“They Are Our Brothers and Sisters”: Why Zapatismo Matters to Independent Labour in Mexico

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Abstract: In this paper I seek to illuminate the bases upon which the Mexican independent labour movement and the indigenous Zapatista movement have been able to engage in a politics of accompaniment, a politics based on mutual respect and support without sacrificing autonomy or difference. I examine how this intersection emerged, the grounds that make it possible, and the significance of such an intersection for the Zapatistas and independent labour. This analysis is also an attempt to explore political relationships and possibilities that transgress traditionally understood boundaries and to begin to imagine new relationships and ways of envisioning and practicing politics.

Keywords: social movements, Mexican independent labour movement, Zapatista movement, political alternatives, political theory, political anthropology

Résumé : Dans cet article, mon intention est d'apporter un éclairage sur les raisons fondamentales qui ont incités le mouvement travailliste indépendant du Mexique et le mouvement autochtone zapatiste à se rapprocher afin de mener une politique complémentaire. Cette politique, fondée sur la considération mutuelle et le soutien réciproque, ne remet cependant pas en cause l'indépendance de chacun des mouvements ni leur particularisme. J'examinerai l'émergence de cette alliance, les conditions qui l'ont rendue possible et son importance pour les Zapatistes et les travaillistes. Mon analyse répond à une volonté d'explorer des rapports et des possibilités politiques qui transgressent les frontières conceptuelles traditionnelles et d'imaginer de nouvelles façons d'envisager et de pratiquer la politique.

Mots-clés : Mouvements sociaux, Mouvement travailliste mexicain indépendant, Mouvement zapatiste, Politique alternative, Théories politiques, Anthropologie politique

On January 1, 1994 an indigenous army of some 3000 Mayan peasants emerged from the jungles and canyons of the southernmost Mexican state of Chiapas and declared war on the federal executive and the Mexican army. On New Year's Day 1994, an insurgent guerrilla army calling itself the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) made its existence publicly known by seizing several towns in the highlands of Chiapas including the colonial city of San Cristóbal de las Casas and declaring “Ya Basta!,” “Enough!,” to 500 years of genocide, colonialism, racism, slavery, and, most recently, neoliberalism embodied by the North American Free Trade Agreement. Invoking the constitutional right for Mexicans to alter their form of government and laying claim to a legitimacy rooted in 500 years of indigenous suffering and resistance as well as the legacy of Emiliano Zapata and the Mexican Revolution, the EZLN called for a national uprising to topple the corrupt government of President Carlos Salinas and the Institutional Revolutionary Party which had ruled Mexico for over 70 years.

In the days that followed the New Year's Day uprising, several things would become clear. First, there would be no national uprising to topple the government. Second, there would be no military solution sanctioned by national or international public opinion. Third, the legitimacy of the Zapatista insurgents and their demands would not only find acceptance throughout the Mexican nation and even the world, it would resonate with the demands of others. Fourth and finally, the indigenous Zapatistas had managed to catalyze and inspire a broad front of social opposition to the longest-ruling dictatorship in the contemporary world. One of the most significant actors to support the Zapatista struggle was the independent labour movement in Mexico. In this paper I seek to illuminate the bases upon which two movements, one of them “urban” and “class-oriented,” the other “rural” and “indigenous,”—the labels themselves require unpacking—are able to find common ground and engage in a politics not

only of solidarity but of accompaniment. A politics of accompaniment is a relationship built upon mutual respect and support which reaffirms rather than denies autonomy and difference. The linkages which emerged between the Zapatista movement and the independent labour movement did not foment revolution in Mexico nor were they always effective or successful in terms of promoting the interests of each of these movements. What makes these linkages significant, however, is the fact that they occurred in the absence of pre-existing links, direct channels of communication, or organizational infrastructure, and in the face of a revolutionary history troubled by the inability of urban workers and the peasantry to articulate their struggles as a common one. In this paper, I examine how this intersection emerged, the grounds that make it possible, and the significance of such an intersection for both the Zapatistas and for independent unionism in Mexico. This analysis is also an attempt to explore political relationships and possibilities and to begin to imagine new relationships and ways of envisioning and practising politics that may allow for the realization of new political spaces and practices.

This paper is not an attempt to engage once more in the well-worn debate of class versus identity politics either as organizational and mobilizing principles or as analytical frameworks. As both Marc Edelman (2001) and Charles Hale (1997) note, not only has this debate become increasingly dated, it has also become decreasingly useful both in terms of evaluating recent scholarship as well as analyzing social movements themselves. In this respect, this paper responds to Hale's call "for intellectuals to develop methods and analytical categories that engender more constructive engagement with the multiple inequalities that organize the worlds we live in and study" (1997: 584). Some recent work by social movement scholars has sought to materialize the spirit inspiring Hale's call, stressing a "multilayered view of social movements" capable of highlighting "the interplay between collective identities, political opportunities, and culture" (Whittier 2002: 289) and even invoking the need for a "more dialogic analysis" of cultures of power and contention, the ways in which they are mutually constitutive of each other and the consequences this implies for the infusion of meaning into collective action (Steinberg 2002: 224).

Marc Edelman's *Peasants Against Globalization: Rural Social Movements in Costa Rica* (1999) is an excellent anthropological example of a work which seeks to engage issues not only of culture but of power, politics and history as they relate to social movements and their struggles. Edelman's critique of new social movement theory in his work is also particularly lucid, problematizing the "just-so" characteristics ascribed so often to "new" social movements such as their basis in identity versus class politics, their focus on cultural versus material struggles, and their disavowal of a politics based on power (ibid.: 17-21). While acknowledging the important contributions made by NSM theory such as a renewed focus on issues of identity, culture and subjectivity, Edelman astutely draws connections between some NSM characteristics and the most "dehumanizing aspects of contemporary neoliberal economics" such as a focus on identity politics, individualizing and even commodifying subject positions and an emphasis on difference reproducing social fragmentation (ibid.: 20). Furthermore, Edelman also questions the accuracy and usefulness of the "new" versus "old" social movement paradigm, a distinction which often serves to erase significant histories and continuities on the part of activists and organizations as well as to obscure the fact that many important struggles have emerged precisely out of the intersection of class and identity-based movements (ibid.: 20). In response to this, Edelman's suggestions for social movement analysis are centred around the following principles: a profound skepticism of grand theoretical categories and the paradigms which give rise to them; a renewed commitment to viewing movements and their participants and opponents as situated relationally—socially, politically, economically and culturally—and thus characterized by these relationships rather than outside of them; and a commitment to engaging issues of history and self-representation (ibid.: 185-189). The contours of analysis delineated by Edelman constitute an analytically and politically efficacious approach to the study of social movements and this paper is an attempt, albeit a preliminary one, to take up its promises and challenges.

