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**Subcommander Marcos and Mexico's Public Intellectuals:
Octavio Rodríguez Araujo, Carlos Monsiváis, Elena
Poniatowska and Pablo González Casanova**

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Introduction

In this article I will trace the relationship between Subcommander Marcos and certain specific public intellectuals in Mexico through an examination of the published interchanges that have taken place between them. In doing so, I am to some extent continuing, deepening and expanding on the groundwork laid by Anne Huffschnid in her *Diskursguerilla: Wortergreifung und Widersinn* (2004). Huffschnid (2004, 94-97, 251-263, 360 & 421-426) analyzes the reception among intellectuals, Mexican and foreign, of the Zapatistas' discourse, concentrating in particular on Marcos' epistolary exchanges with Carlos Fuentes, Adolfo Gilly, Eric Jauffret, John Berger and Carlos Monsiváis. Her

work is useful both for its analysis, and the corpus of references, totaling more than a hundred items by intellectuals writing on the Zapatistas, which she has collated. Regrettably, however, Huffschnid's otherwise impressive work contains two defects, the one relatively minor; the other more significant. With regard to the former, Huffschnid omits discussion of the intellectual and former-Zapatologist-turned-critic, Octavio Rodríguez Araujo, who was one of the first to break with the Subcommander (and very publicly), and is an extremely important figure as I shall demonstrate below. As a result, none of his articles on the Zapatistas are included in her "Korpus Intellektuelle" because Huffschnid (2004, 93 and 94, n. 132¹) categorizes him not as an "intellectual" but rather as a "columnist," which he is (and has been for more than a quarter of a century); however, he was also a longstanding professor of the UNAM, and is the author of numerous academic books. Turning to *Diskursguerilla's* more serious failing, Huffschnid restricts her analysis to a very narrow timeframe, confining her study of the epistolary exchanges mentioned above to the first three years of the uprising,² and her investigation of writings by intellectuals on the Zapatistas to the first five years of the Zapatista rebellion, with the latest of these dating to February 16, 1999.³ The reason for this is unsure—the more so given that Huffschnid's bibliography contains works published as late as 2002, that some of the footnotes to her epilogue refer to works published in 2003 (the latest one dating to July of that year), and that she wrote her epilogue in August 2003—but the unfortunate result is that Huffschnid's discussion of Marcos' interactions with intellectuals terminates prior to the conclusion of what I would identify as a "honeymoon period" between Mexico's intellectuals and the Subcommander.⁴ This is significant since

¹ In this latter note, Huffschnid explains her criteria for distinguishing intellectuals from columnists; her division appears rather arbitrary to this author.

² Of the twelve correspondences between Marcos and these five intellectuals, six date to 1994, four to 1995, and two to 1996.

³ In fact, the overwhelming majority—102 (i.e. 72%)—of the 141 works by intellectuals which she cites in her "Korpus Intellektuelle" pertain to the first three years of the Zapatista uprising. Huffschnid (2004, 425 & 426) lists two works pertaining to 1999—an interview with Manuel Vázquez Montalbán's in *La Jornada* (February 16, 1999) and Wolfgang Fritz Haug's book. However, although the edition of Haug's book which Huffschnid lists in her bibliography (343) came out in 1999, this work had originally been published the previous year (1998). Thus, Huffschnid cites no work published post-February 16, 1999.

⁴ This period saw Marcos court Mexico's public intellectuals, having realized their potential for shaping public opinion and thus, indirectly, for

although the period covered by Huffschnid (i.e. January 1994 to February 1999) was an interesting one, which witnessed the Subcommander attempting to engage and forge relationships with certain of the nation's public intellectuals, and thus yielded some interesting correspondence, it nonetheless falls shy of three polarizing events which provoked considerable and heated exchanges between Mexico's intellectuals and Marcos conducted very publicly in the pages of the national press. These events were the Universidad Nacional Autónoma México [UNAM] strike (April 1999 to February 2000), Marcos' correspondence with Euskadi Ta Askatasuna [ETA] (winter 2002/2003), and the 2006 presidential election, and they became contentious issues which drove a wedge between several of Mexico's most eminent intellectuals and the Subcommander.

Having drawn attention to the limitations of Huffschnid's work, it is only fair that I should acknowledge from the outset the limits of the present article. Like Huffschnid, I too make no attempt to be comprehensive, an impossibly ambitious aim given Marcos' extensive contact with Mexican scholars, including the anthropologists and agrarian historians he invited to act as the EZLN's advisors during the San Andrés negotiations. Thus, I ignore here both intellectuals outside Mexico,⁵ and also those Mexican intellectuals such as Héctor Aguilar Camín, Enrique Krauze and Octavio Paz, who very soon, if not from the outset, adopted a hostile stance toward the Zapatistas and their uprising, and who consequently enjoyed no kind of relationship with Marcos.⁶

Instead, I concentrate on the Subcommander's relationships with four distinguished individuals who play, or have played,⁷ a highly active role in Mexico's intellectual life and whose relations with Marcos, when taken together, can be said to be to some extent indicative of the spectrum of relations that have existed between the Subcommander and the country's

providing a measure of protection against a renewed government-ordered military offensive.

⁵ For the Subcommander's relations with these, see Daniel Nugent (1995), James Petras (1999, 37), Mark T. Berger (2001), and Nick Henck (2007, 234-237, 305, 349).

⁶ For a discussion of the attitudes of Camín, Krauze and Paz toward the Zapatistas, see Huffschnid (2004, 149, 152, & 254-255) and Jorge Volpi (2004, 172-176, 262-265, 272-276, 293-295, & 332-333). Other intellectual critics of the Zapatistas include the poet Jorge Hernández Campos and the historian Rafael Segovia, see Volpi (2004, 180).

⁷ Carlos Monsiváis died on June 19, 2010.

intellectual class. The first three of these intellectuals, Octavio Rodríguez Araujo, Carlos Monsiváis and Elena Poniatowska, initially had very good relations with Marcos which subsequently ran into difficulties over three successive contentious issues (respectively): Marcos' intervention in the UNAM strike, his engaging of ETA, and his criticism of Partido de la Revolución Democrática [PRD] presidential candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador during the run up to the 2006 presidential election. The fourth intellectual, Pablo González Casanova, continues to enjoy good relations with the Subcommander. Crucially, it should be emphasized that while I have elected to concentrate exclusively on these four individuals, I believe them to be fundamentally paradigmatic; by which I mean that each one represents other intellectuals who also either, like Rodríguez Araujo, Monsiváis and Poniatowska, successively distanced themselves from the Subcommander in response to the polarizing events noted above, or, like González Casanova, continued in their support of, and good relations with, Marcos.

Octavio Rodríguez Araujo

Octavio Rodríguez Araujo (1996, 7-8) claims that the Zapatista movement monopolized his attention from its very beginning. Indeed, in two articles written within the first week of the rebellion (January 3 and 6, 1994), Rodríguez Araujo both contextualized the Zapatista uprising, urging that it specifically, and Latin American peasant rebellions in general, resulted from the campesinos not having received the justice they deserve, and accused the government of hostile propaganda against, and certain television stations of biased coverage toward, the rebels.⁸ In June 1994, Rodríguez Araujo received a signed, personal invitation from Marcos to attend the National Democratic Convention (CND) planned for August. Rodríguez Araujo (2005a, 168), although insisting that he was never caught up in the cult of personality that surrounded the Subcommander,⁹ nonetheless acknowledges that when he received this it gave him "great pleasure" and made him feel "very distinguished," and that it did so both because the Subcommander was "making history, and moreover with a

⁸ In *La Jornada Ediciones* (1994, 44-45 & 138-139). Rodríguez Araujo (2005a, 19-20 & 27-28) partially reproduces the first article and summarizes the second.

