. Marcos continues:

Capitalism doesn't just recruit its intellectuals in the academy and in the culture, it also "manufactures" their sounding boxes and assigns them their territories. But what they have in common is their foundation: feigning humanism where there is only thirst for profits, presenting capital as the synthesis of historical evolution and offering the comforts of complicity through grants, paying for publicity and privileged colloquy [...].

Regarding "The Intellectuals in the Middle", the Subcommander claims that they "are navigating, flirting discreetly or blatantly with the system, without caring about the color of the one holding political power [...]". He continues:

From the threshold of power, on their best behavior in the mandarin court of the current administration, these intellectuals are not in the middle, but rather in transit to above. They put themselves on offer, with the tools of analysis and theoretical debate, at the banquets of political and economic

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48 The Spanish original is posted on the Internet at: <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/la-otra-campana/268>; English translations appear at: <http://zaptranslations.blogspot.com/2006/03/marcos-other-theory.html>, and [http://chiapas.indymedia.org/display.php3?article\\_id=120623](http://chiapas.indymedia.org/display.php3?article_id=120623)

power in Mexico, with a sign that reads: "Speeches made. Government programs justified. Businesspersons advised [...]".<sup>49</sup>

Next to those intellectuals are the ones who, slowly or quickly, lose their principles, give in, and desperately search for an alibi which will save them in front of the mirror. They are the prudent, mature and sensible intellectuals who have put away the weapons of criticism [...].

And there are the ones who say they belong to the radical left and are even Zapatistas [...] From the comforts of the academy they set themselves up as the new judges, the neo-commissars of good manners in the debate on what AMLO's irresistible ascent in democratic modernity –in the polls, that is– really means. They are the ones who say that any criticism of the political class promotes abstention, and with Thomist logic, that that will help the right.

Finally, Marcos turns to discussion of the role to be played by "The Other Intellectuals":

From below and from the left, a movement which is building itself, the Other is also building new realities. We neo-zapatistas think these new realities [...] need another theoretical reflection, another debate of ideas. This places demands on the other intellectuals. First, the humility to recognize that they are facing something new. And, secondly, to join in, to embrace the other, to learn about themselves through it and to come to know [...] the other.

We think they should participate directly in the meetings of supporters in their states and, in addition, listen to what all the supporters throughout the country are saying [...] In their way and with their means, the other intellectuals will certainly produce analysis and theoretical debates which will astonish the world.

As Zapatistas we think that the Other Campaign can proudly say that it deserves this country's best intellectuals to be part of it. Now they will say, with their own work, whether they are deserving of the Other Campaign.

This last section, on "The Other Intellectuals", is highly significant in that it demonstrates that Marcos, despite both his frequent and sustained criticisms of certain types of intellectuals and his decision to turn his

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49 See Noam Chomsky, in Carlos P. Otero (2003, 394): "There's another direction [taken by intellectuals] which is [...] a recognition that there's not going to be any popular revolution; there's a given system of power that's more or less going to stay, I'm going to serve it, I'm going to be the expert who helps the people with real power achieve their ends [...]"

back on the institutional path so valued by much of the intellectual class, never lost his keen appreciation of either the importance of securing the support of intellectuals for the Zapatista movement or the contribution they can make to formulating theory and analysis. Indeed, one can go further and see in the Subcommander's appeal to the "other intellectuals" a Gramscian recognition of the need both for the Zapatista movement to develop its own "organic intellectuals", and for intellectuals to adopt an organic role through active and direct participation in the practical struggle of the downtrodden, thereby supplying the link between the intellectual sphere and the popular consciousness and overcoming the situation described by Gramsci (1971, 418) whereby "the popular element 'feels' but does not always know or understand; the intellectual element 'knows' but does not always understand and in particular does not always feel".