The structure of this paper is designed to highlight the most relevant points with respect to the intersection between the Zapatistas and independent labour in Mexico. To begin with, I briefly examine the historical dimensions of independent unionism in Mexico in order to situate it in its political context. I then turn to matters of indigenous and peasant organizing in Chiapas since the Mexican Revolution. While sketching the broad contours of the socio-political and cultural context within which to situate the intersection of the Zapatista movement with that of independent labour, I return frequently to the reflections offered by my research partners involved with the independent labour movement in Mexico City during the summer of 2000. These comments offer essential insights into the Zapatistas and the significance of this intersection of movements for independent unionism in Mexico. Finally, I examine the broader political ramifica-

tions of the intersection of the Zapatista movement with independent labour, particularly with respect to the lessons it offers movements struggling for similar recognition and projection. It is important to note that this paper is largely a preliminary analysis of the connections between independent labour activists and the Zapatista movement in Mexico. The interviews conducted for this research were with leading and militant members of the independent labour movement in Mexico City and by no means represent the full range of sentiment within the independent labour movement toward Zapatismo. Additionally, my methodology focused primarily upon asking labour activists to share their perceptions of the Zapatista movement with me and consider its significance with respect to their own struggles rather than observing their political and solidarity activity at the time. My focus in this paper is thus centred upon issues of consciousness and perception as they relate to the culture of social struggle rather than the "actualization" or materialization of these phenomena within the structure of the independent labour movement itself.

In order to achieve a sense of perspective on the thoughts offered by the members of the independent labour movement in Mexico City with whom I spoke, it is of value to briefly review the organizations they represent. The issue of greatest significance here is the difference between "official" unionism and "independent" unionism in Mexico. All of the individuals with whom I spoke situated themselves and the organizations they represent firmly on the side of independent unionism and clearly opposed to official unionism. During my six-week fieldwork period in Mexico City I spoke with: four members representing the cooperative, national coordination and the Mexican Network of Action Against Free Trade sectors of el Frente Auténtico del Trabajo (FAT, Authentic Labour Front); one senior member from la Organización Revolucionaria del Trabajo (ORT, Revolutionary Labour Organization); one member from la Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (CNTE, National Council of Education Workers); and one member from el Sindicato Mexicano del Electricistas (SME, Mexican Electrical Workers Union). While all of these organizations are significant actors identified with "independent" unionism in a broad sense, they each have their own orientations and agendas which do not always coincide. The FAT is a labour organization which, according to its own description, groups individuals and organizations including "industrial workers, peasants and farm workers, agricultural and industrial cooperative members and neighborhood community activists" in the pursuit of "justice, freedom, and democracy" and in order to improve the lives of its members in the community and in the workplace. The ORT is a political organization rather than a union which seeks to promote a radicalization of Mexican workers in terms of their social and political activity as well as concerning itself with the immediate conditions of work which face them in the current social and political context. The CNTE is an "independent" co-ordinating committee of the official Teachers' union in Mexico, the SNTE, and is therefore more of an independent and dissident democratic movement within a national official union rather than an entirely separate entity unto itself (de la Garza Toledo 1991: 179). The members of the CNTE have been and continue to be among the most active participants of the independent labour movement in Mexico. Finally, the SME is a national independent electrical workers' union which was among the first unions to declare independence from official unionism and which is now deeply involved in the struggle against the privatization of the national electrical industry. Their history of independence and the size of their membership make them one of the most significant voices within the independent labour movement today.

"A Genuine Defence for the Workers' Concerns": Independent Labour in Mexico

The history of unionism in Mexico is a long, complicated and dramatic one, however, for the purposes of this analysis a brief overview will suffice in order to provide the necessary contextualization. One of the most salient points in this history is the emergence of official unionism in post-revolutionary Mexico. During the Mexican Revolution from 1910-1917, workers and peasants active in the Partido Liberal Mexicano, also known as the Precursor Movement, as well as the revolutionary armies of Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata were in fact largely responsible for the success of the revolution and the defeat of the dictator Porfirio Diaz. Their strength is testified to by the concessions ultimately made by the elitist Constitutionalist camp led by Venustiano Carranza in order to pacify radicalized peasants and workers in the aftermath of the revolution itself. While there were several concessions made by the government to the peasantry and the working classes, the significant aspect of this move was to incorporate these diverse groups into the larger project of "national development."

While the mobilization of labour and other "mass actors" was necessary for the success of the revolution, it also presented the post-revolutionary elites with the dilemma of finding ways in which to "institutionalize opportunities for worker participation" that would be

acceptable to the vision of the new regime (Middlebrook 1991: 3). In pursuing this goal, the new regime employed two primary strategies. The first was the development of a legal and administrative framework in order to regulate labour participation and to centralize political power. The second strategy of the new regime was the co-optation of labour organizations through the forging of a political alliance with the leadership of the industrial labour movement (ibid: 4-5). In return for their compliance with state-set agendas that necessitated low wages, no freedom of association and no labour unrest, workers received certain assurances of job security and a share of the social wealth generated through their sacrifices (Roman and Velasco Arregui 1997: 99-100).

