

Communique of July 19, 1999

## For Maurice Najman, who keeps on playing dead

July 19, 1999

To: Asma Jahangir, Special Correspondent of the UN for Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions

From: Insurgent Subcomandante Marcos.

CCRI-CG of the EZLN

Ms. Asma Jahangir,

I write to you in the name of the women, men, children and aged of the Zapatista National Liberation Army.

We know that we'll receive more than a little criticism for what I'm going to say and for having missed out on an opportunity to display the Mexican government in its genocidal policy against indigenous people. But it turns out that, for us, the "political opportunity" has little to do with political ethics. And it wouldn't be ethical, given our confrontation with the Mexican government, to appeal to an international organization that has lost all credibility and legitimacy and whose death certificate was signed with the NATO bombings in Kosovo.

With its war in the Balkans the North American government, disguised as NATO and with the the regimes of England, Italy and France as grotesque foot soldiers achieved the destruction of its principle object: the organization of the United Nations (U.N.). The "intelligent" mega-police action of the global gendarme, the U.S., made mockery of the former highest international tribunal. Violating the precepts that were the basis of the UN, NATO developed a cynical war of aggression, indiscriminately attacking civilians and attempting to delegate the intellectual authority to the satellites who, more than ever, showed themselves useless to those with the vision who have already made the decisions. NATO's bellicose cynicism was surpassed only by the "brilliant" statements of their chiefs and spokespersons. The "humanitarian war", the "good faith error" and the "collateral damage" were not the only gems of the costume jewelry of war they sold (because they were already preparing to pass the buck) in the land of the Kosovars. "Some NATO soldier with a good number of stars under his breast, on Tuesday in Brussels made two chilling declarations: Of a total of 35 thousand air operations only something more than 10 thousand were directed against concrete objectives. And the other 25 thou-

sand? Had they been executed by error? If concrete objectives exist, do non-concrete objectives also exist? What sort of objective is a person? The second declaration inspires as many questions as the first: The objective of NATO wasn't the complete destruction of the Yugoslavian army nor was it to reduce the country to ashes. It's just as well, although one can't help thinking that before ash come embers and before that the bits and before that the pieces: To what size of matter did they think to reduce the country and its army? The post-war banquet is served, the information sent by Roger Waters' satellite fills the media all day long. Meanwhile, the more that is said the better to conceal what can't be spoken" (Jordi Soler in La Jornada, June 19, 1999).

The complicity of the UN with the European war was evident and, given our position with respect to this war, a minimal degree of integrity would bring us to distance ourselves from an organization that, it's true, years ago fulfilled a worthy and independent role on the international scene. Today it's different. On both sides of the planet the UN has become a nonessential legal endorsement for the wars of aggression that the great power of money repeats, never satiated by blood or destruction.

But if in Kosovo the silence of the UN made it an accomplice of the crime and the destruction, it has taken a more active role with the Mexican government in its war against the indigenous people. In May of 1998 at the request of the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) the government attacked the community of Amparo Aguatinta, beat children, imprisoned women and men and militarily occupied what was then the seat of the autonomous municipality of Tierra y Libertad. The results of the "humanitarian work" of the UN in Chiapas remain in the prison of Cerro Hueco, Tuxtla Gutiérrez. Presently, today, July 19, 1999, Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the UN, is presenting the United Nations Vienna Civil Society Award to the self-proclaimed Aztec Foundation which, under the auspices of the local Mexican Milosevic, Mr. Ricardo Salinas Pliego, devotes itself to fighting drugs using cocaine addicts, promoting riots and destroying indigenous schools with helicopters. And so, for being part of the war against indigenous Mexicans, for its ties with narcotics traffickers and for its calls for a coup, the Aztec Foundation receives a medal, a certificate and 25 thousand dollars.

That's why we can't grant the UN any amount of trust. And this is not due to chauvinism or a rejection of all things foreign. There have been here, at risk of their lives, freedom, possessions and prestige, men and women from the five continents, working as international observers (we'll reserve the word "aliens" for those like Zedillo and his cabinet who owe allegiance only to the nation of money). Not so long ago, in February of 1998 the International Civil Commission for the Observation of Human Rights (CCIODH) was here. Not only are its initials greater than the UN's but also is its moral authority, its honesty, its commitment to truth, its gen-

uine struggle for a just and dignified peace. Men and women from Germany, Argentina, Canada, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, Nicaragua, Switzerland, Andalucía, Aragón, Cantabria, Catalunya, Euskadi, Galicia, Madrid, Murcia and Alicante challenged the most fiercely xenophobic campaign of the Mexican government this century so as to document everything in a report (which they dedicated to José Tila López García, and indigenous man murdered after presenting charges placed by his community before the CCIODH). Consider this report, inspired not only by the desire for a dignified peace but also by truth and honesty.

