

ZAPATISTA NATIONAL LIBERATION ARMY

January-February 2011.

To: Don Luis Villoro.

From: Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos.

Greetings, Doctor.

We truly hope that you are in better health and that you take these lines not only as a coming and going of ideas, but also as an affectionate hug from everyone that we are.

We are grateful to him for having accepted participating as a correspondent in this exchange of letters. We hope that from it emerge reflections that help us, there and here, to try to understand the calendar that our geography suffers, that is to say, our Mexico.

Permit me to begin with a kind of joke. We are dealing with ideas, fragmented as our reality, that can continue their path independently or go away linking like a braid (that is the best image that I have found for "drawing" our process of theoretical reflection), and that are the product of our unease about what currently occurs in Mexico and in the world.

And here begin these hurried notations about some themes, all of them related with ethics and politics. Or rather about what we reach out to perceive (and suffer) from them, and about the resistances in general, and our particular resistance. As is expected, in these notations, schematics and reduction will rule, but I think that they reach to draw one or more lines of discussion, of dialogue, of critical reflection.

And that is precisely what we're dealing with, that the word comes and goes, jumping over checkpoints and military and police patrols, from ours here to yours there, although after it happens that the word goes off to other sides and it's not important if anyone picks it up and launches it again (that's what words and ideas are for).

Although the theme on which we have agreed is that of Ethics and Politics, perhaps some beating around the bush is necessary or, better, approximations from apparently distant points.

And, since we're dealing with theoretical reflections, one will have to begin with the reality, because of what the detectives call "the facts."

In "Scandal in Bohemia," by Arthur Conan Doyle, the detective Sherlock Holmes says to his friend Doctor Watson: "It is a capital error to theorize before having data.

Without realizing it, one begins to deform the facts so that they adjust to the theories instead of adjusting the theories to the facts."

We could begin then with a description, hurried and incomplete, about what reality presents to us in the same way, that is to say, without anesthesia, and collecting some data. Something as well as attempting to reconstruct not only the facts, but the form in which we acquire knowledge of them.

And what appears first in the reality of our calendar and geography is an old acquaintance of Mexico's original peoples: War.

I. - THE WARS FROM ABOVE.

"And in the beginning were the statues."

I could begin a historiographic essay on war that way, or a philosophical reflection on the real birthplace of modern history. Because the war statues hide more than what they show. Erected to sing in stone the memory of military victories, the only thing they do is hide the horror, the destruction and the death of all war. And the stone figures of gods or angels crowned with the laurels of victory are not only useful so that the winner has a memory of his success, but also to forge forgetfulness in the conquered.

But currently those rocky mirrors find themselves in disuse. Besides being buried daily by the implacable criticism of all kinds of birds, they have encountered an insuperable competitor in the mass communications media.

The statue of Hussein, brought down in Bagdad during the North American invasion of Iraq, was not substituted by one of George Bush, but by advertisements of the big transnational firms. Although the foolish face of the then United States president could well serve to promote junk food, the multi-nationals preferred erecting homage to themselves of a new market conquered. The business of reconstruction followed the business of destruction. And, although deaths of North American troops continue, what's important is that money comes and goes as it ought to: with fluidity and in abundance.

The fall of Saddam Hussein's statue is not the symbol of the victory of the multi-national military force that invaded Irak. The symbol is in the rise in the shares of the sponsoring firms.

"In the past there were statues, now there are stock markets."

I could continue the modern historiography of war this way.

But the reality of history (that chaotic horror viewed each time less and with more cleanliness), compromises, asks for counts, requires consequences, demands. An

honest view and a critical analysis could identify the pieces of puzzles and then listen to, like a macabre thunderous noise, the sentence:

“In the beginning was the war.”

The Legitimation of Savagery

Maybe, at any moment of humanity's history, the material aspect, physical, of a war is the determinant. But, upon the heavy and slow wheel of history advancing, that was not enough. The statues were useful as well for the memory of the winner and the forgetfulness of the conquered, in wars the contenders needed not just to bring down the opponent physically, but also to pretend to be a propagandistic alibi of legitimacy; overthrowing it morally.

At some moment of history it was religion that granted that certificate of legitimacy to war-like domination (although some of the recent modern wars do not seem to have advanced much in this sense). But later, more elaborate thinking was necessary and philosophy entered into relief.

I now remember a few of your words: “Philosophy has always had an ambivalent relationship with the social and political power. On the one hand, it took the succession of religion as theoretical justification for domination. All constituted power has tried to legitimate itself, first with a religious belief, later in a philosophical doctrine. (...) So it seems that the brute force that sustains domination would lack meaning for man if it were not able to justify itself in an acceptable purpose. Philosophical discourse, in relief of religion, has been in charge of granting that meaning; it is a thought of domination.” (Luis Villoro. “Filosofía y Dominio”. Discurso de ingreso al Colegio Nacional. Noviembre de 1978).

In effect, in modern history that alibi could come to be as elaborated as a philosophical or legal justification (the United Nations has given the most pathetic examples). But what's fundamental was, and is, to become a media justification.