⁹ Rodríguez Araujo (2005a, 86 & 192) distances himself from those who wanted to have their photograph taken with Marcos.

great sense of humor,” and because “thanks to Marcos’ interviews and writings...the indigenous rebellion spread throughout the media and stirred consciences.”¹⁰

A year later (i.e. June, 1995) Rodríguez Araujo, “regardless of...disagreements with the strategy that the EZLN, and Marcos in particular, have followed...” and while harboring “doubts about the *philosophy* of its [the EZLN’s] strategy and objectives,” involved himself more deeply with the Zapatista movement, accepting another invitation from the Subcommander, first to be a member of the National Promotional Commission for the National Consultation, and then a member of the General Council of the National Consultation.¹¹ Six months later, in January 1996, Rodríguez Araujo further immersed himself in the movement, this time in talks over the proposed San Andrés Accords “Table Two: on Democracy and Justice,” scheduled to take place between the Zapatistas and the government. He (2005a, 193) observes: “Such was my commitment to Marcos, [that] I spoke with high-level intellectuals, politicians and reporters asking them if they would accept becoming advisors of the EZLN or invitees.”

Naturally, this increased level of involvement with the EZLN brought Rodríguez Araujo into closer contact with Marcos, and even at this early stage we can detect tension arising between the two men. The first cause of friction centred on Marcos’ response to a request from Rodríguez Araujo in August 1994 to contribute a piece for a book the latter was compiling. In June 1995 the Subcommander sent Rodríguez Araujo his contribution, a communiqué headed “To Doctor Octavio Rodríguez Araujo.” However, the very day that Rodríguez Araujo received the communiqué, the same text was published in the newspapers *Excélsior* and *La Jornada* but headed “To Mr. Such-and-Such.” This annoyed Rodríguez Araujo for several reasons. He had commissioned a paid piece from Marcos specifically for inclusion in his book, and so the appearance of the same material elsewhere would cause him problems with his publisher. It was discourteous of Marcos to have removed Rodríguez Araujo’s name from the text sent for publication in the dailies. And Rodríguez Araujo worried that it would now look as if he had simply taken a piece that had been written for

¹⁰ Rodríguez Araujo (2005a, 61 & 64).

¹¹ Rodríguez Araujo (2005a, 208, 114 & 146-147, respectively)

general consumption, and out of vanity had changed the heading to make it look as if it had been written especially for his book.¹²

A second source of ill feeling arose subsequently when Rodríguez Araujo and the Subcommander began to interact face-to-face. Although the two men initially got on well and Marcos treated Rodríguez Araujo respectfully, the latter, having invited the Subcommander to be more familiar with him (e.g. by using *tú* instead of *usted* when addressing him), subsequently felt that he was being treated discourteously in the Zapatista camp by being sidelined in favor of intellectuals who had not so much as dirtied their boots by visiting Chiapas.¹³

A third, and more serious bone of contention, arose in spring 1996, shortly after Rodríguez Araujo had been asked to co-ordinate jointly with Gustavo Esteva in setting-up a group to advise the comandantes on the form of the agenda for the forthcoming San Andrés Accords “Table Two: on Democracy and Justice.” First, a third coordinator, Julio Moguel, was imposed on Esteva and Rodríguez Araujo and did not get on well with the latter. After numerous tensions had arisen between Rodríguez Araujo and Moguel, the former found himself being asked instead to co-ordinate one of the sub-tables, on “social organizations and civil participation.” Rodríguez Araujo (2005a, 190 & 204) interpreted this as a demotion, refused to coordinate the sub-table, and demanded an immediate explanation. He was, however, refused the latter, and also denied access to the person who had made the decision to “degrade” him. Feeling that he was being snubbed by Marcos, Rodríguez Araujo declined a subsequent invitation to act as coordinator of another sub-table on “democracy and national sovereignty.”¹⁴

These disagreements were, however, nothing compared with what was yet to come, namely, a very public row played out in the pages of the Mexican daily *La Jornada*. This rift was the first to arise between Mexico’s intellectuals and Marcos, and it centered on what was probably the most divisive of issues: the UNAM strike which began in spring 1999. Unlike the

¹² For his part, Marcos has always let it be known that he is vehemently opposed to the copyrighting of his words and that with regard the money he received for this piece, as Rodríguez Araujo (2005a, 163-164) concedes, the Subcommander donated it to workers’ committees comprised of employees of one of Italy’s leading automakers.

¹³ See Rodríguez Araujo (2005a, 168-169).

¹⁴ See Rodríguez Araujo (2005a, 187-194).

other two polarizing events we will examine below, the UNAM strike directly affected the lives of Mexico's intellectuals, both because it concerned academia in general and, more concretely, because many of those who entered into debate with the Subcommander on this matter were UNAM professors. For Marcos too, the discussion was not purely abstract; the UNAM was his *alma mater*, and he had participated in the 1977 strike there until it was forcibly ended when police stormed the campus.¹⁵

The 1999-2000 UNAM strike, which initially centered predominantly on the issue of a proposed increase in tuition fees, began on April 20, 1999.¹⁶ Exactly a week later, on April 27, the Subcommander wrote his first communiqué on the subject, entitled "Páginas sueltas sobre el movimiento universitario," which was published in *La Jornada* the following day (April 28).¹⁷ However, although Marcos inserted himself into the UNAM strike very early on, this communiqué (and those which followed over the next five months) provoked little reaction among the nation's intellectual community.¹⁸ Rather, it was a communiqué entitled "7 veces 2. Carta tres. Dos acosos, dos rebeldías (y, claro, algunas preguntas)"¹⁹ that he issued some five months later, on September 25, after the strike had entered a new phase following a proposal by eight emeritus professors on July 27 to end the deadlock,²⁰ that provoked a flurry of reactions. In it, the Subcommander argued for the existence of a "synchronicity between the UNAM and Chiapas," and drew attention to seven issues, the three most contentious being as follows. First, Marcos

¹⁵ See Nick Henck (2007, 30), Marcos made posters and coined slogans for the strike.

¹⁶ For more background and details concerning the UNAM strike, see: "La Huelga sin Fin," in *Proceso Edición Especial* # 5 (December 1, 1999); Nelia E. Tello Peon et al. (2000); and Javier Mendoza Rojas (2001).

¹⁷ Posted on the Internet at:
<http://www.jornada.unam.mx/1999/04/28/marcos.html>.

¹⁸ For these UNAM strike-related communiqués, see:
http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/1999/1999_05_22.htm (May 22);
http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/1999/1999_06_10.htm (June 10);
http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/1999/1999_06_12.htm (June 12); and
http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/1999/1999_06_25.htm (June 24).

¹⁹ Posted on the Internet at:
http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/1999/1999_09_c.htm (in Spanish); and
http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/1999/marcos_letter3_se99.html (in English).

²⁰ The emeritus professors were: Luis Esteva Maraboto, Miguel León Portilla, Manuel Peimbert, Héctor Fix Zamudio, Alfredo López Austin, Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez, Alejandro Rosi and Luis Villoro.

expressed his belief that the eight emeritus professors, in advising the General Strike Council [CGH] to accept the proposal being offered, were being both naïve and overconfident in their own ability to pressure the Rectory and the government to deliver on what they were offering in return for the strike being lifted. Indeed, the Subcommander emphasized the parallels with what had happened with the Zapatistas in Chiapas, pointedly noting how, in that situation, the government had reneged on the promises it had agreed to when signing the San Andrés Accords, and how although considerable pressure, both domestic and international, had been brought to bear, the government nonetheless refused to honor its obligations. Second, Marcos pointed out that “when at least two of the eight emeriti have taught ethics classes and have written some books on the subject, days before the CGH discussed the proposal of the 8 emeriti, Señor Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León threatened to use public force ‘if the generous and lucid proposal of a group of teachers’ were not accepted,” leading the Subcommander to ask: “Is it ethical to support a proposal that needs the argument of the threat of repression in order to demonstrate its ‘generosity’ and its ‘lucidity?’” Finally, asked Marcos, “Are there no coherent and reasonable arguments for asking for the strike to be lifted (in addition to its already having been negotiated)?”