Two months later, on May 31, 2006, the Subcommander again expounded at length on the subject of intellectuals. In an interview with Sergio Rodríguez Lascano for *Rebeldía* magazine, Marcos responded to criticisms by some intellectuals, including leftwing ones, of his recent (blunt) rejection of the necessity of having to take into account "the correlation of forces" when seeking to effect a significant societal change in favor of the nation's underdogs.<sup>50</sup> In this interview too, as is typical of his discourse on intellectuals during the preceding quarter of a century, the Subcommander repeated the motifs of certain intellectuals being removed from practical matters, of their supporting an unjust status quo, and of their being condescending. Marcos begins by echoing Petras' above cited comment (12) concerning the "inorganic" quality of intellectuals' support:

We say that there is a problem [...] among the entire intellectual sector [...] which is the separation or detachment of intellectual action and political action [...] [T]he problem of theory is that praxis [...] is not taken into consideration. And praxis is not teaching a class. It is not writing an article. It is connecting yourself directly with a social or political movement [...]<sup>51</sup> Anything that alters my position as an intellectual; that which puts it in crisis or which questions it, is something that the intellectual spontaneously rejects.<sup>52</sup> If there are elements of reality or of movements that in reality

50 The Subcommander was quoted as having said "I shit on the correlation of forces".

51 Again here Marcos' comments reflect a Gramscian concern for intellectuals to connect themselves organically to the subaltern by participating directly and actively in their emancipatory struggle.

52 See Kristine Vanden Berghe (2006, 147) who, after noting that the Zapatistas, through effectively representing themselves directly to the Mexican public, put in question Mexico's intellectuals' self-appointed function as the mouthpiece of voiceless subalterns, writes that "This would explain the negative reaction on the part of certain sectors of the

are proposing a radicalization of society, that means that the intellectual loses his space of safety from which to produce theory [...].

With regard to “the correlation of forces” in particular, the Subcommander argues that for intellectuals this

becomes an alibi to do nothing, not even anything for a slow change [...] [W]hat they say is that change cannot be made, period. What can be done is inside of this endless structure but what is fundamental is making a few fixes. And fixes that benefit me as an intellectual [...] In this sense, the analysis of the correlation of forces never arrives at its fundamental point, which [...] is: Is it the system or is it not the system? [...] What we think is that this analysis of “what is the correlation of forces” that is being made is selecting the elements that allow them [i.e. intellectuals] to make the argument of “I am not going to do it [...] there is nothing to be done [...] don't move [...] don't make waves”.

The Subcommander concludes:

[I]f we really analyze the correlation of forces, the enemy probably does continue as the more powerful force, but there is another element of which they [i.e. intellectuals] are not conscious: the force from below [...] I shit on the vision that the academic sector has regarding the correlation of forces [...] they are looking toward above and they don't look below [...]<sup>53</sup> [I]nstead they look upon us with disrespect, as if we didn't even exist. That is the fundamental thing that bothers them about the Other Campaign in Atenco [...] they are obligated to look below and they don't like what they are seeing. Because what is being seen is a plebian, rebel, rude, movement with bad grammar, that puts its feet up on the table, that eats with its elbows also on the table [...] that doesn't follow the established criteria.

[...] The intellectuals of the left above pray to power that it look at them [...] almost never do they say anything directed toward below, it is always toward above [...].

The EZLN is not asking for permission to be noticed or that they classify us up above. It is fundamentally a challenge to this intellectual sector [...].<sup>54</sup>

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Mexican *intelligencia* who are preoccupied with their own survival as a group” (my translation).

53 Zermeño (1993, 295) had previously voiced a similar criticism, claiming that “[...] intellectuals look upwards to the apex of the system where power is concentrated [...]”.

54 The original interview (in Spanish) can be found in the magazine *Rebelión* #42 and also posted on the Internet at: <http://www.rebelion.org/noticia.php?id=33148>. The translation here can be found posted on the Internet at: <http://www.narconews.com/Issue41/article1857.html>

Interestingly, seven years earlier, James Petras (1999, 37) had argued that the Subcommander specifically (and not just the EZLN) represented “a serious challenge to the world intelligentsia to measure up”, on account of the fact that:

He has integrated revolutionary democratic values into his everyday life. He lives the austere life of his Indian comrades. He discusses and “rules by obeying”. He lives a difficult existential situation, reflecting on the profound consequences of a turn to civilian politics or the continuation of armed struggle [...] He attempts to come to terms with realities that provide difficult choices. He takes ideas seriously.