If certain philosophy (following you, Don Luis: the “thinking of domination” in opposition to the “thinking of liberation”) relieved religion in that task of legitimation, now the mass communications media have relieved philosophy.

¿Does anyone remember that the justification by the multi-national armed force for invading Irak was that the regime of Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction? Over that was constructed a gigantic media scaffolding that was the fuel for a war that has still not ended, at least in military terms. ¿Does anyone remember that they never found such weapons of mass destruction? It's no longer important whether it was a lie, whether there was (and there is) horror, destruction and death, perpetrated with a false alibi.

They tell that, to declare military victory in Iraq, George W. Bush did not wait for the

reports that those weapons had been found and destroyed, nor for confirmation that the multi-national force was now controlling, if not all of Iraqi territory, then at least its key points (the North American military force found itself entrenched in what was called the “Green Zone” and was not even able to adventure out into the neighboring barrios –(see the stupendous reports by Robert Fisk for the British newspaper *The Independent*-).

No, the report that Washington received and that permitted it to take the war for ended (that for sure still doesn't end), came from the consultants of the big trans-nationals: the business of destruction can pave the way for the business of reconstruction (about this see the brilliant articles of Naomi Klein in the US weekly “The Nation,” and her book “Shock Doctrine”).

Thus, what's essential in war is not just physical force (or material), moral force is also necessary that, in these cases, is provided by the mass communications media (as before by religion and philosophy).

The Geography of Modern War

If we refer to the physical aspect as an army; that is, an armed organization, the stronger it is (in other words, while it possesses more power of destruction), the more possibilities of success it has.

Whether it is the moral aspect related to an armed organism, while the cause that animates it is more legitimate (that is to say, while it has more power to summon), then the possibility of gaining their objectives is greater.

The concept of war is widened: we were dealing with not only destroying the enemy's physical combat capacity (soldiers and weaponry) to impose its own will, it was also possible to destroy their moral combat capability, although it still has sufficient physical capability.

If wars were able to place themselves uniquely in the military terrain (physical, since we are in that reference), it is logical to expect that the armed organization with the greater power of destruction will impose its will on the opponent (such is the objective of the clash between forces) destroying its material combat capability.

But no longer is it possible to locate any conflict merely on physical terrain. The terrain on which wars (small or large, regular or irregular, of low, medium or high intensity, world-wide, regional or local) are waged is more complicated all the time.

Behind that great and ignored world war (“the cold war” is how modern historiographers call it, we call it “the Third World War”), can be found a historic sentence that will frame the wars to come.

The possibility of a nuclear war (taken to the limit by the arms race that consisted,

roughly, in how many times it will be capable of destroying the world) opened the possibility of “another” end of a war conflict: the result of an armed clash could not be the imposition of the will of one of the opponents over the other, but that could suppose the annulment of the will to fight; that is, of their material combat capability. And by “annulment” I refer not just to “inability to act” (a “tie” then), also (and above all) a “disappearance.”

In effect, the geo-military calculations tell us that in a nuclear war there would not be winners or losers. And even more there would not be anything. The destruction would be so total and irreversible that human civilization would give way to that of the cockroaches.

The recurring argument in the high military spheres of the epoch's powers was that nuclear weapons were not for fighting a war, but for inhibiting it. The concept of “weapons of contention” was translated then into the more diplomatic “elements of dissuasion”

Reducing: the “modern” military doctrine synthesized in: impeding that the opponent impose his greater will (or “strategy”), equates to imposing one's own greater (“strategic”) will; in other words, displacing the big wars towards small or medium-sized wars. No longer are we trying to destroy the physical and/or moral combat capability of the enemy, but of avoiding a direct confrontation. In exchange, they seek to redefine the theaters of war (and the physical and moral combat capacity) from the world to the regional and local. In summary: peaceful international diplomacy and regional and national wars.

Result: there was no nuclear war (at least not yet, although the stupidity of capital is as big as its ambition), but instead there were innumerable conflicts at all levels that shed millions of deaths, millions of people displaced by war, millions of metric tons of destroyed material, economies leveled, nations destroyed, political systems broken to bits... and millions of dollars of profit.

But the sentence was given for the “most modern” or “post-modern” wars: they are possible military conflicts that, because of their nature, cannot be resolved in terms of physical force; that is to say, by imposing the opponent's will by force.

We could suppose then that a parallel struggle began SUPERIOR to the “conventional” wars. A struggle to impose one will over another: the struggle of the militarily powerful (or “physically” to be able to cross the human micro-cosmos) for avoiding that wars are unleashed in lands where they were not able to have conventional results (of the type “the better equipped, trained and organized army will be potentially victorious over a poorly equipped, trained and organized army”). We could suppose, then, that against this struggle of the militarily (or physically) weak to unleash wars in lands where military might would not be the determinant.

The “most modern” or “post-modern” wars are not, then, those that put on land the

more sophisticated weapons (and here I include not only weapons as a military technique, also the ones taken as such in military organigrams: the infantry arm, the cavalry, the protected arm, etc.), but which are taken to lands where the quality and quantity of military might is not the determining factor.