During the years which followed the 1910 Revolution, the social pact which existed between organized "official" labour and the ruling regime, eventually enshrined as the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI, Institutional Revolutionary Party), operated in a distinctly corporatist and paternalistic manner. In exchange for political backing during times of crisis, a steady and reliable basis of mass support for PRI candidates, and the control of rank-and-file demands and mobilization, official labour, their leaders and even their members received material support for union activities, social and economic benefits such as government-subsidized housing, health care and basic commodities and worker profit sharing (Middlebrook 1991: 9). However, while this social pact offered support to both ruling elites and official labour unions and their members, the terms of the pact remained fundamentally and profoundly unequal. Through its control of coercive force and its "well-developed administrative capacity," the post-revolutionary state and its political elites were able to change the terms of the pact as best suited them. Meanwhile, the labour movement's own weaknesses such as small worker concentrations per firm, low overall levels of unionization compounded by variation across sectors, "poorly-developed representational structures in many enterprise-level unions," and a tendency toward factionalism left it in a poor position to effectively respond to these challenges (ibid.: 9). Thus, a system which ostensibly existed for the purposes of "national development" in fact resulted in an effective and subtle framework by which ruling elites could maintain their control over subordinated groups and ultimately justify their position with reference to an overarching revolutionary vision. This project was, of course, a careful balance between appearance, that labour unions represented workers and fought for their best interests, and the reality, that they existed only within predetermined boundaries established by the state. As long as there were concessions being made, as long as there was even a limited commitment to a reciprocal obligation between the state and the working class, this system maintained its integrity. It was only when this commitment was abandoned entirely by the state during the debt crisis of the 1970s, combined with the failure of official labour unions such as the Confederacion de Trabajadores Mexicanos (CTM, Mexican Workers Confederation) to respond effectively to the resulting assault on workers' rights, that the social contract lost its efficacy as ideology. Once this occurred, the bases of these official unions came to see their leaders as tools in the service of national and transnational elites, and workers began to turn to independent action to achieve their goals.

The core characteristics of independent unionism are, in many ways, reflective of the broader struggles engaged in by independent labour organizations on a daily basis in Mexico. Alejandro,[1] a senior member of the FAT, summarized the characteristics of independent unionism by stating that it is "independent, democratic and autonomous. We are independent from the government, from the official political party, from all the political parties, from the private sector. We practice democracy in all the workers' organizations." Similarly, Pedro, a representative of the cooperative sector and the Mexican Network of Action Against Free Trade and a member of the FAT stated that independent unionism in Mexico is "very important because it represents the opportunity for a genuine defence for workers' concerns. We call it independent to distinguish it from the official unionism that has ties to the government party." Pedro also echoed Alejandro's comments with regard to democracy when he remarked that "independent unionism has been fighting for the internal democratization of unions." Expanding upon this, Carlos, a member of the CNTE, noted that there are three characteristics which distinguish independent unionism:

> the first is the search for democracy...we try for a democratic participatory process. The second is looking for better working conditions, more than anything better salaries, but it could be any condition. And the third characteristic is the politicization, more oriented towards the left, more than anything it's people who are more oriented towards socialism.

The notion of union democratization and autonomy is central to the project of independent unionism in Mexico. Benedicto, a member of the ORT, reflected that independent unions "are fighting for democracy, for independence from the political parties and for keeping the union leaders from re-electing themselves many times"

but that with respect to neo-liberal capitalism their work is also much more specific and defensive because "they have to protect their collective contract, they have to stop the neoliberal industries from building a stop-point for the salaries and wages of workers . . . and they also want to stop them from getting the constitution and the federal law reformed." Finally, Cecilia, a representative of the cooperative sector for the FAT, perhaps summarized this amalgamation of the central themes characterizing the independent labour movement best when, speaking in regard to the goals of cooperative organizing and workers' rights, she said: "what we are proposing won't only affect us, it will also affect other sectors of the population, because we think, what we are proposing is solidarity, support, the freedom of association, the right to live, the right to work, and the right to be happy, even if this sounds a little too sweet." Indeed, from these words it should be clear that it is not at all an act of fantasy to draw a connection between the goals of the Zapatista movement and those of independent unionism in Mexico. It is a connection which will become even more apparent upon further examination of the words offered by these Mexican labour activists.

"They Don't Care That We Have Nothing, Absolutely Nothing": Indigenous and Peasant Organizing in Chiapas

The history of indigenous and peasant organizing and resistance in Chiapas is perhaps even more rich, complicated and powerful than that of the labour movement in Mexico's urban centres. Stretching back more than 500 years, indigenous resistance and organizing are constant features of the history of the state. To echo the words of Adolfo Gilly, this resistance should be understood in its most general sense as the embodiment of *"the will of...communities to persist.* The participants resist and rise up in order to persist, because they can persist only by resisting the movement of a world that dissolves and negates their Being" (1998: 264). This sentiment is crucial in understanding the Zapatista uprising and its resonance amongst independent labour organizers and it is one about which I will say more shortly.

It is impossible to do justice to this history within the contours of this article but I do wish to illuminate some of the most relevant elements of this history during the 20th century which would set the stage for the emergence of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation. Perhaps the first issue that needs to be understood is that there was no revolution in Chiapas. Rather, it would only be after the Mexican Revolution and the "guided reformism" which occurred in Chiapas, and which created fissures in existing systems of domination, that indigenous and peasant organizing would begin in earnest. Beginning in 1919-1920, class-based political polarization began to increase in response to the politicization of the countryside during the preceding years of conflict (Benjamin 1996: 139). Governments at both the federal and state levels were confronted with "radicalized masses" whose support could no longer simply be taken for granted and whose demands would need to be addressed if the regime were to survive. In Chiapas, addressing the demands of these "radicalized masses" often involved outright attempts at cooptation through the creation of "official" and elite-dominated peasant and labour organizations which served to channel dissent and co-opt support in return for ever-decreasing influence and gains (ibid.: 178-199), a situation evocative of the circumstances faced by the labour movement on a national scale.

While the 1950s and the 1960s were decades of economic growth in Chiapas, it was private landowners who benefited most from this situation and *ejidatarios,* people who lived and worked off of communally held land, who continued to suffer.[2] A measure of social peace was preserved, for the time being, largely through the employment of socioeconomic "safety valves" such as the continuation and expansion of land reform, involving the opening of the Lacandon Jungle to colonization and programs of social and economic improvement organized by the National Indigenist Institute (ibid.: 228). However, these initiatives could not stem the emergence in the 1970s of a "grassroots, widespread, and increasingly organized agrarian struggle" in Chiapas (ibid: 229). Against a national backdrop of increasing agitation, militancy and the inability of the PRI regime to suppress dissent, the rural poor of Chiapas were moving toward direct confrontation with the elite, their institutions and their interests.

Beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, the rural poor of Chiapas, after learning the bitter truth of "institutional organizing," increasingly turned to independent labour, agrarian and community organization. The Zapatista rebellion of 1994 is a direct continuation of this type of organizing. Indigenous politicization in Chiapas was assisted by the First Indian Congress of 1974 sponsored by Bishop Samuel Ruiz, himself one of the most important factors in the organization of indigenous peoples through his diocese's "preferential option for the poor" (ibid.: 235). Significantly, the well-organized indigenous movement which emerged from this congress was assisted not only by clergy and church workers but also by radical political activists from urban centres who had fled police and army repression or decided that the countryside would be a

more fruitful venue for the emergence of a radical political movement (ibid.: 235). Several political parties and organizations also began grassroots organizing in Chiapas including Proletarian Line, People United, the Independent Organization of Agricultural Workers and Peasants-Mexican Communist Party, the Socialist Workers Party and a democratic union movement which had emerged among the state's teachers (Hernandez 1994: 7). During this period, the Unión de Uniones Ejidales y Grupos Campesinos Solidarios de Chiapas (UU, Union of Ejidal Unions and Peasant Solidarity Groups of Chiapas), the Central Independiente de Obreros Agrícolas y Campesinos (CIOAC, Independent Central of Agricultural Workers and Peasants) and the Organización Campesina Emiliano Zapata (OCEZ, Emiliano Zapata Peasant Organization) emerged in the eastern, northern and central areas of the state (Benjamin 1996: 235-236). While facing both private and state-based attempts at repression and co-optation, these independent and combative mobilizations would form the basis for the new forms of popular contestation of government abuses and elite exploitation and provide the context within which new strategies of struggle and innovation would begin to emerge.

During the early 1980s, into this matrix of liberation theology, political and physical repression, and peasant and worker mobilization, cadres from a Che Guevara-inspired urban guerrilla movement were thrown to add one of the last elements necessary to give rise to the Zapatista Army of National Liberation. Formed in the north in 1969 by survivors of earlier guerrilla initiatives, the Fuerzas de Liberación Nacional (FLN, Forces of National Liberation) had sent new cadres into the highlands of Chiapas to initiate a new front in preparation for the long military and political national struggle against the bourgeoisie in order to install a socialist system (Womack Jr. 1999: 36). Indeed, Subcomandante Marcos, a military leader and spokesperson of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation would recount years later that the EZLN was born on November 17, 1983 in a meeting attended by three indigenous people and three mestizos, including himself (Harvey 1998: 164). In 1984, along with the first group of guerrillas, Marcos went to live in the Lacandon Jungle's harsh mountainous terrain and it is there that the urban and Marxist core of the EZLN came face to face with the indigenous culture and heritage of Chiapas, a confrontation which would force the former to reconfigure and subordinate itself to the latter (ibid.: 165-166). The "defeat" of Marxist dogma by the cultural and historical force of indigenous reality in Chiapas allowed the EZLN to expand and to begin recruiting new members from communities.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the state attempted to respond to the increasingly mobilized and politicized rural poor in Chiapas through various programs designed to ameliorate their suffering while at the same time accelerating the neo-liberal economic policies which were responsible for exacerbating it.[3] Land invasions by independent campesino organizations continued, followed by violent expulsions and repression (ibid: 249). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the federal government of Carlos Salinas would bring neo-liberal economic policies to their highest pitch yet. Even as the government established the National Solidarity Program, a national anti-poverty program "for small projects of community development and improvement," and with no state receiving more money than Chiapas, Mexico was also preparing to enter into a new economic pact with the U.S. and Canada through the North American Free Trade Agreement (ibid.: 251). NAFTA necessitated the reform of Article 27 of the Constitution in 1992. It removed the rights of campesinos to petition for land redistribution and made ejido land open to privatization in order to encourage investment in agriculture. This reform was not simply a blow to the socio-economic aspirations of the working poor; it was also the most unabashed betrayal of the principles of the Revolution and the agrarian struggle of its greatest hero, Emiliano Zapata.

As Adolfo Gilly insightfully explains, the Mexican state community was consolidated through the Mexican Revolution and the nature of this community and the social pact that binds it together were enshrined in the Mexican Constitution of 1917 (1998: 268). One of the central features of this social pact, attributable to the central position of peasants in the revolutionary struggle itself, was that "peasants figured in the Constitution of 1917 (Article 27) with *status* and specific rights as peasants, not abstractly as citizens; a *status* that includes their expectation of protection by the state in exchange for their obedience to the rulers of the state" (ibid.: 268). The significance of this, contends Gilly, is that "rural rebellion ended up establishing itself…as one of the elements with a potential for constituting the very relationship between rulers and ruled," and that once the pact had been broken, "the right to take up arms is once again ours" (ibid.: 268-269). In this context, a new grassroots peasant organization emerged in the highlands, eastern frontier and north of Chiapas calling itself the Alianza Nacional Campesina Independiente Emiliano Zapata (ANCIEZ, Emiliano Zapata Independent National Peasant Alliance) (Harvey 1998.: 253). Indeed, ANCIEZ was in fact the first public face of the Zapatista Army of Liberation (Womack Jr. 1999: 39). For some time, the need to take up arms had

been advocated by people working in the Lacandon Jungle and several communities in the highlands, a position persuasively argued on the basis of "the explosive combination of unresolved land claims, lack of social services, institutional atrophy, authoritarian political bosses, monstrous deformations in the justice system, and the general lack of democracy" (Hernandez 1994: 8). On October 12, 1992 during a massive protest commemorating 500 years of indigenous and popular resistance thousands of peasants took over the streets of the colonial city of San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas and smashed the statue of the city's founder, the conquistador Diego de Mazariegos (ibid.: 8). It would later be learned that the Zapatista communities in Chiapas had already embarked on the path of armed resistance and at the beginning of 1993 ANCIEZ went underground. The stage was now fully set for the explosion of January 1, 1994 and the emergence of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation.

On January 1, 1994 the Zapatista Army of National Liberation seized the towns of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Ocosingo, Las Margaritas, Altamirano, Chanal, Oxchuc and Huixtán in the highlands of Chiapas (Harvey 1998: 6). Later it would be known that in mid-1992, Zapatista communities had made the decision to go to war "to coincide with 500 years of resistance" (ibid.: 198). In the *First Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle,* the Zapatista declaration of war, the General Command of the EZLN states that "we are a product of five hundred years of struggle," explicitly narrating a history of struggle not only of indigenous peoples against Spanish invaders, but of the people of Mexico against invasion, dictatorship, poverty and repression (EZLN 1993) While asserting their goal to advance on the Mexican capital and depose the federal executive in order to allow "the people liberated to elect, freely and democratically, their own administrative authorities," the Zapatistas also outline the central goals of their struggle, namely: "work, land, housing, food, health care, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice, and peace" (ibid.). These demands evoke not only the concrete concerns of peasants living in the far southeast of Mexico today, but also echo the demands of Mexican revolutionaries for almost 300 years. Furthermore, these demands echo, and would resonate with, the struggle of workers involved in the independent labour movement.