Responses came in rapid succession from Octavio Rodríguez Araujo, Carlos Monsiváis, and several other of Mexico’s intellectuals, appearing predominantly in the pages of *La Jornada*—e.g. Monsiváis (September 28), Luis Villoro y Alfredo López Austin (September 29), Octavio Rodríguez Araujo (September 30) and Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez (October 1)²¹ - but also in other leading newsarticles (e.g. Miguel Angel Granados Chapa writing in *Reforma* (September 30²²).

The Subcommander chose to respond to the last individually, by sending his reply directly to the columnist. Chapa had charged that the

²¹ Respectively: “De los argumentos para levantar la huelga,” at : <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/1999/09/28/monsi.html>; “Misiva de Villoro y López Austin a Marcos,” at : <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/1999/09/29/correo.html>; “La extraña lógica de Marcos sobre la UNAM”, at : <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/1999/09/30/araujo.html>, reprinted in Rodríguez Araujo (2005a, 209-211); and “Venturas y desventuras de una propuesta,” at : <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/1999/10/01/sanchezvazquez.html>.

²² In his column, “Plaza Pública”, in a piece entitled “[Zapatismo en la UNAM.](#)”

UNAM did “not matter to him [i.e. Marcos],” and had asserted that the Subcommander should “do a service to the University” by urging the CGH to reconsider the proposal of the eight emeritus professors “instead of discrediting it.” Marcos’ response was highly principled, but may well have appeared highhanded to those intellectuals who did not share his opinion on the strike, but who had given their support to the Zapatista cause during the preceding five-and-a-half years:

If our position of supporting the students on strike means that a rift is opened (to use the image you use) between us and Zapatista advisors and activists, then too bad. By supporting the student university movement...we are fulfilling our duty... If we are willing to die for what we believe, imagine whether we are not prepared to be abandoned by those who, now or previously, were close to us. The University matters to us... We respect the students and the CGH; they have already rejected it [i.e. the proposal] and they have given their reasons and arguments...[which] seem, to us, to be perfectly understandable.²³

Nonetheless, Marcos ended cordially: “I hope I can visit you soon on your radio program...”

The Subcommander’s reply to the pieces appearing in *La Jornada* took a different form, with Marcos attempting to address many of the points raised together in a single, substantial communiqué entitled “The ‘H’ Has the Floor (and, since it is silent, it cedes it to the strike),” dated October 13, 1999. This correspondence set about briefly responding to the points raised by Alfredo López Austin, Luis Villoro, Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez and Octavio Rodríguez Araujo, before moving on to Monsiváis.²⁴

In the communiqué the Subcommander first accused Alfredo López Austin, Luis Villoro, Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez and Octavio Rodríguez Araujo, of “othering” anyone who held an opposing view: “...these [four professors’] criticisms are noteworthy for the classification on which all of

²³ Posted on the Internet at:

http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/1999/1999_10_08_c.htm.

(The translation above, and all those elsewhere, unless otherwise indicated, are those of Irlandesa, either posted on the Irish Mexico Group webpage or commissioned specifically by the author.)

²⁴ For those sections of the communiqué which directly address Monsiváis, see below.

you agree: yours is ‘quality criticism,’ in the ‘other’ it is ‘defamatory;’ what is ‘maturity’ in you is ‘irresponsibility’ in the other; what in you is ‘notable rationality’ is ‘delirium’ in the ‘other.’”²⁵ Marcos continues in the following vein:

I agree that the doctors have the legitimate right to present their reasons and arguments for their position on the UNAM conflict. They even have the right to consider themselves as “the only viable solution.” It could even be said that they also have the right to condemn all those mortals who dare to criticize their position (for his part, Doctor Rodríguez is allowed to state that I am irresponsible—as are all those who disagree with him—okay, worse things have been said about me, but I cannot confirm that I am inconsistent, I hope that he can say the same²⁶)

Finally, the Subcommander declared: “We think that the [student] movement has been clear in their demands, none of which seem to us disproportionate, delirious, irresponsible, defamatory or the equivalent.”²⁷

Alfredo López Austin, Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez and Luis Villoro, who constituted three of the eight emeritus professors who had put forward the proposal, responded jointly to this in *La Jornada’s* “El Correo Ilustrado” section on October 24, 1999.²⁸ They noted how Marcos, in his “communiqué of the 13th of this month refer[s] once again to the student movement in terms with which we disagree,” and went on to state their condemnation of the “repressive measures and the exclusionary attitudes of a sector of the CGH which is trying to impose its will on the rest of their

²⁵ See too, Marcos’ comments directed specifically toward Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez: “Doctor Sánchez Vázquez said, concerning the proposal of ‘the 8:’ ‘No one has rejected it publicly, except for the occasional delirious academic who still exists.’ Do you see? For you, the ‘other’ does not exist or is ‘delirious.’ Despite the fact that the CGH and the majority of the student assemblies publicly rejected the proposal, the doctor says ‘no one,’ and the position of many academics who do not agree with it...are reduced to ‘the odd delirious academic...’”

²⁶ See below for the significance this comment in parentheses would later take on.

²⁷ Posted on the Internet at: <http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/chiapoct.html>; and http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/1999/1999_10_08_a.htm; and printed in *La Jornada* (October 13, 1999): <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/1999/10/13/chiapas.html>.

²⁸ Posted on the Internet at: <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/1999/10/24/correo.html>.

compañeros and on the academic community.” They ended, however, in a more conciliatory fashion, stating that: “Given the difficulty of the moment, we do not believe it is advisable to enter into a formal polemic with you, since it would not help the just causes which we share. Nonetheless, we do not reject the possibility of continuing this dialogue later.” Marcos wrote a counter-response in *La Jornada* on October 30.²⁹ He begins by stating that he respects the professors’ decision not “to enter into a formal argument,” but then adds: “But I do not understand why you say: ‘since it will not help the just causes which we share.’ I believe that the just causes which we share...would be helped by the argument and the debate of ideas...” Marcos continues: “I understand that the climate which has generated a few writings in some media, in the sense that the EZLN is breaking ties with its allies over the UNAM conflict, concerns you and that, in the interest of not serving as a pretext or support for a repressive action against the indigenous communities, you are relinquishing (even if only temporarily) your legitimate right to defend your points of view and opinions,” adding “The moral nobility you demonstrate with this attitude does not escape our notice.” The Subcommander ends, respectfully, by stating: “We applaud and are delighted for the honour of having had you as advisors in the frustrated attempt to achieve a peaceful solution to the war in the Mexican Southeast;” however, he pointedly notes how “[t]he possibility of continuing this dialogue later...depends, unfortunately, on our still existing ‘later.’” He signs-off: “Vale. Salud and may the confrontation of ideas not produce distances, but rather tomorrows.”

Thus concluded the Subcommander’s exchange with Alfredo López Austin, Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez and Luis Villoro concerning the UNAM strike: the two sides had laid out their opinions; their differences had been clearly enunciated; but respect for each others’ positions and, more importantly, the interlocutors themselves, remained intact. The same could not be said of the Subcommander’s correspondence with Rodríguez Araujo, who was stung into replying by what he would later portray as Marcos’ “getting involved in a terrain which was not his, and where he wanted to pontificate.”³⁰ Rodríguez Araujo therefore responded to Marcos’ September

²⁹ <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/1999/10/30/la.html>. Also posted on the Internet at: http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/1999/1999_10_08_d.htm.