Three years prior to Petras, the Mexican-American intellectual and scholar Ilan Stavans (1996, 63) had written a piece on Marcos that contained elements of self-reflection in which he recollected: “I left Mexico in 1985, but I often look back at my years at UAM as a turning point. Between the pen and the sword, I thought I was wise for choosing the pen. But el Sup was even wiser: he chose both”. Marcos thus avoided the “guerrilla or intellectual” dichotomy that had ensnared many Leftwing Mexicans of his generation, choosing instead to embrace both simultaneously, becoming a man of arms and action, who was prepared to put revolutionary theory into practice, to place his life on the line in defense of his principles, and who, in terms of his ideals, refused absolutely to sell-out or be co-opted.<sup>55</sup> Few intellectuals could claim to have done the same, and this perhaps explains the tension that has existed at times between Mexico’s intellectual class and the Subcommander.<sup>56</sup>

In the second interview, which took place in November 2007, journalist Laura Castellanos (2008a, 57, 60-61) asked Marcos about the split between Mexico’s intellectuals and himself:

LC: Was it with all the intellectuals? With Pablo González Casanova, the former rector of the UNAM, closely tied to Zapatismo? Have any of them tried to maintain a close position with you?

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55 See Volpi (2004, 362-363), who dubs Marcos “an aficionado of philosophy and of arms [...] a lover of literature and a man of action”, and Juan Pellicer (1996, 208), who calls Marcos a “maestro de las letras y de las armas”.

56 Cf. Volpi (2004, 121), who argues that intellectuals could be said to suffer from “ski-mask envy” since Marcos “could well have devoted himself to the academic life [...] but at some point he opted for another path, more uncertain and passionate, that of armed revolution”. However, for Volpi, such envy accounts not for why certain intellectuals have been hostile toward Marcos, but rather for why “such a large number of intellectuals admire the Subcomandante”.

SM: Ah, yes, of course! There was Don Pablo González Casanova's group. They tried to understand and even share the criticisms we made of López Obrador's program. Don Pablo was very radical in his writings in that regard.

LC: Then there are exceptions...

SM: Yes. But the great majority are in the media, and they are not only not with us, they are against us [...].

LC: At your speech in Jojutla you went after the intellectuals.

SM: No! That was the only time I didn't beat up the intellectuals. I said: "I'm not going to talk about the intellectuals but rather about those who carved out a career with Zapatismo." Because the intellectuals don't make their career with us, they earn their own prestige. We said that the people of the progressive intellectual community [...] have authority as it is, that they don't owe it to the EZLN [...]. But no, we were talking about those who were nobody, nothing and who carved their careers out of Zapatismo.

Again then, as we have seen previously, Marcos is careful here to draw the necessary distinctions so as to avoid descending into blanket condemnations of intellectuals as a class. Indeed, that the Subcommander retained his appreciation of the importance of engaging intellectuals, carrying this into practice as well as expressing it in his discourse, can be seen from the fact that, as Octavio Rodríguez Araujo (2009, 35) observes: "For the Encuentro of the Indigenous Peoples of America, which took place in Vímam, Sonora, from October 11 to 14 in 2007, *Marcos* invited many intellectuals as outside observers [...]."

Most recently, on January 5, 2009, Marcos gave a speech at the *Zapatistas' Primer Festival Mundial de la Digna Rabia* in Chiapas in which he praised leading academic and former UNAM rector, Pablo González Casanova and other intellectuals who were in attendance at the Subcommander's request. Singling-out Casanova, Marcos stated:

His simplicity and modesty towards us has not ceased to astonish us, the Zapatistas. I hope it does not offend, but he does not seem to be an intellectual [...] he has had, at least with us, a humility and modesty which identifies him more with the *sabedores* (knowing ones) among the Indian peoples than with the arrogant "specialists" who, from the comfort and privilege of academia, judge and condemn a reality from which they have always been aloof [...].

Unlike many of the "great brains" [...] Pablo González Casanova [...] has never tried to tell us what we should do, "throw us a line", give us orders

or direct us [...].<sup>57</sup>

This speech is significant both for the distinction that Marcos makes between “sabedores” and “intellectuals”, and what it reveals about his attitude toward the latter. Here we find the same criticisms of intellectuals –as comfortable, privileged, divorced from reality, and (by inference from their contrast to “sabadores” who are humble and modest) overbearing and condescending– as we encountered in Rafael Guillén’s thesis. A case can therefore be made for the existence of at least some element of continuity in Guillén’s/Marcos’ attitude toward intellectuals from 1980 to 2009.