"For Everyone, Everything, for Ourselves, Nothing": The Politics and Symbolism of Zapatismo

It is vital to note that in calling themselves "Zapatista," the insurgents of the EZLN and the civilian base which comprises the bulk of the movement have adopted the name of one of the greatest Mexican revolutionary heroes, but also one who was neither active, nor particularly well known in Chiapas until relatively recently (Collier and Quaratiello 1999:158). By invoking the man, his image and his legacy, the Zapatistas are currently involved in a process not only of engaging the national imaginary and reaffirming the "Mexicanness" of their movement, but also one of holding the state accountable to the revolutionary ideals of a man whose image it has actively sought to appropriate (ibid.: 158). The source of the image and ideology of Zapata in Chiapas can be traced primarily traced to organizers from the Mexican urban left who went to work in the countryside after 1968 (Stephen 2002: 150).[4] But the image of Zapata ultimately employed by the EZLN is one which "was forged through the melding of [Zapata] with a supposedly Tzeltal mythical figure," resulting in a hybrid known as Votán Zapata embodying the spirit of indigenous Zapatismo and providing a symbolic, unifying point of reference for those engaged in the Zapatista struggle (ibid.: 158-164). Thus, the use of Zapata by the EZLN needs to be seen as a conscious move on the part of the insurgents not only to employ a revolutionary icon to give themselves legitimacy, but, more significantly, to use such an icon to evoke a particular revolutionary imaginary within the minds of the indigenous communities specifically and the Mexican people in general.

While the Zapatista rebellion took both Mexico and the world by storm, the EZLN was driven back into the canyons of the Lacandon Jungle almost immediately by the Mexican military. While still technically at war with the Mexican army and the state, the EZLN has in the years since the uprising foregone the route of armed struggle in favour of an approach which has emphasised dialogue and connection with national and international civil society. In his article "Chiapas and the Rebellion of the Enchanted World" (1998), Adolfo Gilly explores the bases upon which the resonance of Zapatismo within the Mexican nation occurred. Gilly considers the "adoption and protection" of Zapatismo by Mexican civil society to be based upon seven central points which I will briefly discuss in turn as they are significant with respect to appreciating the reaction of independent labour to Zapatismo. The first basis of resonance emerged from the nationally transmitted symbolic gesture of columns of armed and masked but clearly indigenous men and women taking control of the colonial plaza of San Cristóbal de las Casas. This, Gilly argues, evoked "the historical memory of the country....Indians, those about whom the urban society bore an ancient and unconfessed guilt, had organized themselves and risen up with weapons in their hands"

and through the transmission of these images the rebellion legitimated itself before Mexican society (1998: 309). The second basis, related to the first, is that the word *zapatismo* instantly explained the rebellion to the nation in "terms accessible to all"; furthermore, this movement's right to invoke this word and its history, so often co-opted by ruling elites, was demonstrated by the fact that "entire Indian communities had organized an army" (ibid.: 309). The third basis of resonance resulted from the state's negotiation with the Zapatistas because, as Gilly explains, "[o]ne doesn't negotiate because one has the right to, but because one has the *force* to make that *right* recognized," a principle "rooted in the common culture within which the Mexican state community has sustained itself, above all since the revolution of 1910" (ibid.: 309-310). Situated in relation to these three initial historical, cultural, and political points of reference, the reasons for the "adoption and protection" of the Zapatistas on the part of Mexican civil society begin to crystallize.

The resonance of Zapatismo is not based purely on historical, cultural and political antecedents however. As Gilly asserts, the fourth basis of this resonance was established through the demands issued by the Zapatistas in their declaration of war, their invocation of Article 39 of the Mexican Constitution and their call for the removal of Carlos Salinas and his government to allow for free and democratic elections to occur. These calls demonstrated that the Zapatistas did not want to destroy the Mexican state, they wanted to reinvigorate it with a spirit of deep inclusivity and radical democracy. In the fifth instance of this resonance, Gilly explains that the Zapatista movement "aroused in Mexico an *Indian movement independent* of the government," a movement which has since been materialized in the form of the National Indigenous Congress (ibid.: 310). This independent indigenous movement has in turn reinvigorated the "Indian question, especially about culture and autonomy," a moment which Gilly considers to be marked by a "diversification and democratization of Mexican political culture" that is entirely new and to which other broad sectors of Mexican society could relate (ibid.: 310-311). Gilly asserts that the sixth basis for the resonance of Zapatismo is that the Zapatistas, along with the national indigenous movement, put the issue of national identity back on the agenda "during a period when that notion was (once again) the subject of debate," particularly in light of NAFTA and other globalizing forces (ibid.: 311). The Zapatistas were not calling for an abandonment of the Mexican nation and the identities which comprise it, instead they called for a direct and explicit consideration of national identity, who it currently excluded and who it privileged.

Gilly's final point with respect to the "adoption and protection" of Zapatismo by Mexican civil society is that it is also due to the communicative ability of the Zapatistas, their management of modern media and their profoundly original discourse. This discourse, Gilly contends, is so powerful because it is articulated in a language "of modern images and ancient symbols, [which] does not propose a return to a past either distant or near," rather, "[i]t suggests instead the possibility of a *nonexcluding modernity,* one that does not destroy history and those who carry it with them but, rather, integrates then into a reality where none are excluded" (ibid.: 312). As Gilly convincingly demonstrates, both this set of interwoven factors and the social resonance of Zapatismo to which they have given rise ultimately rests upon the central pillar of the Zapatista movement itself, namely, "the *material, human, and historical substance* of this rebellion: the *indigenous communities* and the *Indian leadership* of the movement, without which the combination [of factors] would be impossible" (ibid.: 312). As for Marcos' role in all of this, Gilly situates it brilliantly in relation to this set of bases of resonance by simply stating that Marcos "knew enough, first, to comprehend and assimilate that substance [of the indigenous communities] and, then, how to be the mediator or the guide through which its image is transmitted to urban society" (ibid.: 312; also see Higgins 2000). Through a complex interplay of cultural, historical and political reference points, a deep rootedness in the indigenous communities from which it emerged, a communicative approach at once profoundly evocative of indigenous culture and yet capable of speaking powerfully to urban audiences, and a political project which challenges relations of power and domination (both long-standing and newly emergent) and seeks to enrich democracy and reinvigorate the Mexican nation, Zapatismo has initiated a powerful resonance on a multiplicity of levels within Mexican civil society.