With centuries of delay, the military theory from above discovered that, things being like that, conflicts would be possible in which an opponent overwhelmingly superior in military terms would be incapable of imposing its will on a weak rival.

Yes, they are possible.

Examples in modern history are more than sufficient, and those that now come to mind are of defeats of the greatest war power in the world, the United States of America, in Vietnam and in Playa Girón. Although some examples of past calendars and of our geography could be added: the defeats of the Spanish Royal Army by the insurgent forces in the Mexico of 200 years ago.

Nevertheless, the war there and continues there its central question: the physical and/or moral destruction of the opponent to impose its own will continues being the basis of the war from above.

Then, if the military (or physical, I repeat) force not only is not relevant but one can do without it as a determining variable in the final decision, we must enter other variables into the war conflict or some of the present as secondary ones pass to the first level.

That is not new. The concept of “total war” (although not as such) has antecedents and examples. The war by all means (military, economic, political, religious, ideological, diplomatic, social and even ecological) is the synonym for “modern war.”

But it lacks what's fundamental: the conquest of a territory. In other words, that that will is imposed in a precise calendar indeed, but above all on a delimited geography. If there is not a conquered territory, in other words, under direct or indirect control of the conquering force, there is no victory.

Although one can talk about economic wars (like the blockade that the North American government maintains against the Republic of Cuba) or about the economic, religious, ideological, racial aspects, etc., of a war, the objective continues being the same. And in the current epoch, the will that tries to impose capitalism is destroying/depopulating and reconstructing/reordering the conquered territory.

Yes, the wars now do not conform to conquering a territory and receiving tribute from the conquered force. In the current stage of capitalism it is necessary to destroy the conquered territory and to depopulate it; in other words, to, destroy its social fabric. I speak of the annihilation of everything that gives cohesion to a society.

But the war of above does not stop there. Simultaneous to the destruction and depopulation, operates the reconstruction of that territory and the reordering of its social fabric, but now with another logic, another method, other actors, another objective. In sum: the wars impose a new geography.

If in an international war, this complex process occurs in the conquered nation and operates from the aggressor nation, in a local or national or civil war the territory to destroy/depopulate and reconstruct/reorder is common to the forces in struggle.

In other words, the victorious attacking force destroys and depopulates its own territory.

And it reconstructs and reorders according to its plan of reconstruction or reconquest.

Though if it has no plan... then "someone" operates that reconstruction – reordering.

As Mexican native peoples and as the EZLN, we have something to say about war. Above all if it is carried out in our geography and in this calendar: Mexico, in the beginning of the 21st century...

II. MEXICO'S WAR FROM ABOVE

"I would welcome almost any war because I believe that this country needs one.
"Theodore Roosevelt.

And now our national reality is invaded by war. A war that is not only not far away from those who were accustomed to see war in distant geographies or calendars, but also one that begins to determine the decisions and indecisions of those who thought that wars were only in the news and in places so far away like...Iraq, Afghanistan... Chiapas.

And in all of Mexico, thanks to Felipe Calderón Hinojosa's sponsorship, we don't have to look towards the Middle East to critically reflect on war. It is no longer necessary to turn the calendar back to Vietnam, the Bay of Pigs, always Palestine.

I don't mention Chiapas and the war against Zapatista indigenous communities, because it is known that they aren't fashionable (that's why the Chiapas state government has spent so much money so that the media no longer puts it on war's horizon, instead, it publishes the "advances" in biofuel production, its "good" treatment of migrants, the agricultural "successes" and other deceiving stories that are sold to editorial boards who put their own names on poorly edited and argued governmental press releases).

The war's interruption of daily life in current-day Mexico doesn't stem from an insurrection, nor from independent or revolutionary movements that compete for

their reprint in the calendar 100 or 200 years later. It comes from, as all wars of conquest, from above, from the Power.

And this war has in Felipe Calderón Hinojosa its initiator and its institutional (and now embarrassing) promoter.

The man who took possession of the title of President by *de facto* wasn't satisfied with the media backing he received, and he had to turn to something else to distract people's attention and avoid the massive controversy regarding his legitimacy: war.

When Felipe Calderón Hinojosa made Theodore Roosevelt's proclamation that "this country needs a war" his own (although some credit the sentence to Henry Cabot Lodge), he was met with fearful distrust from Mexican businessmen, enthusiastic approval from high-ranking military officials, and hearty applause from that which really rules: foreign capital.

Criticism of this national catastrophe called the "war on organized crime" should be completed with a profound analysis of its economic enablers. I'm not only referring to the old axiom that in times of crisis and war, the consumption of luxury goods increases. Nor am I only referring to the extra pay that soldiers receive (in Chiapas, high-ranking military officials received, or receive, an extra salary of 130% for being in "a war zone"). It would be necessary to also look at the patents, the suppliers, and the international credits that aren't in the so-called "Merida Initiative."