³⁰ Araujo Rodríguez (2005b). In the same paragraph he stresses that

25 communiqué with a piece in *La Jornada* on September 30 (see above, n. 21), entitled “La extraña lógica de Marcos sobre la UNAM,” in which, after expressing his surprise at the Subcommander’s “lack of dialectical sense,” he wrote:

Marcos reproaches the emeriti for not having explained to the students that the government and the Rector’s office were not complying with, nor would they comply with, any commitment, since they knew (as did everyone) that the government had still not complied with the San Andrés Accords. What does Marcos mean by this? That the EZLN did not know, when it accepted dialogue with the government, that it frequently did not fulfill its commitments? If someone had told the EZLN that the government would not fulfill its commitments, would it have not agreed to dialogue and the signing of the San Andrés Accords? (...) The history of the Indians of Chiapas and of the poor of the entire world are full of examples of governments’ failure to comply. The EZLN and Marcos in particular...knew this, and nonetheless they sought dialogue, as they knew that while the dialogue was being carried out the government was continuing its counterinsurgency tactics and provocation in the Zapatista area of influence.

Rodríguez Araujo then took Marcos to task over the Subcommander’s questioning of the ethics of two of the eight emeritus professors for supporting “a proposal that needs the argument of the threat of repression in order to demonstrate its ‘generosity’ and lucidity?” After declaring this statement of Marcos “very subtle and enormously irresponsible,” Rodríguez Araujo drew the following (pointed) analogy:

Would Marcos tell us that the EZLN is responsible for those who have disguised themselves as Zapatistas in order to hold up buses in Chiapas? Obviously not, as neither are the emeriti responsible for the use Zedillo and not a few of the university students of the right have made of their proposal. No one has accused the Subcomandante, as far as I know, of a lack of ethics because his image has been marketed throughout the world, since it is clear that

Marcos’ interference “bothered me because I was in the focus of the university conflict, not in the Jungle. I was dealing with the protagonists. No one can tell me how things were, because I was on the inside.”

he is not responsible for that fact... In addition, its authors never characterized their proposal as "generous" nor "lucid." It was the government that did that, and, again, the emeriti are not responsible for this either.

Marcos, for his part, chose to respond to Rodríguez Araujo's arguments in a lengthy section of his "The 'H' Has the Floor:"

Dr. Rodríguez asked: "The EZLN did not know, when it accepted dialogue with the government, that it frequently did not fulfill its commitments? If someone had told the EZLN that the government would not fulfill its commitments, would it have not agreed to dialogue and the signing of the San Andrés Accords?"

The response is: no, not only did we not know, but we were strongly convinced that national and international civil society was going to create such pressure that the government would be compelled to fulfill its commitments. And I am going to insist on this because the problem of a political ethic continues: if we had not thought that the path of dialogue was feasible...we would not have sat down to dialogue with the government. Because that is what is in question in a dialogue between conflicting parties: reaching accords, commitments and fulfilling them...

If the government sat down at the dialogue table knowing that it was not going to follow through and trying to gain time in order to bring about violent annihilation (at the same time it was presenting a made-up image for international consumption), we did not...We did so because the people asked us to insist on the path of dialogue and we committed ourselves to following it... Because people like the doctors Rodríguez, Villoro, López Austin, Sánchez Vázquez and many others who are not doctors...asked us to continue the route of dialogue...And they told us they would mobilize in their ways and with their strengths so that route would be feasible... And we...have followed through. And people like you and those who are not like you have also followed through. Here the only one who has not followed through is the government.

It is evident from the tone and length of this rebuttal that Rodríguez Araujo had raised a point about which Marcos felt passionately. Writing several years later, Rodríguez Araujo (2005a, 112) criticized Marcos'

response. First, he took exception at being called “Doctor Rodríguez,” as opposed to “Doctor Rodríguez Araujo” as Marcos had previously addressed him, because “This difference, in the codes of popular language, means that I did not have a mother, since Araujo...is my maternal surname.” Second, concerning the Subcommander’s assertion that “not only did we not know, but rather we were firmly convinced that national and international civil society were going to create such pressure that they would compel the government to fulfill its commitments,” Rodríguez Araujo argued that “Marcos slipped up in this response and contradicted himself,” continuing:

First he said they did not know [sabían], and then he said that they were convinced that social pressure would force the government to fulfill its commitments. Ergo, they did know [sabían] that the government would not follow through, but they would finally do it because of national and international social pressure. But, in addition, he also knew [sabían] because I told the comandantes that at San Andrés...

However, Rodríguez Araujo seems to be being deliberately obtuse here. The Spanish verb “saber,” like the English word “know,” contains an element of certainty, so, while Marcos may have *suspected* that the Mexican government *would try to renege* on its promises, he could not have *known* that it *would succeed* in doing so (i.e. Marcos could not have been certain that the government would ultimately prove completely successful in resisting public pressure to such an extent that it could abandon entirely the commitments it had signed).

Rodríguez Araujo (2005a, 212-114) then continued by contrasting Marcos’ attitude toward him as expressed in the “The ‘H’ Has the Floor” with that the Subcommander exhibited in a letter which he had written to Rodríguez Araujo on September 15, 1994. At that time Marcos had written:

I am pleased that Doctor González Casanova has invited a person like you, of scientific rigor and critical position in the face of power (something very rare among the global “intelligentsia”) to coordinate that book. I applaud that, in the midst of the “reflexive” abandonment of just causes which was provoked by the collapse of the socialist camp, you...stayed firm, on the side of justice (which, in Mexico, is on the side of the millions of the dispossessed).

Rodríguez Araujo therefore asked:

What can I say after such praise? In the first place, that the

Subcomandante changed his opinion about my humble person. Why? Because one day I told him I did not agree to organizing the panel which he had suggested to me, and, years later, because I called him irresponsible. On the other hand, I did not call him irresponsible *for not agreeing with me*, but rather for the implications of what he was saying about the document of “the emeriti” and for the possible repercussions of his writings in a university conflict which he seemingly did not understand and which perhaps he did not want to understand either...

Returning to the Subcommander's immediate response to Rodríguez Araujo, one might be forgiven for thinking that the matter would rest there, as had happened in the case of Marcos' exchange with Alfredo López Austin, Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez and Luis Villoro. However, almost a month after the publication of Rodríguez Araujo's piece and more than two weeks after the appearance of Marcos' “The ‘H’ Has the Floor,” the Subcommander decided to take a side-swipe at Rodríguez Araujo in a postscript to a communique published in *La Jornada* on October 29, writing: “for Dr. Rodríguez Araujo. Let's see if I understood you well: if you say I am irresponsible, it is a criticism; and, if I say that I hope you can say that no one can accuse you of being inconsistent, it is an attack? Or the other way around?”³¹ This postscript by Marcos, which appeared a month after Rodríguez Araujo's initial piece and which refers to Marcos' communiqué published in *La Jornada* on October 13, makes no sense unless we suppose that Rodríguez Araujo had subsequently complained of having been “attacked” by the Subcommander in his “The ‘H’ Has the Floor.” Unfortunately, however, I have not been able to find any evidence, including in Rodríguez Araujo's lengthy retrospective account of this episode in his *Mi paso por el Zapatismo*, to corroborate the supposition. And yet, the existence of such a complaint remains the only logical explanation behind Marcos' inclusion of this postscript. Possibly, Rodríguez Araujo had complained to Marcos in personal correspondence or the Subcommander had heard through indirect channels of Rodríguez

³¹ The communiqué was entitled “La P.D. toma la Cámara... de video,” and can be found on the Internet at:
<http://www.jornada.unam.mx/1999/10/29/comunicado.html>.