"They Are Our Brothers and Sisters": The Reaction of Independent Unions to the Zapatista Uprising

In his editorial comments in *The Zapatista* Reader, Tom Hayden reflects upon the place of indigenous peoples and their movements within the scope of the organized Left in a manner that is profoundly evocative of the absences and obstacles about which I wrote in the introduction to this paper:

> while there always has been a romantic movement concerned with indigenous culture, spirituality, and rights, the general thrust of both conservative and progressive

political thought has accepted the notion of their "backwardness." The Left's tendency has been to place greater emphasis on the working class than the indigenous, viewing the latter as primitive or traditional. In effect, the end of indigenous cultures, however tragic or brutal, was prelude to the formation of a proletariat with supposed revolutionary potential. (Hayden 2002: 318-319)

While Hayden notes that "Marcos and the EZLN have returned the question of the indigenous to its central place in our memory and the organization of our world" I contend that the relationship between independent labour in Mexico and the Zapatistas has come to embody much more than this. In a climate where voices of opposition such as independent unions had been struggling for years against a system which appeared to offer less and less to most Mexicans in order to serve the interests of a few, the Zapatistas veritably exploded onto the national and international stage demanding "Democracy! Liberty! Justice!" not only for themselves, but for all Mexicans. Nevertheless, why did this message not only reach but resonate with movements such as independent labour? I posed this question to my research partners and what I was told says much about the capacity of movements founded in very distinct traditions to find common cause with one another without seeking to subordinate the other to their own agenda.

Reflecting upon the Zapatista uprising, Pedro from the FAT spoke not only of the initial reactions of independent labour to it but also upon the aspects of it which allowed independent labour activists to actively engage with it:

> in general, this event was received with a lot of sympathy, with a lot of support. Because in Mexico, the sector with the worst conditions of justice, of human rights, of the lack of citizens' rights, are traditionally indigenous sectors....So, for the majority of independent unions of democratic organizations, the defence of indigenous rights is a duty, it is principal, and the indigenous uprising was an opportunity to put indigenous rights on the national agenda. In Mexico, there is a very strong folklore tradition, right? The memory, our past, the Hispanic, the Aztecs, the pyramids; a person would have a sculpture in their house, something, right? But when it concerns indigenous rights, the situation is more complicated. So, this permitted the indigenous issue to be put on the agenda, to be put on the list of national priorities. Also, the platform with which the uprising presented itself was a very advanced platform. Politically very advanced, no? It wasn't, let's say, just an uprising. It was a questioning of the lack of indigenous rights and the general population.

The notion of the "Indigenous Question" is central to understanding the impact of the Zapatista movement upon other sectors of Mexican society, particularly in light of the fact that the Mexican state has long claimed a "pre-Hispanic Indian ancestry for itself while denying the rights common to all citizens to those Indians actually living in Mexican territory" (Gilly 1998: 277). While peasants were included in the revolutionary Constitution of 1917, indigenous peoples were not, instead, their relationship to the Mexican state was expressed through the official ideology of "indigenismo" involving the "assimilation and absorption of the indigenous in the Mexican, and the 'citizenization' of Indians through public education, state protection, and economic development" (ibid.: 278). As Carlos Monsiváis notes with respect to the "durability" of the EZLN, "[i]ts sticking power isn't due to the spirit of armed resistance (with its fatal implications), nor even to the charisma of its leadership, but rather to the way in which they have brought the Indians of the zones some social visibility" (2002: 126). Not only this, but as Pedro's comment reflects as well, this "visibility" has forced an explicit consideration of "the recuperation or incorporation of Indianness into the notion of the nation," not as a co-opted and desiccated tribute to some imagined Indian past but in the form of actually-existing social subjects (ibid.: 127). Homero Aridjis (2002) also picks up on these points as he argues that in 1994 the EZLN "not only called attention to the plight of the indigenous peoples, but to the plight of all the indigenous in Mexico, a Mexico torn apart between its indigenous past and its attempts to insert itself into the economic future of North America" (2002: 142). The Zapatistas have not only forced Mexicans to think about indigenous people, they have forced them to explicitly consider them in contemporary relation to the Mexican nation-state in terms of how the indigenous themselves want to be included.

While there were certainly expressions of sympathy and support for the Zapatista uprising from the independent labour movement in the early days of 1994, many of the sentiments expressed during those first days also extended beyond sympathy and concern. Carlos from the CNTE elaborated on this point when he related to me his impressions of the initial reaction of independent unions to the Zapatistas:

> Euphoria. Joy. Green with envy. It stimulated us, motivated us a lot. We were worried, especially at first because we knew the people would be killed, and weren't so much worried about them because they were indigenous, that wasn't so much of our worry at first. We were worried about them because we knew that they were struggling, and millions of Mexicans

have wanted to do the very same thing before, which is to raise arms up against the system. They identified immediately with the Zapatista movement because they were asking for things, all kinds of things that many other Mexicans were asking for, for example: land, better salaries, health, democracy, justice, and the ousting of the PRI. Everything that we've been working for and that we've always fought for they were fighting for too.

These reactions are emblematic not of instrumental or convenient linkages between the Zapatistas and the independent labour movement, rather, they speak to the deep sense of people in struggle together despite the acknowledged differences of their particular circumstances. As Lynn Stephen and George Collier reflect, the resonance of Zapatismo amongst diverse sectors of Mexican society "responds to a growing sense of hopelessness that Mexicans feel in the face of stark economic realities" connected to the neo-liberal policies pursued in Mexico by successive PRI governments since the 1970s (Collier and Stephen 1997: 10). Furthermore, as Shannan Mattiace asserts, "the Zapatistas offered a critique of modernity as defined by the Salinas administration" in a way which "straddled" both the more traditional class-based argument, in which poverty is the result of a subordinate economic position with respect to the economic system, and the "ethnic argument" which attributed unequal relations between Indian and mestizo society to "cultural differences" (Mattiace 1997: 36). Instead, the Zapatistas' message explained "current injustices and inequality, both for the indigenous as well as for other groups within Mexican society, in terms of political power" (ibid.: 36). This ability to create bridges is a defining feature of Zapatismo and is central to appreciating its resonance within Mexican civil society.