If Felipe Calderón Hinojosa's war (even though he's tried, in vain, to get all Mexicans to endorse it) is a business (which it is), we must respond to the questions of for whom is it a business, and what monetary figure it reaches.

Some Economic Estimates

It's not insignificant what's at stake:

(Note: the quantities listed are not exact due to the fact that there is not clarity in the official governmental data, which is why in some cases the source was the Official Diary of the Federation [the federal government's official publication], and it was complemented by data from [government] agencies and serious journalistic information).

In the first four years of the "war against organized crime" (2007-2010), the main governmental entities in charge (the National Defense Ministry--that is, army and air force--, the Navy, the Federal Attorney General's Office, and the Ministry of Public Security) received over \$366 billion pesos (about \$30 billion dollars at the current exchange rate) from the Federal Budget. The four federal government ministries received: in 2007 over \$71 billion pesos; in 2008 over \$80 billion pesos; in 2009 over \$113 million pesos; and in 2010 over \$102 billion pesos. Add to that the over \$121 billion pesos (some \$10 billion dollars) that they will receive in 2011.

The Ministry of Public Security alone went from receiving a budget of \$13 billion pesos in 2007 to receiving one of over \$35 billion pesos in 2011 (perhaps because cinematic productions are more costly).

According to the [federal] Government's Third [Annual] Report in September 2009, in June of that year, the federal armed forces had 254,705 soldiers (202,355 in the Army and Air Force and 52,350 in the Navy).

In 2009 the budget for the [Ministry of] National Defense was \$43,623,321,860 pesos, to which was added \$8,762,315,960 pesos (25.14% more), in total: over \$52 billion pesos for the Army and the Air Force. The Navy: over \$16 billion pesos; Public Security: almost \$33 billion pesos; and the Federal Attorney General's Office: over \$12 billion pesos.

The "war on organized crime's" total budget in 2009: over \$113 billion pesos.

In 2010, an Army private earned about \$46,380 pesos per year; a major general received \$1,603,080 pesos per year, and the Secretary of National Defense received an annual income of \$1,859,712 pesos.

If my math is correct, with 2009's total war budget (\$113 billion pesos for the four ministries) could have paid the annual salaries of 2.5 million Army privates; or 70,500 major generals; or 60,700 Secretaries of National Defense.

But, of course, not all that is budgeted goes towards salaries and benefits. Weapons, equipment, bullets are needed...because those that they already have don't work anymore or they're obsolete.

"If the Mexican Army were to engage in combat with its over 150,000 weapons and its 331.3 million cartridges against an internal or external enemy, its firepower would only last on average 12 days of continuous combat, according to the Joint Chiefs of Staff's estimates for the Army's and Air Force's weapons. According to the predictions, the gunfire from 105mm howitzers (artillery) would last, for example, 5.5 days of combat if that weapon's 15 grenades were shot continuously. The armored units, according to the analysis, have 2,662 75mm grenades.

In combat, the armored troops would use up all of their rounds in nine days. In the Air Force, it is said that there are a little over 1.7 million 7.62mm cartridges that are used by the PC-7 and PC-9 planes, and by the Bell 212 and MD-530 helicopters. In a war, those 1.7 million cartridges would be used up in five days of aerial fire, according to the Ministry of National Defense's calculations. The Ministry warns that the 594 night vision goggles and the 3,095 GPS used by the Special Forces to combat drug cartels "have already completed their service."

The shortages and the wear in the Army and Air Forces' ranks are evident and have

reached unimaginable levels in practically all of the institution's operative areas. The National Defense [Ministry's] analysis states that the night vision goggles and the GPS are between five and thirteen years old, and "they have already completed their service." The same goes for the "150,392 combat helmets" that the troops use. 70% reached their estimated lifespan in 2008, and the 41,160 bulletproof vests will do so in 2009.

(...)

In this panorama, the Air Force is the sector most affected by technological backwardness and overseas dependency, on the United States and Israel in particular. According to the National Defense Ministry, the Air Force's arms depots have 753 bombs that weigh 250-1,000 lbs. each. The F-5 and PC-7 Pilatus planes use those weapons. The 753 that are in existence would last in air-to-land combat for one day. The 87,740 20mm grenades for F-5 jets would combat internal or external enemies for six days. Finally, the National Defense Ministry reveals that the air-to-air missiles for the F-5 planes only number 45, which represents only one day of aerial fire." -- Jorge Alejandro Medellín in "El Universal", Mexico, January 2, 2009.

This was made known in 2009, two years after the federal government's so-called "war." Let's leave aside the obvious question of how it was possible that the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, could launch a war ("long-term" he says) without having the minimal material conditions to sustain it, let alone "win it." So let's ask: What war industries will benefit from the sales of weapons, equipment, and vehicles?

If the main promoter of this war is the empire of stripes and cloudy stars (keeping note that, in reality the only congratulations that Felipe Calderón Hinojosa has received have come from the US government), we can't lose sight of the fact that north of the Rio Grande, help is not granted; rather, they make investments, that is, business.