Araujo's displeasure with what he had written in "The 'H' Has the Floor." Whatever the exact circumstances, Rodríguez Araujo (2005b) took offense at Marcos' comment—as much as anything for the form it appeared in: six years later, he would reflect on it, saying: "perhaps he...want[ed] to ignore me, because he dedicated a postscript to me instead of a direct response, as if saying 'you are not worth it.'"

With this, the relationship between Rodríguez Araujo and Marcos soured. Rodríguez Araujo (2005a, 214) concluded: "It is obvious that Marcos has taken an aversion to me," and from that point on clearly felt scant compunction about openly criticizing the Subcommander. In his 2005 book, *Mi paso por el Zapatismo*, a personal testimony of his years of involvement with the Zapatistas, and in particular of his passage from Zapatista to Zapatologist,³² Rodríguez Araujo (2005a, 190, 192, & 204-205) talks of himself and others both feeling and being "excluded" by the Subcommander, half-jokingly suggesting (2005a, 220) they should form a "club of excluded ones." He (2005a, 209) also wrote:

...it is worrisome, and sometimes offensive, that occasionally, instead of adding, he [i.e. Marcos] subtracts, and sometimes with insults and preemptive attacks. Or was it not an insult to question the ethics of two professors...Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez and Luis Villoro Toranzo? And I could give more examples, some with dramatic consequences, but they were not public.

Also in 2005, in May, Araujo Rodríguez (2005b) stated in an interview that: "I am quite clear about who are my friends and who are my enemies. Marcos is not my enemy, let that be quite clear. I do not like him, which is another thing, and I do not like him because he is a whiner (un *majadero*), not for his political position."

Indeed, throughout 2005 and the following year, relations reached a nadir as the two men clashed over the candidacy and election campaign of Andrés Manuel López Obrador. Rodríguez Araujo, who three decades earlier had taught López Obrador, had been invited by the latter to

³² The distinction Rodríguez Araujo is trying to make is between formerly seeing himself as a Zapatista [i.e. self-identification as a member of, or participant in, the movement], and currently seeing himself as an outside, neutral observer, a scholar or student of it. Rodríguez Araujo talks of this transition at pp. 202 and 206.

accompany him on campaign and post-campaign rallies and to participate in the Advisory Council established after the presidential elections to formulate which strategy to pursue from there.³³ Not surprisingly then, following Marcos' criticisms of López Obrador during his campaign,³⁴ Rodríguez Araujo publicly rebuked the Subcommander, his comments featuring in a piece in *La Jornada* headed "Críticas de Marcos a López Obrador dividen a intelectuales de izquierda:"

Academic and writer Octavio Rodríguez Araujo, ardent follower of the EZLN during the first years, who later distanced himself from the movement, thought that, instead of making a political analysis of Marcos words, one would have to "consult a psychoanalyst." Rodríguez Araujo pointed out that Marcos' "criticisms of López Obrador seemed like 'bravado' and a 'bar fight' which only help the right." In his opinion, the EZLN's strategy "is playing into the hands" of the National Action and Institutional Revolutionary Parties, which are competing with the Revolutionary Democratic Party of Andrés Manuel López Obrador for the support of the electorate.³⁵

Furthermore, journalist Laura Castellanos (2008b, 35-36) noted that "...the political scientist Octavio Rodríguez Araujo...called Marcos a 'bully'," adding, "In a telephone interview, Rodríguez Araujo further reproached Marcos for treating the intelligentsia that once supported him in a 'foolish, condescending' way."³⁶

On May 18, 2006, Rodríguez Araujo, in a piece in *La Jornada*, again strongly and publicly criticized the Subcommander.³⁷ After deriding Marcos' response to the recent repression unleashed at Atenco, and in particular the Subcommander's call for a blockade of Mexico City and his

³³ The information in this sentence derives from Teresa Guitián (undated).

³⁴ See Marcos' June 2005 communiqué entitled "La (imposible) ¿geometría? del Poder en México;" posted on the Internet at: http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/2005/2005_05_a.htm.

³⁵ "Críticas de Marcos a López Obrador dividen a intelectuales de izquierda," *La Jornada* (August 9, 2005); posted on the Internet at: <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2005/08/09/011n1pol.php>.

³⁶ Castellanos (ibid) notes, more generally, how "Intellectuals who had previously been close to zapatismo but also supported López Obrador criticized Marcos, blaming him for dividing the left and thereby collaborating with the Calderón fraud."

³⁷ "Atenco, DF, UNAM y la otra;" posted on the Internet at: <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2006/05/18/index.php?section=opinion&article=027a2pol>.

encouragement of the disruption of the UNAM's day-to-day functioning, Rodríguez Araujo drew a parallel between the Subcommander's actions in the UNAM strike of 1999 and his current conduct, and concluded: "...Marcos, very conveniently, devotes himself to writing insults in order to distribute them right and left, as he is now, with absolute irresponsibility..."

Indeed, there has been very little let-up in the steady drumbeat of criticism that Rodríguez Araujo has heaped upon the Subcommander. More recently, having been invited to speak on the proposed theme of "the prolonged leadership of Subcommander Marcos," Rodríguez Araujo (2009, 35) instead used the occasion to criticize him:³⁸

The Other Campaign did not achieve its aims. In most of the country, it was charmless. The intellectuals, who at first supported the EZLN, were gradually marginalized by *Subcomandante Marcos* to such an extreme that at a roundtable in July of 2007, at the National School of Anthropology and History, *Marcos* could only count on Marcos Roitman...For the Encuentro of the Indigenous Peoples of America, which took place in Vicam, Sonora, from October 11 to 14 in 2007, *Marcos* invited many intellectuals as outside observers (even me, whom he had criticized for many years) and only "a few, those of always" went, as the journalist Laura Castellanos informed me. It would appear that the famous *Subcomandante* has been left alone...

Marcos will never admit it, but *The Other Campaign* failed with him and by him. His phobias led him to excesses.³⁹

Notable by its very absence here is any credit given to the Subcommander for his continued efforts to engage intellectuals by inviting them to participate in the two above-mentioned events. So too, the intellectuals who did attend are glossed over and their importance minimized. Finally, Rodríguez Araujo's observation that "even" he, who, he claims, Marcos "had criticized for many years," was also invited to the Encuentro of the Indigenous Peoples of America, is revealing. First,

³⁸ See Rodríguez Araujo (2009, 31): "The theme they had proposed I develop was 'The prolonged leadership of Subcomandante Marcos.' I have preferred, however, to speak of the end of that leadership, which I locate in *The Other Campaign*."

³⁹ The text of this 2009 *article*, minus the introductory paragraph quoted above in n. 38, appears almost verbatim in Rodríguez Araujo ([2006] 2008, 195-206).

Rodríguez Araujo appears to be criticizing the Subcommander for attempting to be inclusive of a former adversary—a gesture which some may interpret as Marcos extending an olive branch, or at least putting aside personal differences for the benefit of a wider, noble cause. Second, from this author's reading of the available published material, the Subcommander's public criticisms of Rodríguez Araujo took place predominantly in 1999, whereas, as we have seen in the preceding paragraphs, Rodríguez Araujo, especially since 2005, has seldom missed an opportunity to criticize Marcos, and publicly so.