After the CCIODH, also in 1998, a group of Italians arrived. It was worse for them than for the CCIODH because they were summarily deported by the current Mexican presidential pre-candidate, Francisco Labastida and by the one presently in charge of international public relations on his campaign team and then directly responsible for hundreds of illegal expulsions, Fernando Solís Cámara.

Thousands of men and women from all over the world, all noble and of good will, the majority young men and women of those "ear ringed" that bother the institutionalized left everywhere, came here and saw what the government denied: a war of genocide. They left, many expelled, and told and tell of what they saw: an unbalanced war between those who have all the military power (the government) and those that have only right, history, truth and the future on their side (us). It's obvious who will win (us).

And that's not it, also international organizations like Amnesty International, Americas Watch, Global Exchange, Mexico Social Network, National Commission for Democracy in Mexico-USA, Pastors for Peace, Humanitarian Law Project, Doctors of the World, Bread for the World, Doctors without Borders and many others whose names escape me now but not their history nor their commitment to peace.

For us, any one of them, individuals or groups, have greater moral authority and international legitimacy than the United Nations which today has become a cocktail party of the neoliberal wars at the end of the century.

The government representatives (the pathetic Ms. Green, likewise Rabasa, the Croquetas Albores, etc.etc.) have aptly stated that they have nothing to fear from your visit. It wouldn't frighten them because they know that the UN has been an accomplice and, as in the case of the autonomous municipality of Tierra y Libertad, part of the war of extermination against the indigenous peoples of Mexico.

From what we've read and heard, you are an honest person. You probably entered into the service of the UN during the times in which that institution avoided wars, supported the different groups that were victims

of governmental arbitrariness and promoted the development of those in greatest need. But now the UN promotes and endorses wars, supports and rewards those who kill and humiliate the excluded of the world.

It hasn't escaped our notice that different international economic powers cherish the idea of helping themselves to the rich deposits of oil and uranium under Zapatista soil. Those up there are making complicated calculations and guarding the hope that the Zapatistas would make separatist proposals. It would be easier and cheaper to negotiate with the banana republic (Mayan Nation, they call it) for the purchase of mineral rights as it's well known that the indigenous would be happy with little mirrors and glass beads. And so they won't back down on their intention to enter into the conflict and direct it in accord with their interests. Of course, they have thus far been unable to do so, at least not on our side. Because it turns out that this issue of "national liberation", the last names of the EZLN, we Zapatistas take to heart in all sincerity. And, anachronistic as we are, we still believe in the "outdated" concepts of "national sovereignty" and "national independence". We haven't accepted, nor will we accept, any foreign interference in our movement. We don't accept, nor will we accept, any international force that would be part of the conflict. We will fight it with equal or greater resolve as we fought those who decreed the death by negligence of 10 million indigenous Mexicans. We welcome anyone with moral authority, legitimacy, not an appendage of armed forces (like NATO) or who would have military forces in their service (like the unfortunately celebrated Blue Helmets of the UN), that is, whoever would be part of the PEACEFUL solution of the conflict.

We need absolutely no help to make war. We can do that ourselves. But to make peace, yes, we need many honest people and there aren't many of them left.

Don't take this too hard. The UN isn't the only official international organization that collaborates with the counterinsurgency campaign of the Mexican government. There's also the delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in San Cristóbal whose stupidity and servility bordered on the sublime. In a meeting with the refugees from Polhó the delegates of the ICRC declared, without the least sign of embarrassment, that the refugees were homeless because they were lazy and because they wanted the care of the Red Cross. For these imbeciles who wander around under the supposed banners of neutrality and the humanitarian aid of the ICRC the paramilitaries are an invention, a product of the collective hysteria of more than 7,000 indigenous refugees. According to them, the 45 murdered in Acteal in reality died from infections and in the highlands of Chiapas peace and tranquility reign. Of course, Albores has already congratulated them (and has shared a little of his bone with them, only a little, since we understand he's not very generous). And so they continue driving around in their modern vehicles, increasing the prestige of their "wor-

thy" institution. So what's up? Surely the ICRC will be the next award winner in the UN's "civil society" contest.