Victories and Defeats

Does the United States win with this "local" war? The answer is: yes. Leaving aside the economic gains and the monetary investment in weapons, vehicles, and equipment (let's not forget that the USA is the main provider of all of this to two contenders: the authorities and the "criminals." The "war on organized crime" is a lucrative business for the North American military industry), there is, as a result of this war, a destruction/depopulation and a geopolitical reconstruction/rearrangement that benefits them.

This war (which was lost from the moment it was conceived, not as a solution to an insecurity problem, but rather a problem of questioned legitimacy) is destroying the last stronghold that the Nation had: the social fabric.

What better war for the United States than one that grants it profits, territory, and

political and military control without the uncomfortable body bags and cripples that arrived, before, from Vietnam and now from Iraq and Afghanistan?

Wikileaks' revelations about high-ranking US officials' opinions about the "deficiencies" in the Mexican repressive apparatus (its ineffectiveness and its complicity with organized crime) are not new. Not only amongst the people, but also in the highest circles of government and Power in Mexico, this is a certainty. The joke that it is an unequal war because organized crime is organized and the Mexican government is disorganized is a gloomy truth.

On December 11, 2006, this war formally began with "Joint Operation Michoacan." Seven thousand soldiers from the army, the navy, and the federal police launched an offensive (commonly known as the "Michoacanazo") that, when the media's euphoria passed, turned out to be a failure. The military official in charge was Gen. Manuel García Ruiz, and the man in charge of the operation was Gerardo Garay Cadena of the Ministry of Public Security. Today, and since December 2008, Gerardo Garay Cadena is imprisoned in a maximum-security prison in Tepic, Nayarit, accused of colluding with "el Chapo" Guzmán Loera.

And, with each step that is taken in this war, the federal government finds it more difficult to explain where the enemy is.

Jorge Alejandro Medellín is a journalist who collaborates with various media outlets--Contralinea magazine, the weekly Acentoveintiuno, and Eje Central, amongst others--and he's specialized in militarism, armed forces, national security, and drug trafficking. In October 2010 he received death threats because of an article where he pointed to possible links between drug traffickers and Gen. Felipe de Jesús Espitia, ex-commander of the V Military Zone and ex-chief of the Seventh Section--Operations against Drug Trafficking--during Vicente Fox's administration, and in charge of the Drug Museum located in the offices of the Seventh Section. Gen. Espitia was removed as commander of the V Military Zone following the tumultuous failure of the operations he ordered in Ciudad Juarez and for his poor response to the massacres committed in the border city.

But the failure of the federal war against "organized crime," the crown jewel of Felipe Calderón Hinojosa's government, is not a destiny that the Power in the USA laments: it is a goal to reach.

As much as corporate media tried to present resounding successes for legality, the skirmishes, which take place every day in the nation's territory, are not convincing.

And not just because the corporate media have been surpassed by the forms of information exchange used by a large portion of the population (not only, but also the social networks and cell phones), also, and above all, because the tone of the government's propaganda has passed from an attempt to deceive to an attempt to mock (from the "even though it doesn't appear as though we're winning" to "[drug

traffickers are] a ridiculous minority," which pass as barroom boasting for the president).

About this other defeat for the written, radio, and television press, I will get back to that in another missive. For now, and regarding the current issue, its enough to remind people that the "nothing's happening in Tamaulipas" that was extolled by the media (namely radio and television), was defeated by the videos shot by citizens with cell phones and portable cameras and shared on the Internet.

But let's get back to the war that, according to Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, he never said was a war. He never said it, right?

"Let's see if this is or isn't a war: on December 5, 2006, Felipe Calderón said: "We work to win the war on crime... " On December 2007, during breakfast with naval personnel, Mr. Calderón used the term 'war' on four occasions in a single speech. He said, "Society recognizes in a special manner the important role our marines play in the war my Government leads against insecurity..." "The loyalty and the efficiency of the Armed Forces are one of the most powerful weapons in the war we fight...", "When I started this frontal war against crime I stated that this would be a long-term struggle," "...that is precisely how wars are...". But there's more: on September 12, 2008, during the the Commencement Ceremonies of the Military Education System, the self-proclaimed "president of employment" really shined when he said war on crime a half a dozen times: "Today our country fights a war that is very different from those that the insurgents fought in 1810, a war that is different from that which the cadets from the Military College fought 161 years ago..." "...it is the duty of all of Mexicans of our generation to declare war on Mexico's enemies... That's why, in this war on crime..." "It is essential that all of us who join this common front go beyond words to acts and that we really declare war on Mexico's enemies..." "I am convinced that we will win this war..." (Alberto Vieyra Gómez. Agencia Mexicana de Noticias, January 27, 2011).

By contradicting himself, taking advantage of the calendar, Felipe Calderón Hinojosa neither corrects his mistakes nor corrects himself conceptually. No, what happens is that wars are won or lost (in this case, lost) and the federal government doesn't want to recognize that the central focus of this administration has failed militarily and politically.