Ultimately, a rift between Rodríguez Araujo and Marcos appears to have been to some extent inevitable. On a personal level, Rodríguez Araujo (2005a, 147-148) readily confesses to being “not very patient,” to having been “accustomed from youth to being very direct, sometimes caustic, sometimes offensive, above all in debates,” adding that he is “harsh (violento)” with his words, both spoken and written, and that “this annoys many people.” (Elsewhere he (2005a, 191) also admits to being “explosive” and “very brusque verbally.”) Moreover, as is evident from his *Mi paso por el Zapatismo*, Rodríguez Araujo seems to have lived in constant expectation of being struck by the “Thunderbolt of Zeus” (a reference to incurring the Subcommander's displeasure)⁴⁰ while doing nothing to avert it and much to court it (e.g. by abruptly resigning from the CND very publicly in the pages of *La Jornada*.⁴¹) More generally, as an academic, Rodríguez Araujo (2005a, 16) places much emphasis on his critical faculties, and the importance of always exercising them. He (2005a, 204) considers his role to be that of a “professional critic” who is careful not to confuse loyalty with unconditional support, the latter being something he could never agree to bestow.⁴² This is perhaps typical of academics. For their part, rural

⁴⁰ See Rodríguez Araujo (2005a, 112, 161, 163, 168, & 204) for references to the “Thunderbolt of Zeus.”

⁴¹ Marcos had appointed Rodríguez Araujo and other moderates to the CND to offset the influence of the “ultras” in it, and he had done so with specific instructions for both currents to put aside their differences and work together. By resigning in the way he did, Rodríguez Araujo was both trumpeting the thwarting of Marcos' intentions and drawing attention to the divisions that wracked the CND. Rodríguez Araujo (2005a, 161 & 163) himself makes clear that he thought his resignation would bring about the “Thunderbolt of Zeus,” and yet nothing of the sort happened.

⁴² See too, Araujo Rodríguez (2005b): “...my support for zapatismo was never unconditional...I supported it because it was a movement that seemed to me, and continues to seem to me, very healthy and very authentic...This does not mean

guerrillas are renowned for having entrenched views, something of a prerequisite for justifying and enduring the sacrifices they make daily. Thus, Marcos, as an academic-turned-rural-guerrilla may have been doubly intransigent.

The legislative failure of April 2001

Prior to commencing discussion of Marcos' relationship with the remaining three intellectuals (i.e. Carlos Monsiváis, Elena Poniatowska and Pablo Casanova) due emphasis needs to be placed on another event which, as with the UNAM strike, Marcos' epistolary exchange with ETA and the 2006 presidential campaign, can also be interpreted as a marking a watershed in the relationship between Mexico's public intellectuals and the Subcommander; namely, the failure of the passage of the Indigenous Rights Bill brokered during the San Andrés Accords. This event, rather than causing certain specific intellectuals to break with Marcos, instead provoked a change in the Subcommander's attitude toward intellectuals in general, as is revealed in the following exchange between Marcos and Laura Castellanos (2008a, 54):

SM: ...Finally, after a lot of stress, the San Andrés Accords came about and they were not complied with. And from there we judged that the possibility of interlocution was broken, there was no sense whatsoever in talking with the political class, in its entirety. That was what most bothered many people, that we wiped the slate clean and we didn't make the distinctions or nuances that they wanted.

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

SM: Yes, they were the ones who were upset. The PRD, no, they are totally unaffected by everything. The intellectuals, yes, because they are committed to...the institutional political channel...⁴³

The Subcommander's rhetoric in this instance, involving wiping the slate clean, belies however both his general discourse, which has remained

that I have to agree with everything they do."

⁴³ See too, Castellanos (2008b, 38): "He [Marcos] says that...the decision to break with former allies had been made after the legislative failure of 2001...the EZLN...concluding...that they had chosen the wrong interlocutors and needed to break with the entire political class, the progressive intelligentsia, and some international supporters."

inclusive of intellectuals, and his practice of continued engagement with them as individuals and as a class. The most that can perhaps be said then is that, in the wake of the April 2001 legislative failure, the Subcommander may possibly have felt less inclined to mend fences with specific intellectuals once they had become broken.

Let us now turn then to examine the relationship between the Subcommander and, successively, Carlos Monsiváis and Elena Poniatowska, two of Mexico's leading literary and intellectual figures, and ones toward whom Marcos had expressed his respect and admiration in an interview give as early as the second month of the uprising.⁴⁴ Indeed, the relationship between these three Mexican cultural icons is so close that Volpi (2004, 178) has argued that "there is no doubt that Marcos, Monsiváis and Poniatowska together form a kind of triad – or perhaps an eccentric family – in which the relationships are not always easy but among whose members any observer can distinguish a certain *family resemblance*." It is these, at times uneasy, relations, which took place within the post-April 2001 context described above, that are the subject of the pages that follow.

Carlos Monsiváis

Monsiváis was a prodigious intellectual, a prolific journalist and a consummate chronicler who for half-a-century consistently defended democracy, challenged the hegemonic discourse propagated by the Mexican government, criticized racist attitudes common in Mexico, expressed sympathy with women's issues, scrupulously advocated and practiced intellectual independence, and generally held up a critical mirror to the nation, thus securing a well-deserved reputation as a progressive force within Mexican society. As Linda Egan (2001, 25) notes, Monsiváis "has remained unswervingly loyal to leftist liberal values and quixotic postures that he calls lost causes."

All this naturally drew Marcos to Monsiváis. In an interview given

⁴⁴ The interview dates to February 17, 1994 and was printed in *Proceso* 903, February 21, 1994, pp. 7-15; a version of it can be found posted on the Internet at: http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/1994/1994_02_21_b.htm, while an English translation appears in *Autonomeia* (1994, 201). In it, Marcos revealed himself to be "an avid reader of Carlos Monsiváis and remembers the first time he read *Días de Guardar*," while also specifically mentioning "Poniatowska's *La Noche de Tlatelolco*."

within the first few weeks of the Zapatista uprising, Marcos admitted to being an “avid reader” of Monsiváis (see above, n. 44). Indeed, Carlos Fuentes ([1994] 1997, 93) has declared “that Subcommander *Marcos*...has read more Carlos Monsiváis than Carlos Marx,” while Volpi (2004, 177) notes how “Carlos Monsiváis...[is] gifted with enormous astuteness and an acid sense of humor—two characteristics which Subcomandante Marcos will always try to imitate.” It is not surprising, given the affinities between them, that in the summer of 1994 the Subcommander invited Monsiváis to attend the Zapatistas’ CND then being organized for August.⁴⁵

Monsiváis chose to respond to Marcos’ invitation via the pages of *La Jornada*. His “Respuesta de Carlos Monsiváis a *Marcos*”⁴⁶ is worth examining for the light it sheds on Monsiváis’ ambivalent attitude toward Marcos and the Zapatista cause, and because it represents the first of many interactions between the two men.

As we shall see with Poniatowska, Monsiváis perceives his interaction with the Zapatistas as to some extent justifying his lifework as a journalist and author, writing that Marcos’ invitation “made me think, for sixty long, cozy seconds, that my work has not been in vain.”⁴⁷ Moreover, the Zapatistas’ proposal of political and social change in the form of a substantially more democratic and less racist Mexico was one that Monsiváis had been advocating for almost half a century.⁴⁸ Conversely, however, Monsiváis expressed misgivings about both the democratic credentials of an armed guerrilla movement and the use of violence to achieve political aims.⁴⁹ The latter stance in particular ought not surprise us, given that Monsiváis was raised “within a deeply religious Quaker family,”⁵⁰ no doubt imbuing him with an aversion to the kind of armed rebellion resorted to by the Zapatistas (and even more so the terrorism perpetrated by ETA). Because of these reservations, coupled with a desire

⁴⁵ Marcos invitation was published on the front page of *La Jornada* (July 20, 1994) and reprinted in *Los hombres sin rostro II* (México: SIPRO, 1995): 95-97.

⁴⁶ Published in *La Jornada* (July 27, 1994):1, 16.

⁴⁷ Quoted and translated in Egan (2001, 23-24).