This dawn in which I write these lines the moon is a scythe of cold light. It is the hour of the dead, of our dead. And you must know that the Zapatista dead are very restless and talkative. They still speak even though they're dead, crying out history. They cry it out so that memory won't sleep nor die, so they might live, our dead cry out...

Ocosingo, January 3 and 4, 1994. Soldiers of the Federal Army attack and take the municipal capital which had been held by the Zapatistas since dawn of January first. Following orders of then Brigadier General Luis Humberto Portillo Leal, who was chief of Military Zone 30, Infantry Major Adalberto Pérez Nava executes five members of the EZLN. General Portillo Leal had ordered the execution of Zapatistas, armed or not. The word was to not take prisoners, they would all have to be dead (this was only to be avoided if the press was present so as not to damage the image of the Army). The second Infantry Captain, Lodegario Salvador Estrada, executed other indigenous Zapatistas. Days later, in the offices of the Department of National Defense, an Infantry Second Lieutenant Jimenez Morales was executed by military personnel who have him take the blame for the murder of eight indigenous people in the IMSS hospital in Ocosingo. We didn't make up this information. You can verify it on record at the Department of Justice of the United States, Executive office for Immigration Review, Immigration Court of El Paso, Texas, signed by Bertha A. Zuniga, Immigration Judge of the Court the United States, dated March 19, 1999. The Case of Jesús Valles Bahena A76-804-703. Here Officer Jesús Valles Bahena states why he had to desert the Army, after having received death threats from Coronel Bocarundo Benavidez for having refused to carry out orders of summary executions. Along with Officer Valles other officers refused to carry out orders for murder. Their fate is unknown.

Ms Jahangir, here are the civilian names and *noms de guerre*, of those executed in Ocosingo, Chiapas on January 3 and 4 of 1994: Comandante Hugo or Sr. Ik', Francisco Gomez Hernández; Second Lieutenant Insurgente for War Materiel Alvaro, Silverio Gómez Alvarez; Insurgent for War Materiel Fredy, Bartolo Pérez Cortéz; Infantry Insurgent Calixto (his civilian name cannot be revealed); Infantry Insurgent Miguel, Arturo Aguilar Jiménez; Miliciano Salvador, Eusebio Jiménez González; Miliciano Ernesto, Santiago Pérez Montes; Miliciano Venancio, Marcos Pérez Córdoba; Miliciano Amador, Antonio Guzmán González; Miliciano Agenor, Fernando Ruiz Guzmán; Miliciano Fidelino, Marcos Guzmán Pérez; Miliciano Adán, Doroteo Ruiz Hernández; Miliciano Arnulfo, Diego Aguilar Hernández; Miliciano Samuel, Eliseo Hernández Cruz; Miliciano Horacio, Juan Mendoza Lorenzo; Miliciano Jeremias, Eliseo Sánchez Hernández; Miliciano Linares, Leonardo Méndez Sánchez;

Miliciano Dionisio, Carmelo Méndez Méndez; Miliciano Bonifacio, Javier Hernández López; Miliciano Heriberto, Filiberto López Pérez; Miliciano Jeremías, Pedro López García; Miliciano Germán, Alfredo Sánchez Pérez; Miliciano Feliciano, Enrique González García; Miliciano Horacio, Manuel Sánchez González; Miliciano Cayetano, Marcelo Pérez Jiménez; Miliciano Cristóbal, Nicolás Cortéz Hernández; Miliciano Chuchín, Vicente López Hernández; Miliciano Adán, Javier López Hernández; Miliciano Anastacio, Alejandro Santiz López.

During those days more died, but in combat, not executed.

In Morelia, then the municipality of Altamirano, there was, besides execution, flagrant torture. On the seventh of January, 1994 the military entered the community and kidnapped Severiano Santiz Gómez (60 years old); Hermelindo Santiz Gómez (65 years old) and Sebastián López Santiz (45 years old). A little later their remains, with fracture marks and clear indications of execution, were found. The analysis of the remains was done by specialists of the NGO Physicians for Human Rights.

Torture and execution was also the "glorious" method used by the Federal Army in the municipality of Las Margaritas, Chiapas. Here, in the first days of combat, Major Teran (who'd previously been tied to drug trafficking) kidnapped, tortured and executed Eduardo Gómez Hernández and Jorge Mariano Solís López in the neighborhood of Plan de Agua Prieta. The executed men had had their ears cut off and their tongues cut out.

These dead, our dead, find no rest. The butchers of Ocosingo and the murdered and tortured of Morelia and Las Margaritas are still free, enjoying good health and prosperity. Yet now thousands of shadows pursue them, competing for the honor of doing justice.