Endless War? The Difference Between Reality... and Videogames

Faced with the undeniable failure of his warmongering policies, will Felipe Calderón Hinojosa change his strategy?

The answer is NO. And not just because war from above is a business, and like any other business, it is maintained as long as it is profitable.

Felipe Calderón de Hinojosa, the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, the fervent admirer of [former Spanish Prime Minister] José María Aznar, the self-

proclaimed "disobedient son," the friend of Antonio Solá [1], the "winner" of the presidential elections by a half a percentage point thanks to Elba Esther Gordillo's alchemy [2], the man of authoritarian rudeness that is close to a tantrum ("Get down here or I'll make them bring you down here!" [3], he who wants to cover up the murdered children in the ABC Daycare Center in Hermosillo, Sonora, with more blood [4], he who has accompanied his military war with a war on dignified work and just salaries, he who has calculated autism when faced with the murders of Marisela Escobedo [5] and Susana Chávez Castillo [6], he who hands out toe tags that say "members of organized crime" to little boys and girls and men and women [7] who were and are murdered by him because, yes, because they happened to be in the wrong calendar and the wrong geography, and they aren't even named because no one keeps track, not even the press, not even the social networks.

He, Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, is also a fan of military strategy video games.

Felipe Calderón Hinojosa is the "gamer" *"who in four years turned the country into a mundane version of The Age of Empire--his favorite videogame--(...) a lover--and bad strategist--of war."* (Diego Osorno in Milenio, October 3, 2010).

It is he who leads us to ask: Is Mexico being governed videogame-style? (I believe that I can ask these sorts of controversial questions without them firing me for violating an "ethics code" that is determined by paid advertising [8]).

Felipe Calderón Hinojosa won't stop. And not only because the armed forces won't let him (business is business), but also for the obstinacy that has characterized the political life of the "commander-in-chief" of the Mexican armed forces.

Let's remember: In March 2001, when Felipe Calderón Hinojosa was the parliamentary coordinator of the National Action Party's federal deputies [in Congress], that unfortunate spectacle took place when the National Action Party (PAN) did not let a joint indigenous delegation from the National Indigenous Congress and the EZLN take the podium in Congress during the "March of the Color of the Earth."

Despite the fact that he was making the PAN out to be a racist and intolerant political organization (which it is) by denying the indigenous people the right to be heard, Felipe Calderón Hinojosa stood firm. Everything told him it was an error to take that position, but the then-coordinator of the PAN deputies refused to cede (and he wound up hiding, along with Diego Fernández Cevallos and other distinguished PAN members, in one of the chamber's private halls, watching on television as the indigenous people spoke in a space that the political class reserves for its comedy sketches).

"No matter the political cost," Felipe Calderón Hinojosa would have said at the time.

Now he says the same, although now it's not about the political costs that a political

party assumes, but rather the human costs that the entire country pays for that stubbornness.

At the point of ending this missive, I found the statements of the US Secretary of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano, speculating about the possible alliances between Al Qaeda and Mexican drug cartels. One day before, the undersecretary of the United States Army, Joseph Westphal, declared that in Mexico there is a form of insurgency lead by the drug cartels that could potentially take over the government, which would imply a US military response. He added that he didn't want to see a situation in which US soldiers were sent to fight an insurgency "on our border...or having to send them to across the border" into Mexico.

Meanwhile, Felipe Calderón Hinojosa was attending a rescue simulation in a simulated town in Chihuahua, and he boarded an F-5 combat plane and he sat in the pilot's seat and joked with a "fire missiles."

From the strategy video games to the "aerial combat simulation" and "first-person shots"? From Age of Empires to HAWX?

HAWX is an aerial combat video game where, in a not-so-distant future, private military companies have replaced governmental militaries in various countries. The video game's first mission is to bomb Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico, because the "rebel forces" have taken over the territory and threaten to cross into US territory.

Not in the video game, but in Iraq, one of the private military companies contracted by the US State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency was "Blackwater USA," which later changed its name to "Blackwater Worldwide." Its personnel committed serious abuses in Iraq, including murdering civilians. Now it has changed its name to "Xe Services LLC" and is the biggest private security contractor the US State Department has. At least 90% of its profits come from contracts with the US government.

The same day that Felipe Calderón Hinojosa was joking in the combat plane (February 10, 2011), and also in the state of Chihuahua, an 8-year-old girl died when she was hit by a bullet from a shoot-out between armed people and members of the military.

When will this war end?

When will "Game Over" appear on the federal government's screen, followed by the credits, with the producers and sponsors of the war?

When will Felipe Calderón be able to say "we won the war, we've imposed our will upon the enemy, we've destroyed its material and moral combat abilities, we've re-conquered the territories that were under its control"?

Ever since it was conceived, this war has no end, and it is also lost.

There will not be a Mexican victor in these lands (unlike the government, the foreign Power does have a plan to reconstruct-reorganize the territory), and the defeat will be the last corner of the dying National State in Mexico: the social relations that, providing a common identity, are the base of a Nation.

Even before the supposed end, the social fabric will be completely broken.