## MARCOS AS AN INTELLECTUAL

Prior to concluding, it is worthwhile to ask whether Marcos himself should be viewed as an intellectual?<sup>58</sup> The question is a far from whimsical one, since if Marcos proves to be an intellectual then any criticisms he raises concerning the function and role of intellectuals can be said to come from within the intellectual class itself, and therefore cannot be dismissed as arising from the commonly held misgivings that “men-of-action” harbor toward “men-of-letters”. Petras (1999, 37, 42), for one, answers this question in the affirmative, writing: “Marcos is a committed intellectual [...] an intellectual of urban origin with a literary flair that is unmatched among his counterparts in Latin America”. Another, Volpi (2004, 121), argues that “If Marcos received the support of so many intellectuals in so many parts of the world, it was owing to the fact that they saw in him another intellectual”. Indeed, Volpi (2004, 355) devotes considerable space to asserting the Subcommander’s intellectual credentials:

Why did Marcos, unlike other guerrilla leaders, manage to attract the sympathy of men of letters so quickly and effectively? The primary reason is obvious: because Marcos himself is, basically, an intellectual [...].<sup>59</sup>

Nonetheless, this explanation is limited: other Latin American guerrillas have had an education similar to that of the Subcomandante and nonetheless have

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57 Both the text and a recording of this speech can be found at: <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2009/01/06/septimo-viento-unos-muertos-dignos-y-rabiosos/#Marcos>

58 See Nicola Miller (1999, 13ff) on the “notoriously problematic” task of defining what constitutes an intellectual.

59 Earlier, Volpi (2004, 121) had described Marcos as “a brilliant intellectual critic”.

not turned into immediate heroes of the *intelligentsia*. If Rafael Guillén did indeed study Philosophy at the National University and has always been a voracious reader, that did not transform him into an intellectual *per se* [...].

The other half of the explanation has to be sought, then, in his talent for appropriating –and putting into practice, even if using extreme measures– the ideas and style of the intellectuals of the left whom he had so praised. Seen in retrospect, the Subcomandante incarnated the idea of many of his correspondents: a man of ideas who, driven by his desire to transform the world, decided to turn himself into a man of action. If you add to that the richness of his imaginative universe, his dramatic genius and his ability to seduce the media –and the very justice of his cause– it can be better understood why the intellectuals have identified so well with him.

Similarly, Anne Huffschmid (2004, 256) strongly implies that Marcos is an intellectual on the same level (“von gleich zu gleich”) as those intellectuals such as Carlos Fuentes, Adolfo Gilly, Eric Jauffret, John Berger and Carlos Monsiváis, with whom he has engaged in correspondence. Noting how “In all six letters to the most prominent of his counterparts [i.e. the five aforementioned intellectuals], and as in a text addressed to Enrique Krauze, Marcos from time to time cites sections from their works and uses them to support his own views”, Huffschmid (*ibid*) concludes that “In this way he appropriates elements of the intellectual universe of the opposition, and so constructs a sort of common ground”. In Huffschmid’s eyes then, Marcos’ considered citation of extracts from the works of intellectuals with whom he exchanges correspondence should be seen as an intellectual activity, and one which creates a common intellectual ground, thus ultimately placing the Subcommander on a level with these intellectuals. (To this, I would add that the case for Marcos being considered an intellectual in his own right is perhaps strengthened by his recently having engaged in a lengthy public epistolary exchange on the theme of ethics and politics with eminent Mexican philosopher Luis Villoro.)

So too, Kristine Vanden Berghe (2006, 148) argues that “Marcos is inspired by several convictions that usually are associated with the “typical” Latin American intellectuals of before”, most notably, “he thinks that the written word constitutes an effective weapon in social and political struggles [...] that discourse constitutes a privileged place from where the marginalized can reply to those who dominate them [...] and that he seems to attribute to narrative fiction a central role in the formation and the transformation of power relations”. Vanden Berghe continues, “In this belief also he agrees with many other intellectuals of the continent of the past decades and, particularly, with those who are usually included

in what is called the *boom*'. She concludes (2006, 149): "Marcos revitalizes a tradition [...] of the Latin American intellectual who is not on the side of power and who, by means of words, tries to elaborate political counter-hegemonies".