⁴⁸ See Julio Moguel (1994, 150), who in the first year of the uprising noted that: “The EZLN...[was] influence[d]...by that generation of thinkers who, in Mexico, have Monsiváis as one of their most recognized representatives.”

⁴⁹ Egan (2001, 19-27) has a detailed discussion of Monsiváis’ “Respuesta...a *Marcos*.”

⁵⁰ Egan (2001, 7).

to maintain his journalistic integrity and intellectual independence, Monsiváis agreed to attend the CND, but as a journalist, a correspondent for *La Jornada*, not as an invited participant.

Egan sums up the chronicler's attitude toward the Subcommander as follows:

While he is clearly on the side of liberty and justice, he is not so clearly a fan of...the rebel army's charismatic spokesman. Seldom inclined to wave a flag of any color, Monsiváis constructs a critically independent response to the Chiapas movement's Masked Man...Monsiváis lets it be known that he thinks it prudent to leave a skeptical space in which to wonder if, behind the mask, Marcos might be hiding something less than useful for an aspiring democracy.

Egan's statement is sound, but relationships and interactions of a personal nature often prove fluid. Indeed, Volpi (2004, 177) notes that:

At first, Monsiváis demonstrated a skepticism bordering on distrust towards Marcos and the zapatistas... Only later, beginning with the encuentros which would take place throughout the years, would there be established, if not a friendship, at least a kind of respect, perhaps that of a teacher who finally recognizes his teachings in the unpredictable acts of his rebel disciple.

So too, Beth Jörgensen (2004, 93), in her study of three pieces written by Monsiváis in 1994, 1999 and 2001, notes how: "His articles on Marcos, beginning with 'Crónica de una convención,'⁵¹ start out deeply skeptical [of Marcos] but through time they reveal an ever greater willingness to invest the masked figure with the writer's own best hopes for Mexico."⁵² Indeed, contrasting Monsiváis' 1994 "Crónica de una convención" with his "A quién tienen que pedir perdón" written in 1999, Jörgensen (2004, 102) detects a change in the chronicler's attitude toward the Subcommander to one of greater trust and acceptance:

⁵¹ Entitled "Crónica de una convención (que no lo fue tanto) y de un acontecimiento muy significativo," in EZLN (1994, 313-23).

⁵² This skepticism, Jörgensen (2004, 103) claims, perhaps derived from "the chronicler's [i.e. Monsiváis'] dread of a messianic role for the Zapatista leader."

Marcos...is the topic of the final two paragraphs [of the essay], and there is a notable difference between this new portrayal and the sly, ironic representation of his role in the August 1994 Pro-Democracy Convention. Now the emphasis is on the efficacy of Marcos' multifaceted strategies of persuasion, including his romanticism, occasional dogmatism and use of kitsch, and his humor, his undeniable commitment to his cause, and his constant defense of the rights and dignity of indigenous communities and other marginalized groups such as women, homosexuals, and lesbians.

Jørgensen concludes (ibid): "The reader comparing Monsiváis' texts of 1994 and 1999 will easily perceive the greater stature that the writer grants to Marcos, a shift that documents the effect of five years of his masked visibility and his gift for words."

1999, however, would prove a tumultuous year, in which the issue of the UNAM strike had the potential to cause a rift between Monsiváis and Marcos, as it had done between Rodríguez Araujo and the Subcommander.

Monsiváis' response to Marcos' September 25 communiqué, "7 veces 2. Carta tres. Dos acosos, dos rebeldías (y, claro, algunas preguntas)," was printed in *La Jornada* only three days later.⁵³ Monsiváis took particular issue with the Subcommander's argument that a proposed solution to end the strike put forward by eight emeritus professors should be rejected by the CGH because the professors, despite providing assurances of their own sincerity and determination to broker an end to the strike, had no means of enforcing the compliance of any commitments made. He also rejected attempts by the Subcommander to draw direct parallels between what was taking place at the UNAM and the situation in Chiapas:

The UNAM is not Chiapas, and, with this, besides the obvious, I would note that there is no militarization, nor Acteal nor paramilitaries...in the UNAM. It is something very different, and here the fulfillment of the accords does not depend on the (classic) bad faith of the government, but rather on the collective will that is

⁵³ Carlos Monsiváis, "De los argumentos para levantar la huelga," *La Jornada* (September 28, 1999); posted on the Internet at <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/1999/09/28/monsi.html>.

now taking responsibility for the vigorous existence of the institution... If the government does not do so, there are very many others who will fulfill it. This is not an absolute guarantee—what could manage to be so?—but it is what there is, and for the time being it is enough.

This provoked Marcos' hefty communiqué, already discussed above, entitled "The 'H' Has the Floor," in which, turning to address Monsiváis specifically, he wrote:

Regarding the point of my criticism of the emeriti's proposal, you disagree and give your reasons. Okay and too bad. But if you insist that the UNAM is not Chiapas...this is true and not true. It is true that there is no militarization (yet) in the UNAM, nor Acteal, nor paramilitaries. But it is not true that what is happening there is something very different from what is happening here [in Chiapas]...Previously I wrote that the UNAM and Chiapas were the symptom of "something," the political crisis or the crisis of political activities in Mexico...If Chiapas was the symptom that the activities of the political class were "forgetting something," the university student movement is telling us that nothing was learned from Chiapas...Chiapas was a symptom, the UNAM is another. More will come. And the movements and turmoil will be increasingly more and more radical...and, watch out, increasingly difficult to build bridges of dialogue with...

The communiqué also revealed Marcos' dislike for what he perceived as academic posturing and rank-pulling. He draws attention to "the academic titles, prizes and prestige which are brandished instead of arguments..." and asks sarcastically: "should we think that, when the arguments run out, the 'ultras' take out their fists,⁵⁴ the government its weapons and the intellectuals...their curriculum vitae?"

Monsiváis responded with a piece in *La Jornada* (October 19, 1999) entitled "De la búsqueda belicosa del 'Nada'."⁵⁵ In it he outlined nine points

⁵⁴ The UNAM strike was widely portrayed as involving two groups: moderates and hardliners/extremists – the latter were dubbed "ultras" and "ultra" became a label to describe those who maintained an uncompromising stance.

⁵⁵ <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/1999/10/19/monsi.html>.

of contention between himself and the Subcommander concerning the UNAM strike. Chief among these appears to have been Marcos' support for the "ultras," whom Monsiváis characterizes as intolerant and sectarian, and whom he rebukes both for their abuses and abusiveness. Other significant areas of divergence included Marcos' assertions that: (a) the government was aiming at co-opting the students—Monsiváis argues that on the contrary, the government's aim was to portray them as extreme, radical and fanatical, and thus to marginalize, alienate and exclude them; (b) the authorities should accept the CGH's 6 proposals, a precondition which Monsiváis rejects on the basis that the CGH "...is using the list of demands as an area of control, not of dialogue, from which everything is demanded;" (c) the strikers were going to win, to which Monsiváis replies, "In fundamental matters they have already won, although it could also be said 'they are going to lose.' Public opinion, with or without polls, is simply fed up with the strike, as are the great majority of the academics and students who, in the dividing up of responsibilities, are being treated very inconsiderately by the strikers;" (d) the words of the authorities cannot be trusted and that therefore negotiating with them is pointless—regarding which Monsiváis concedes the former point, although adding "all Mexicans already possess such elemental information, it would be presumptuous and paternalistic to stress it," but denies the conclusion, arguing instead that the rejection of the authorities as interlocutors with whom to dialogue would deprive the strikers of all options available for settling the dispute;" and (e) that the proposal put forward by the eight professors be rejected, which Monsiváis opposes on the grounds that it should rather be unravelled, examined and used as a point from which to begin a dialogue, and ultimately, through suggesting improvement to the proposals, arrive at a solution. Nonetheless, having delineated the points of disagreement between himself and the Subcommander, Monsiváis ended amicably: "This, compañeros of the EZLN, is my vision or revision of the facts. I send you a cordial acknowledgment and my conviction of the justice of the indigenous struggle in Chiapas and its demand for a dignified peace. And my greetings to Subcomandante Marcos."