Results: the War Above and the Death Below

Let's see what the federal Ministry of the Interior reports about Felipe Calderón Hinojosa's "non-war":

"2010 was the most violent year during the current administration, accumulating 15,273 murders linked to organized crime, 58% more than the 9,614 registered during 2009, according to statistics published this Wednesday by the Federal Government. From December 2006 up to the end of 2010 34,612 murders were counted, of which 30,913 were reported as "executions"; 3,153 are listed as "clashes" and 544 are listed as "homicides-attacks." Alejandro Poiré, the National Security Council's technical secretary, presented an official database created by experts that will show, beginning now, "monthly disaggregated information at the state and municipal level" about violence in the whole country." (Vanguardia, Coahuila, Mexico, January 13, 2011)

Let's ask: Of those 34,612 murders, how many were criminals? And the more than one thousand little boys and girls murdered (which the Secretary of the Interior "forgot" to itemize in his account), were they also organized crime "hit-men"? When the federal government proclaims "we're winning," against which drug cartel are they referring to? How many tens of thousands more make up this "ridiculous minority" that is the enemy that must be defeated?

While up there they uselessly try to tone down this war's murders with statistics, it is important to note that the social fabric is also being destroyed in almost all of the national territory.

The Nation's collective identity is being destroyed and it is being supplanted by another.

Because "a collective identity is no more than an image that a people forges of itself in order to recognize itself has belonging to that people. Collective identity is those features in which an individual recognizes himself or herself as belonging to a community. And the community accepts this individual as part of it. This image that the people forge is not necessarily the persistence of an inherited traditional image, but rather, generally it is forged by the individual insofar as s/he belongs to a culture, to make his/her past and current life consistent with the projects that s/he has for that community.

So identity is not a mere legacy that is inherited, rather, it is an imagine that is constructed, that each people creates, and therefore is variable and changeable according to historical circumstances." (Luis Villoro, November 1999, interview with Bertold Bernreuter, Aachen, Germany).

In a good part of the national territory's collective identity, there is no (as they wish us to believe) dispute between the national anthem and the *narco-corrido* ["narco-ballad"] (if you don't support the government you support organized crime, and vice-versa).

No.

What exists is an imposition, by force of arms, of fear as a collective image, of uncertainty and vulnerability as mirrors in which those collectives are reflected.

What social relationships can be maintained or woven if fear is the dominant image by which a social group can identify itself, if the sense of community is broken by the cry "Save yourself if you can"?

The results of this war won't only be thousands of dead... and juicy economic gains.

Also, and above all, it will result in a nation destroyed, depopulated, and irreversibly broken.

III. - IS THERE NOTHING TO DO?

To those who extract their petty electoral sums and subtractions in this deadly count, we remind you:

17 years ago, on January 12, 1994, a gigantic citizen mobilization (eye: without bosses, central commands, leaders or directors) stopped the war here. Faced with the horror, destruction and deaths, 17 years ago the reaction was almost immediate, resounding, efficient.

Now it is the spasm, the greed, the intolerance, the meanness that curtail support and convene immobility... and inefficiency.

The laudable initiative of a group of cultural workers ("NO MORE BLOOD") was disqualified from its beginning for not "folding" before an electoral project, for not complying with the mandate to wait until 2012.

Now that they have the war there, in their cities, in their streets, on their highways, in their houses, what have they done? I say, "folding" before whoever has "the better

project.”

Asking people to wait until 2012? What then must one indeed vote again for the lesser of two evils and now indeed one is going to respect the vote?

If there are more than 34 thousand deaths in 4 years, there are more than 8 thousand deaths per year. In other words, must one wait for 16 thousand deaths more to do something?

Because it's going to get worse. If the current point men for the 2012 presidential elections (Enrique Peña Nieto and Marcelo Ebrard), govern the states with the greatest number mayor of citizens, is it not expected that the “war against organized crime” will increase there with its volume of “collateral damages”?

What are they going to do? Nothing. They are going to follow the same path of intolerance and satanization as 4 years ago, when in 2006 everyone that was not in favor of López Obrador was accused of serving the right. Those that attacked and slandered us then and now, continue on the same path at the front of other movements, organizations, protests, and mobilizations.

Why the supposed big national organization that is preparing so that in the next federal elections, now indeed, an alternative project for the nation will win, doesn't do anything now? I say, if they think that they can mobilize millions of Mexicans to vote for anyone, why don't they mobilize them to stop the war so that the country survives? Or is it a petty calculation and ruin? That the count of deaths and destruction rests with the opponent and might add up for the nominee?

Today, in the midst of this war, critical thinking is once again postponed. What's first is first: 2012 and the answers to questions about the “leaders,” news or recycled, for that future that is being destroyed little by little from today. Everything must be subordinate to that calendar and to its previous steps: the local elections in Guerrero, Baja California Sur, Hidalgo, Nayarit, Coahuila, and the state of Mexico.