These are the dead, our dead. They are not the only ones.

Last year, contrary to its propaganda made for international consumption, the government renewed armed attacks on Zapatista forces. The tenth of June, 1998, a military column reinforced with infantry, tanks, planes and helicopters, attacked the community of Chavajeval in the municipality of San Juan de la Libertad (for the Zapatistas) or El Bosque (for the government). Zapatista troops repelled the aggression and so began a strong exchange of fire that was shown on national television. Our troops shot down a helicopter and, frustrated and angry, the military withdrew but attacked the community of Unión Progreso that same day of June 10, 1998. There they took seven Zapatista militia prisoners and executed them without trials. These were their names:

Miliciano Enrique, Adolfo Gómez Díaz; Miliciano Jeremías, Bartolo López Méndez; Miliciano Jorge, Lorenzo López Méndez; Miliciano Marcelino, Andrés Gómez Gómez; Miliciano Gilberto, Antonio Gómez Gómez; Miliciano Alfredo, Sebastián Gómez Gómez; Miliciano Pedro, Mario Sánchez Ruiz.



(The television reporter who covered the military attack of Chavajeval received a national journalism award. Over indigenous and rebel blood his bosses rewarded him and sent him to cover the campaign of one of the two intellectual authors of the murder of Unión Progreso — the other is Zedillo — then Secretary of Government and now presidential candidate Francisco Labastida Ochoa).

This is the Mexican Federal Army which now wants to present an image of innocence by announcing that it will send seven thousand troops into the Lacandona Jungle with the story that they'll be planting little trees. No one says anything. The military chief says that the seven thousand will go unarmed and they all arrive armed. No one says anything.

This is the "new" governmental strategy for Chiapas, the announcement of which served the interests of a few senators of the PRI (those in power thanks to narcotics trafficking and the prostitution of bodies and ideas) to calm the minds of a few Irish legislators.

The same "new" strategy that has been promised to you by that pathetic person named Rabasa Gamboa (who is paid, well paid, for coordinating nothingness). And meanwhile, a new braying from Rabasa explains that what happened at Acteal wasn't an execution.

This time he's right: Acteal and the entire policy followed by his boss Ernesto Zedillo, is GENOCIDE.

This is the history. With the arrival to power, through murder, of Ernesto Zedillo, the Federal Army obtained cover and money to bring into focus their hunger for blood and death.

Seeking to improve the Army's damaged public image the paramilitary squads were activated. These were organized, trained, armed, protected, directed and, in not a few cases, composed of and by active military personnel and militants of the Institutional Revolutionary Party. The objective was and is clear, it was and is about trying to turn the conflict around and present it to international public opinion (the national opinion doesn't concern them in the very least) as an inter-ethnic, or, as a corrupt PGR would have it, an inter-familial conflict. The names chosen by soldiers to baptize their new paramilitary units reflect their great imagination: Red Mask (its greatest "military" success: the Acteal massacre). Peace and Justice (responsible for the murder of dozens of indigenous in the north part of the state). Chinchulines (active in the north and the jungle); Revolutionary Indigenous Anti-Zapatista Movement (having training camps in the military headquarters of the *cañadas* and financed by the state PRI committee); Los Punales (active in Comitán and Las Margaritas); Albores of Chiapas (depend directly on the Croquetas Albores Guillén, wear green caps and have a war cry of "Albores Finish!").

The new governmental strategy for Chiapas is clear: In the ejido of

El Portal, on the Comalapa Border, a group of Zapatista families demand that potable water be reinstated. This had been cut off by PRI military in complicity with the local municipal president. That any indigenous Zapatistas would demand anything is something that the government is unable to tolerate given that for them the only thing the Zapatistas should receive are bullets and blows. Before the Zapatista civilian mobilization the government mobilizes its public forces. The PRIistas, emboldened by the presence of the police, attack the Zapatistas with sticks and bullets. Two Zapatistas are gravely wounded. The police act quickly and detain — the Zapatistas! And they accuse the Zapatistas of criminal association because they find some ski masks. With the characteristic swiftness of the "State of Law" in Chiapas a state government helicopter takes the prisoners to be tried for "violating the peace" (because in Chiapas demanding potable water is a violation of the peace). The two wounded hang between life and death in the hospital while those who fired are free and safe and in the Government Palace they celebrate the new "victory" won in the war against the EZLN. You won't find any of this in the written or the electronic press which is too busy devoting its eight columns or headlines to the yelping of Albores or to the circus of hypocrisies and fallacies of the presidential candidates of the PRI. Indigenous Zapatista prisoners, beaten, wounded or murdered are no longer news in Mexico. They're part of its daily life.