Most recently, Jeff Conant (2010, 67) writes that Marcos "reveals himself as an intellectual, displaying a sharp wit and deeply informed playfulness that [...] assures [...] that the motives behind the Zapatista uprising are treated as 'serious', if not by the political class in Mexico then at least by its academics and intelligentsia".

I would add to all this that the Subcommander's function within Mexican society certainly jibes with Said's (1996, 11) description of the role of an intellectual:

[...] this role has an edge to it, and cannot be played without a sense of being someone whose place is to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma (rather than to produce them), to be someone who cannot be easily co-opted by governments or corporations, and whose *raison d'être* is to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug. The intellectual does so on the basis of universal principles: that all human beings are entitled to expect decent standards of behavior concerning freedom and justice from worldly powers or nations, and that deliberate or inadvertent violations of these standards need to be testified and fought against courageously.

Moreover, I would point to the fact that Marcos' recurrent wrestling with the distinction between those intellectuals who collude with power and those who remain aloof from it, places him within a well-established tradition of intellectuals such as Julien Benda, Noam Chomsky and Edward W. Said, who have made similar distinctions.<sup>60</sup> Thus, I would conclude that the Subcommander, on account of the education he experienced, the philosophical training he undertook, the academic career he briefly pursued, the literary accomplishments he has stacked-up,<sup>61</sup> the function within Mexican society he fulfils, the recognition from intellectuals he has received, the convictions he shares with preceding "typical" Latin

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60 Chomsky and Said have been discussed above. Julien Benda wrote *La trahison de clercs* (*The Treason of the Intellectuals*) in which he distinguished between real intellectuals ("clerics") and those who had been co-opted by power – Said (1996, 4ff) has a useful discussion of Benda's work.

61 See Kristine Vanden Berghe (2005, 51), who notes that Marcos was nominated by some of Mexico's literary luminaries for both the *Premio Chiapas de Literatura* and the *Premio Chiapas en Arte*. Nick Henck (2007, 236f) collects quotations by several academics extolling the virtues of Marcos' literary flair.

American intellectuals, and the fact that both the role of intellectuals and the division of them into categories based on their collusion with, or aloofness from, power are themes that demonstrably preoccupy him, deserves to be considered an intellectual, albeit perhaps what Said (2001) terms a “non-academic intellectual”.<sup>62</sup>

## CONCLUSION

We have traced a broad trajectory in the development of Marcos' attitude toward Mexico's public intellectuals, from one of harboring misgivings concerning them in his youth, through a necessary reliance on them during the initial years of the rebellion, to finally one of complete independence from them following the legislative failure of 2001. Initially, from his encounters with “elite intellectuals” and “café Marxists” (and possibly also the writings of Louis Althusser), Rafael Guillén developed a skepticism toward intellectuals which may possibly have facilitated his decision to turn his back on an academic life in favor of an insurgent one. Later, as Subcommander Marcos, during the first weeks of the uprising in January 1994, he accepted assistance from those intellectuals who stepped forward to ensure the survival of the rebels by helping to shape public opinion in their favor and by exerting pressure on the government to disavow a policy of annihilation. However, as time went by, Marcos came to realize not only that there were limits to the support that Mexican intellectuals would provide the Zapatistas, but also that the price of such support as they offered was acceptance of significant constraints on the movement, including urging that it demonstrate both its commitment to the peace process, by entering into dialogue with the government, and its respect for the electoral process – both things that lent legitimacy to an institutional politics which the Subcommander vigorously rejected. (To a large extent the Subcommander's misgivings were borne out by events: the period 1994-2001 witnessed seven years of dialogue and engagement with the government, all of which ultimately proved fruitless given the legislative failure of 2001.)