In "The New Zapatista Movement: Political Levels, Actors and Political Discourse in Contemporary Mexico" (1998), Xochitl Leyva Solano examines the reasons inspiring the connection between the Zapatista movement and what she refers to as "*México Rebelde.*" According to Leyva Solano, "México Rebelde" includes "traditional parties of the left and centre-left, cells of clandestine political organisations and 'legal' peasant, indigenous and sector organisations together with non-governmental organisations and civil associations" (1998: 38). Independent unionism could thus also be grouped within "México Rebelde" and there are several bases for identification between it and Zapatismo, including: worsening living conditions for people throughout Mexico; the entrenchment of ruling party power and privilege; the fragmentation of the organized left and its electoral defeat through massive fraud in 1988; and, finally, the "unanimous rejection of armed struggle as an option to solve the country's problems" (ibid.: 38). Leyva Solano argues that the Zapatista rebellion reverberated so strongly within Mexico because it came at a particularly delicate time, on the eve of both the NAFTA and the six-year ritual of PRI presidential succession (ibid.: 38). Leyva Solano also contends that the "convergence of different political actors" which the Zapatista uprising appeared to stimulate should in no way be seen as peripheral or accidental "since the EZLN discourse had always emphasised the necessity of fomenting ties between the various popular struggles that had taken place in Mexico, in 'isolated nuclei,' over the past five decades" (ibid.: 48). As I hope will become increasingly clear, these factors resonate powerfully with the insights shared by my research partners in the independent labour movement.

The expressions of sympathy and solidarity which characterized the reaction of members of the independent labour movement to the Zapatista uprising are not simply the product of vaguely similar commitments or support for any movement which seeks to challenge the existing power structure. Rather, this reaction was born of a mutual acknowledgement of suffering and subjugation as well as a deep recognition of sharing a similar struggle in spite of significant differences. Samuel of the SME described his perception of the nature of this connection in the following manner:

the first reaction when we saw the Zapatista uprising in '94 was surprise. It was amazing, it was unbelievable. In those days society was numbed by Carlos Salinas' promises of becoming part of the First World, of which this country was about to become, that was just around the corner. And all of a sudden, in the middle of that numbness, they have this uprising, this untraditional guerrilla, an army of poor people that rose up and we just couldn't believe it. There was no background for this, we didn't even know they existed, actually these people, the indigenous people, seemed to have ceased to exist, we didn't know they were there...what the society and especially us, the independent unions, have seen is we have recognized the poverty and similar problems that the Zapatistas have, we have seen them in our houses. We have seen people die from perfectly curable diseases because they don't have the minimum health insurance, we have seen children that cannot even complete their elementary education, and we have seen people and families that don't even have a piece of land to work on. We reflect on that and we recognize our problems in their problems and that is what has generated this astounding response from the people and from independent unions. We have the same cause as

them, independent unions have supported the Zapatistas all the way....So the role of the independent unions in the Zapatista movement has been really important. The SME has about 35 000 active members, 14 000 retired members, and we as a union had kind of a late reaction. The bases, most of the members, accepted and embraced the cause of the Zapatistas, but the leaders were not so sure of how they should react. About a year ago there was a beautiful encounter between the workers and the indigenous of the Zapatista army....From that encounter we have formed really strong bonds between their army and our union, solidarity has even grown from that day. We have sent fellow workers to give the Zapatistas the service of electricity, we do it on our own, we take the cables and the generators and everything they need and leave them there so that they can have electricity. And most of the independent unions have done things like this to show solidarity like the SITUAM, the independent union of the university workers, they have done this kind of thing, they have sent poets and artists so that they can teach people how to read and how to write and they paint murals and they read poetry to them, so they can have a little of what we do and what we have...the solidarity with the Zapatistas is not in question. There is not a single independent union that dares to question the solidarity or that dares to stop the support to the Zapatistas....the Zapatistas have lots of political authority with us and much respect. They are our brothers and sisters.

The Zapatista struggle needs to be appreciated not as simply another moment of resistance to an oppressive and exploitive regime, because this in and of itself is insufficient to explain the manifestations of sympathy and solidarity for the Zapatista movement. As Samuel related to me, the reason the Zapatistas were so compelling is because members of the independent labour movement could see their struggle reflected in that of the Zapatistas. While there are indeed specificities to each movement which remain located within certain geographic or socio-economic spheres, the relationship the Zapatistas seek with movements such as independent labour is one premised not on vanguardism but mutual accompaniment, a relationship not of the "masses" but as brothers and sisters.

In many ways, the uprising which began on the first of January, 1994 could be seen as the tearing of a veil or the shattering of a silence that had allowed the dominance of the ruling party and its allies to continue for so long. As Cecilia from the FAT explained to me:

I think [the Zapatista uprising] opened people's eyes to the injustice that has been going on in Chiapas for over 500 years and especially for the last 50 years with the neoliberal politics and the repression the government has established there. So when the Zapatistas appeared, when they rose up with their weapons and their army and everything, it was something very different and very strange in this official control that the government had, so I think it broke with everything that was established before, it was something very radical....It's obvious to me that their struggle is absolutely valid, it's so obvious that it's shameful to even say it because their struggle is for life, for freedom, for the satisfaction of their needs and ultimately for dignity so their struggle is absolutely valid.

The uprising can be interpreted not simply as an indigenous uprising but as an act of rebellion against a system which has betrayed every principle of the Revolution of 1917 and even the Mexican nation itself. As Chris Gilbreth and Gerardo Otero (2001) argue, the Zapatista message is so radical not only because the Zapatistas have sought to open spaces "in which new actors in civil society could press for democracy and social justice from below" but because in pressing for this "the EZLN established a cultural strategy that called into question the PRI's hegemony by reinterpreting national symbols and discourses in favor of an alternative transformative project" (Gilbreth and Otero 2001: 9). In this sense, the resonance of the Zapatista political project amongst groups such as independent labour activists needs to be understood as rooted in specific cultural, political and historical coordinates of the Mexican nation while at the same time inspired by a dynamic democratizing and diversifying energy directed toward re-envisioning the Mexican nation-state itself.