This is the "new" strategy of the Federal government for Chiapas, of the government of Zedillo. There's nothing new here, not even a strategy. It is the same stupid beating which assumes that those who have known how to resist 500 years won't be able to continue to do so in another year and a half.

Of Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon it must now be said what everyone will be saying tomorrow: He is a man of no word, a liar and a murderer. We say that today. When he leaves Los Pinos everyone (even those who today pay him homage) will repeat it and all his corruption and crimes will be brought to light. Persecution, exile and prison, these are the probable stations of his future. It doesn't make us sorry, our dead don't make us sorry.

I read in the press that you've had meetings with some national non-governmental organizations in Mexico City and that you'll meet with others on your visit to Chiapas soon. I congratulate you as you have the honor and good fortune to personally meet men and women who, without the official and/or institutional paraphernalia have confronted every kind of threat and persecution for their work in defense of human rights in Mexico.

I won't mention here any name because in Mexico, and especially in Chiapas, the NGOs that fight for human rights are military objectives of

the Federal Army. But any one of these NGOs has more moral authority in the real, oppressed Mexico than the UN. Still, perhaps you're not to blame, only those great leaders of the UN that have accepted, without the least protest, their sporadic role as spokespersons for NATO and accomplices in the Mexican government's war of extermination against the indigenous peoples.

Nevertheless, we aren't pessimistic with regards to the future of the international community. The failure of the UN is not the failure of humanity. A new international order is possible, a better one, a more human, just order. In that order there will have to be a central place for all these international and national NGOs (that, in contrast with the UN, don't have in their service, nor are in the service of, military forces) and for all these men, women, children and aged who understand that the future is fought out between the world which is exclusive of difference (the war in Kosovo) and the world where many worlds fit (of which Zapatismo in Chiapas is, barely, an intimation).

With them, and above all, for them, the world will one day be a place where war will be shameful and peace a reality and where the reporters of human rights violations, would become 'specimens' whose only area of work will be the investigation of the prehistory of humanity.

Forgive the tone, Ms. Asma Jahangir, as this isn't a personal attack against you. It's just that the organization which you represent represents nothing. This, and moreover that we don't forget Kosovo, nor Amparo Aguatinta, nor Ocosingo, nor Morelia, nor Las Margaritas, nor Unión Progreso, nor anything. That's it, that's what's happening, that we don't forget. We don't forget.

Okay. *Salud* and may dignity never lose memory, because if it loses, it dies.

From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast,

Insurgent Subcomandante Marcos

Mexico

## Editor

**Ben Clarke** is a freelance writer and editor. He is a long-time student of Mayan culture and religion, and over the past fifteen years has made many research trips to Chiapas and Southeastern Mexico. In 1997 he was writer-in-residence at the Oakland Museum of California where he created the multimedia presentation *Image and Imagination Encounters with the Photography of Dorothea Lange* which was also published in book form by Freedom Voices (1997). He is the founding editor of Freedom Voices and the editor of two works by Native American writer Mary TallMountain, *A Quick Brush of Wings* and *Listen to the Night*. Clarke is a community organizer active in domestic and international issues. For seven years, he was co-director of the Tenderloin Reflection and Education Center, a cultural project working with the homeless in San Francisco. He is currently director of Editing and Design at the Media Alliance in San Francisco, where he writes and edits for *MediaFile*.

## Editor and Translator

**Clifton Ross** has been translating and editing Latin American literature for over a decade. In the mid-eighties, he translated and edited *Light and Truth* (1984, CO-Press), A.C. Sandino's manifestos and interviews on politics and spirituality; and *A Dream Made of Stars: A Bilingual Anthology of Nicaraguan Poetry* (1986, CO-Press). In 1987, Ross worked as a translator for CERIGUA, a Guatemalan news service, in Managua Nicaragua. In 1990, he translated and published *Quetzalcoatl* by Ernesto Cardenal (1990, New Earth Publications). *Fables for an Open Field*, a collection of short prose, was published by New Earth Publications (U.S.) and Trombone Press (U.K.) in 1995. *The Light the Shadow Casts*, a collection of interviews Ross did with William Everson, was published by Stride Publications (U.K.) in 1996. Ross is currently working on a translation of poems and essays by Cuban poet, Eliseo Diego.