We may surmise, therefore, that for the first few years of the rebellion Marcos felt that the support and protection offered by intellectuals more than offset the constraints they placed upon the movement, and so he devoted considerable energy to engaging with them, entering into

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62 Said cites John Pilger and Alexander Cockburn as examples of “non-academic intellectuals”.

correspondence with them, and inviting them both to attend conventions and *encuentros*, and to act as advisors in negotiations with the government. There followed president Zedillo's refusal to sign the San Andrés Accords, despite his own team of advisors having negotiated them, and the Mexican legislature's "gutting" of the Indigenous Rights Bill in 2001. By then, it is reasonable to conjecture that Marcos had decided on a change of strategy, having calculated that the constraints placed upon the movement by Mexico's intellectuals were too restrictive in relation to the benefits their support bestowed. After all, the Subcommander no doubt observed, even those Mexican intellectuals who had championed the passing of the Indigenous Rights Bill –and not all had– had singularly failed to exert sufficient pressure on the nation's legislature to ensure the Bill's passage, while the protection that intellectuals had previously provided the Zapatistas movement could now perhaps be substituted for that afforded by Mexican civil society, the national and international Press, foreign intellectuals, and the presence in Chiapas of domestic and international NGOs and peace camps staffed by both Mexicans and foreigners. Consequently, from March 2001 the Zapatistas spurned Mexico's political class, and decided instead to concentrate on making indigenous autonomy a lived reality instead of working to convince the government to recognize and confer legitimacy upon it. They could now totally reject the institutional political path which had brought nothing but betrayal and which, in all likelihood, Marcos as a leftwing *guerrilla*, and the Zapatistas as an indigenous movement,<sup>63</sup> had always been exceedingly distrustful of.

In terms of the continuities and progressions within the Subcommander's discourse, two points can be made. First, we can detect Marcos' progressive attempts at elaborating a more nuanced theory on intellectuals. In his autumn 1995 communiqué Marcos had contented himself with criticizing "some intellectuals" whom he claimed had been co-opted by the powerful.

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63 Again, see Hernández Castillo (2006, 118, 122, 128, respectively):

Indigenous people's concrete needs have not been among the priorities of either the PRI [...] or of the [...] PRD, much less of [...] the PAN [...] all three have long histories of confrontation with and even repression of indigenous and campesino organizations [...].

Considering this long history of clashes between political parties and indigenous peoples, it is understandable that the EZLN's criticisms of the institutional left and party politics find an echo in a broad sector of the indigenous population [...].

The history of misunderstandings between indigenous peoples and political parties has made Zapatista criticisms of partisan politics resonate with a broad sector of the national indigenous movement.

However, by April 2000, he was drawing a distinction between “progressive” and “reactionary” intellectuals –those who remained true to their vocation and those who had sold out– and trying to articulate a clear view of the role of these two in Mexico. Finally, in March 2006, the Subcommander arrived at his most refined formulation to date of the division of intellectuals, this time into three constituencies –those from above, middle and below– and elaborated on their respective functions in society. This 2006 reformulation of the categories constituting intellectuals, and the increased discussion of intellectuals in Marcos’ discourse between March 2006 and November 2007 which it issued-in, was, I would urge, stimulated by the reactions of many intellectuals to the Subcommander’s decision to turn his back on the institutional political channel. Second, turning to continuities within the Subcommander’s discourse, we can see that Marcos has consistently been concerned with role of intellectuals as influencers of public opinion, and has repeatedly criticized those of them who have upheld a status quo he deems intolerable. Other persistent criticisms of some intellectuals include what the Subcommander evidently perceives to be their entrenched privilege, their being removed from reality and/or their deliberate distancing of themselves from the underdogs, and their condescension toward others.

Furthermore, I would urge that an understanding of Marcos’ attitude toward intellectuals is complicated by the fact that the Subcommander can himself be said to be an intellectual, and thus the tension that stereotypically exists between military men-of-action and intellectuals is not sufficient to account for the nuanced attitude depicted in this paper. Any future discussion of Marcos’ interaction with Mexico’s intellectuals would do well to take this into account.

Finally, Marcos’ discourse on Mexico’s intellectuals lends itself to a Gramscian interpretation according to which the Zapatistas have been waging a “war of position” against the Mexican State on the battlefield of ideology. Adopting this perspective, the Subcommander can be seen as playing a key role both in challenging “traditionalx intellectuals”, or commissars, who formulate and disseminate hegemony on behalf of the regime, and in fostering “organic intellectuals” necessary for the production and diffusion of a Zapatista counter-hegemony: indeed, Marcos himself perhaps constitutes the model of a Gramscian “organic intellectual” for the twenty-first century.

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