And while everything crumbles, they tell us that what is important is to analyze the electoral results, the tendencies, the possibilities. They call for enduring until it is the time of censuring the electoral ticket, and of once again hoping that everything is fixed and the fragile castle of cards of the Mexican political class once again rises.

Do they remember that they ridiculed and attacked the one that since 2005 would call to the people to organize according to their own demands, history, identity and aspirations and not to gamble that anyone there above was going to resolve everything?

Were we wrong or were they?

Who in the principal cities dares to say that he can go out with tranquility not only in

the wee hours of the morning, but when it's barely getting dark?

Who makes his own the "we are winning" of the federal government and sees with respect, and not with fear, soldiers, marines and police?

Who are those that wake up now without knowing if they are going to be alive, healthy or free at the end of the day that begins?

Who cannot offer the people an escape, an alternative that is not to wait for the next elections?

Who is not able to put forth an initiative that really charms locally, not the national level?

Who remained alone?

Because in the end, those who are going to stay will be those who resisted; those who did not sell out; those who did not surrender; those who didn't no give up; those who understood that the solutions don't come from above, but that they are constructed from below; those who didn't bet or gamble on the illusions that sell a political class that has timing that smells like a cadaver; those who didn't follow the calendar of above nor adjusted their geography converting a social movement into a list of numbers of IFE credentials; who faced with the war did not remain immobile, awaiting the new juggling spectacle of the political class in the electoral circus tent, but that constructed a social alternative, not individual, of liberty, justice, work and peace.

IV. - ETHICS AND OUR OTHER WAR

We have said before that war is inherent to capitalism and that the struggle for peace is anti-capitalist.

You, Don Luis, have also said before that: "social morality constitutes only a first level, pre-critical, of ethics. Critical ethics begins when the subject distances himself from the forms of existing morality and asks himself about the validity of its rules and behaviors. Can it be perceived that the social morality does not fulfill the virtues it proclaims?" Is it possible to bring Ethics to war? Is it possible to make it burst out among military parades, military grades, checkpoints, operations, combat actions, or deaths? ¿Is it possible to bring into question the validity of military rules and behaviors?

Or is the outline of its possibility no more than an exercise in philosophical speculation?

The inclusion of that “other” element in the war would only be possible within a paradox. To include ethics as a conflict's determining factor would bring as a consequence a radical recognition: the opponent knows that the result of its “triumph” will be its defeat.

And I don't refer to defeat as “destruction” or “abandonment,” but to the negation of existence as a belligerent force. That is, a force makes a war that, if it wins, will mean its disappearance as a force. The same thing happens if it loses; but no one makes a war to lose it (well, Felipe Calderón Hinojosa yes).

And here is the paradox of the Zapatista war: if we lose, we win; and if we win, we win. The key is in that our war is a war that does not seek to destroy the opponent in the classic sense.

It is a war that tries to annul the terrain of its realization and the possibilities of the opponents (us included).

It is a war to stop being what we are now and thus to be what we must be.

That has been possible because we recognize the others, a la otra, a lo otro, that, in other lands of Mexico and of the World, and without being equal to us, suffer the sorrows, maintain similar resistances, that struggle for a multiple identity that does not annul, enslave, conquer, and that longs for a world without armies.

17 years ago, on January 1, 1994, the war against the original peoples of Mexico became visible.

Looking at the national geography in this calendar, we remember:

We Zapatistas, were we not violent ones? Didn't they accuse us of seeking to divide national territory? Was it not said that our objective was to destroy the social peace, undermine the institutions, sow chaos, promote terror and finish with the welfare of a free, independent and sovereign Nation? Was it not pointed out up to a bellyful that our demand for recognition of indigenous rights and culture undermines the social order?

17 years ago, on January 12, 1994, a civil mobilization, without defined political membership, demanded that we attempt the path of dialogue to resolve our demands.

We complied.

Time and again, in spite of the war against us, we insisted on peaceful initiatives.

For years we have resisted military, ideological and economic attacks, and now the silence about what occurs here.

In the most difficult conditions not only did we not surrender, nor sell out, nor give in, we also constructed better living conditions in our towns.

At the beginning of this missive I said that war is an old acquaintance of the original peoples, of indigenous Mexicans.

More than 500 years after, more than 200 years after, more than 100 years after, and now with that other movement that demands its multiple communal identity, we say:

We are here.

We have identity.

We have a sense of community because neither did we wait for nor did we aspire to the solutions that we need and deserve because they came from above.

Because we do not subject us to walking around with one who looks to above.

Because, maintaining the independence of our proposal, we relate on an equal basis with the other that, like us, not only resists, but also has been constructing their own identity that gives them social belonging, and now also represents the only solid opportunity of surviving the disaster.

We are few, our geography is limited and we are nobody.

We are dispersed original peoples in the most distant geography and calendar.

We are something else.

We are few and our geography is limited.

But in our calendar anguish does not command.

We only have each other.

Perhaps it is little what we have, but we are not afraid.

All right, Don Luis. Health, and let critical reflection inspire new steps.

From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast,

Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos. Mexico, January-February, 2011