This challenge to the corruption of Mexican economic and political elites resonated with the independent labour movement because the Zapatistas articulated their challenge in a way that spoke to issues rooted in but not limited to their own particular historical experiences and their identity as indigenous peoples. In the words of Samuel from the SME:

the Zapatistas reflected us in their particularities and we reflected them in our struggle and in our problems. Nonetheless, they were even worse, they were even poorer, and they had even worse problems than us and yet they demanded things not only for themselves but for workers and poor urban people. Seeing our brothers in such inhuman conditions, in such low conditions, shook us, and it shook us even more to see them fight so fearlessly and with such passion...[Subcomandante] Marcos and the EZ [Zapatista Army] in general, they built a new way of talking, a new speech that was fresh and radical and incisive, and this new speech, this new

way of talking, put us in front of the mirror and showed us this is what we are, we're not the First World, neoliberal politics are not the way, this is what we are, these are our problems.

The notion of reflection is a vital element in understanding Zapatismo's resonance for independent labour in Mexico. The reflection that Samuel describes is not one in which the Zapatistas and members of the independent labour unions are identical images of one another, rather it is one of affinity. This reflection reveals a shared struggle but not necessarily identical paths or destinations. The issue here is *resonance.* As Nicholas Higgins (2000) asserts in his analysis of the Zapatistas' "poetics of cultural resistance," for a Mexican state increasingly tied to implementing the "rationalizing" demands of a neo-liberal agenda, the Zapatista discourse is difficult to counter precisely because it is not a discourse aimed simply at eliciting sympathy, rather, "as Marcos says, 'we are not saying that we want to create a sentimental discourse, one that's apolitical, or atheoretical, or antitheoretical, but what we want is to bring theory down to the level of the human being, to what is lived, to share with the people the experiences that make it possible to continue living" (2000: 371). Through this message, rather than feeling subordinated, activists in the independent labour movement instead felt inspired, embraced, and vital as participants in this shared struggle.

During our conversation, Antonio from the FAT related the significance of the Zapatista movement on a national level by situating it "not only as an indigenous movement but also as a movement for the poor people...the poor class of the country...[the Zapatista movement is a] matter of poverty, it's a matter of oppressed classes, it's something that has been created by the globalization process and by the neoliberal politics in Mexico." Seen in this light, the Zapatista movement is a marker not only of the injustices suffered by the indigenous peoples of Mexico since the time of the conquest, but also for the suffering endured by those exploited by the politics and economics of neo-liberalism and globalization in Mexico today. They serve, in other words, as a symbol, symptom and response to the neglect and abuse suffered by Mexicans throughout the nation.

"Something Has Told Him That His Dream Is That of Many, and He Goes to Find Them": Conclusions on False Dichotomies and New Possibilities

Through this article, I have attempted to illuminate how the Zapatista movement and the independent labour movement in Mexico have been able to engage in a politics of mutual accompaniment. The bases for such a politics which does not seek to subordinate one movement to the dictates or agenda of the other are extensive and powerful, laced with historical threads and inspired by a profound commitment to principles of social justice which recall the hallmarks of the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1917. Through this article I have also sought to demonstrate how movements regarded largely as incompatible from the perspective of the "traditional" Left can find common cause in shared struggle without operating from identical political paradigms. While a shared history with respect to co-optive and repressive state apparatuses as well as a common commitment to principles such as democracy, justice and liberty and a deep-seated feeling of social abandonment and betrayal certainly form part what makes this relationship possible, it is by no means the entire story.

So how do movements with no pre-existing common infrastructure, no direct links of communication and with different political agendas, goals and tactics nevertheless find not only grounds for solidarity with one another but manage to articulate a relationship like that of "brothers and sisters"? From the perspective of the independent labour activists I spoke with, this is possible precisely because despite all the particular differences between the Zapatista struggle and that of independent labour there is an awareness of suffering, oppression and abandonment which is broadly shared as well as a sense that the source of these circumstances emerges from a commonly acknowledged socio-economic and political system and the elites who benefit from it. In addition, the linkage of a labour movement with an indigenous movement is possible because both these movements root their struggles not only in the specific demands of their "constituencies" but upon principles such as "democracy," "justice," and "liberty" which speak across difference by providing common points of struggle without insisting upon a unitary political project, ultimate goal, or even upon strict definitions for what these terms may embody. No organizational structure emerges from this approach, no hierarchies of either tangible or theoretical nature, and no broad coalition dedicated to the seizure of state power. What does emerge, however, are the makings of a broad front of social and political opposition to neoliberal capitalism and the political and economic elites who execute it. The shared recognition of the vital importance of a radically democratic process within both the Zapatista movement as well as the independent labour unions serves as the foundational structure for this approach to politics.

Rather than getting lost in debates about whose interpretive framework is correct or about the precise dimensions of the struggle itself, the Zapatista movement and independent labour have instead affirmed the right of others to struggle for what they need and in the ways that they see fit without seeking permission from anyone else. While each movement may not support or agree with every aspect of the other's struggle or even upon where the struggle should go, these judgements are subordinated to a deeply democratic process of a politics of accompaniment. In this way, the differences between urban and rural, worker and campesino, indigenous or non-indigenous, "class-based struggle" and "identity-based struggle," become not barriers to a common struggle but paths which need to be walked by those who know them if the struggle is to be successful.

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Notes

1 All the names of my research partners have been changed to preserve their confidentiality.

2 In 1960, while small landholders constituted nearly half of all landowners, they occupied less than 1% of the land; large landowners holding properties of more than 1 000 hectares constituted 2.4% of the landowning population but owned nearly 60% of the land (Benjamin 1996: 226).

3 The World Bank sponsored $300 million "Plan Chiapas," as well as the Program of Agrarian Rehabilitation which operated by compensating estate and plantation owners for lands invaded by peasants, were both implemented in the 1980s (Harvey 1998: 247). At the same time the federal government issued 2932 certificates of agricultural ineffectability and 4 714 certificates of ranching *ineffectability,* protecting "productive," and elite-owned, land from reform (ibid.: 248).

4 In the statutes of the Forces of National Liberation, written 14 years before the Zapatista uprising, the choice of Emiliano Zapata as the icon for the revolution is attributed to the fact that "Emiliano Zapata is the hero who best symbolizes the traditions of revolutionary struggle of the Mexican people" (Fuerzas de Liberación Nacional 1980, cited in Stephen 2002: 152).

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