Marcos responded with another communiqué in which he imagined

a dialogue between himself and Monsiváis.⁵⁶ The communiqué, with its casual style and at times cordial tone, may be interpreted as an attempt by the Subcommander to gloss over the differences that had emerged so publicly between the two men over the past month. Marcos appears to be trying to agree with a number of Monsiváis' points while simultaneously avoiding the appearance of backtracking. At times, no doubt reacting to Monsiváis' (and others') pointing out some of the extremes and abuses of the ultras, the Subcommander even goes so far as to distance himself from the latter, whom earlier he had championed to the hilt, writing, for example:

[T]hese "forceful actions" [instigated by the ultras] have shown themselves to be a failure...The days of the "ultras" as a hegemonic force are numbered...now I read that the weariness with the "little ways" of the radicals of the CGH is spreading among...the majority of the [student] movement. The so-called and self-styled "ultras" are demonstrating that, when it comes to politics, they are the same as those who criticize (and insult and beat) them.⁵⁷

If Marcos' intention was to smooth relations with Monsiváis, he appears to have succeeded. The two men ceased their exchanges on this divisive topic. Several years later, Monsiváis, looking back to October 1999 and his debate with the Subcommander, characterized it thus:

I believe, and I debated with him in this regard, that Marcos was mistaken in his positive assessment of the National Strike Council (CGH)...After his epistolary support of the CGH, Marcos recapitulated and analyzed the faction with sarcasm and distance. On the other hand, his interest in intellectuals is constant. He not only wants to distance himself from the traditional anti-intellectualism of the political left, but also to share his utopian

⁵⁶ The communiqué, entitled "La P.D. toma la Cámara... de video" and published in *La Jornada* (October 29, 1999), is posted on the Internet at: <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/1999/10/29/comunicado.html>; and at : http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/1999/1999_10_08_b.htm.

⁵⁷ Marcos had criticized the CGH as early as September 25, 1999: "Is the method for winning an argument imposing silence on the opposing side? Does the CGH make itself stronger by 'purging' and turning itself into a homogeneous entity?"

vision with those who are most adept at understanding it.⁵⁸

Thus far therefore, although Marcos and Monsiváis had disagreed with each other, sometimes quite fundamentally and certainly very publicly, over the UNAM strike, there was no permanent rift between them. Indeed, in January 2001 Monsiváis trekked into the jungle “for the third time”—having attended the CND (summer 1994) and the Intergalactic Encuentro (summer 1996)—for what “would be his fourth personal conversation with Marcos.”⁵⁹ Journalist Hermann Bellinghausen, who attended the interview, dubbed this a meeting of “two of the most influential and active intellectuals of the Mexican left,” in which “*Monsí* and *el Sub* exchanged pleasantries [and] demonstrated that that they were both *au jour* as regards each other’s work,” before adding: “Despite the fact that there were differences and nuances, Monsiváis and *Marcos* quickly realized they were speaking exactly the same language.” Not long after, on March 3, Monsiváis published a piece in which he wrote that “Marcos’ speech in San Cristóbal [in January] was typical and a classic: the message wrapped in rhetoric, yearning to communicate through the breath of poetry,” and proceeded to praise Marcos’ “charisma,” “his media savvy skills,” and the Subcommander’s addressing of a crowd “with a savvy I can respect.”⁶⁰

It is ironical, therefore, that this relationship changed abruptly in autumn 2002, and that the cause was a matter wholly unrelated to the direct concerns of both men. On October 12, 2002 Marcos re-inserted himself into Mexican public life by issuing a communiqué entitled “Letter from Sup-Marcos to Aguascalientes Madrid,” only his fourth since April 2001. In it, Marcos welcomed the coming European Encuentro in the Spanish capital, but also expressed his views on the Basque issue.⁶¹ He insulted the Spanish King Juan Carlos, labeled the Spanish Prime Minister José María Aznar an “imbecile,” and accused the Spanish judge Baltasar

⁵⁸ In his introduction to EZLN (2003, 24).

⁵⁹ The interview, prefaced with an introduction by Hermann Bellinghausen, was published in *La Jornada* (January 8, 2001) under the heading “*Marcos*, ‘gran interlocutor’;” posted on the Internet at: <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2001/01/08/004n1pol.html>.

⁶⁰ Monsiváis ([2001] 2002, 123-132).

⁶¹ This communiqué is posted on the Internet at: http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/2002/2002_10_12.htm (in Spanish); and <http://struggle.ws/mexico/ezln/2002/marcos/madridOCT.html> (in English).

Garzón Real of being a “grotesque clown” who, “After ridiculously catching Pinochet with that tall tale (the only thing he did is take all-expenses-paid vacations)...demonstrates his true fascist vocation by denying the Basque people the right to fight politically for a legitimate cause.”

This provoked a quick and public response from Judge Garzón, who, in the pages of the Mexican daily *El Universal* (December 6, 2002), challenged the Subcommander to a debate on the ETA issue to take place at a time and venue of Marcos' choosing.⁶² This in turn prompted a series of communiqués from Marcos in the first week of December, in which he proposed a “Basque Country: Paths encuentro” to be attended by ETA delegates in addition to “all the political, social and cultural forces which are involved or interested in the problems of the Basque Country,” and urged upon ETA the declaring of a 177-day unilateral truce.⁶³ The Subcommander's involvement of himself and the Zapatistas in the ETA issue, as Castellanos (2008b, 35) notes, “received the support of [Iberian] intellectuals like José Saramago and Manuel Vázquez Montalbán...” The reaction in Mexico, however, was far less positive. Following a favorable communication by the pro-Independence Basque political party, Batasuna, welcoming the Zapatistas' “interest, solidarity and support for the Basque cause,” and pledging the party's “willingness to ‘participate in any initiative that could seriously and democratically have the objective of creating the necessary political conditions’ to guarantee the right to decide freely and democratically the future of the Basque country,” a confused and confusing flurry of (mis)interpretations emerged.⁶⁴ Indeed, Gloria Muñoz Ramírez (2008, 247) notes how in Mexico Batasuna's response “produced one of the

⁶² Posted on the Internet at:

http://www2.eluniversal.com.mx/pls/impreso/noticia.html?id_nota=13563&tabla=primera.

⁶³ For the relevant communiqués, see:

http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/2002/2002_12_07_a.htm;

http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/2002/2002_12_07_b.htm;

http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/2002/2002_12_07_c.htm;

http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/2002/2002_12_07_d.htm;

http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/2002/2002_12_07_e.htm. See too *La Jornada* (December 9, 2002); posted on the Internet at:

<http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2002/12/09/>. English translations of most of the relevant communiqués can be found at:

<http://struggle.ws/mexico/ezln/2002/marcos/basqueDEC.html>.

⁶⁴ For these quotations, and a good, concise account in English of Marcos' intervention in the ETA issue, see Gloria Muñoz Ramírez (2008, 245-247).

most widespread and least understood polemics of the conflict,” adding, “Most of the media took advantage of the confusion to publicize the fact that the EZLN supported the terrorist group ETA, a version that intellectuals and academics utilized to disassociate themselves from the Zapatista movement.”

Monsiváis was one of the first to distance himself from Marcos concerning the matter. Indeed, even prior to Judge Garzón’s response to the Subcommander’s initial October 12 communiqué, and well before Batasuna’s communication, Monsiváis had already reacted, in a piece entitled “Sí a la lógica” in *La Jornada* (November 27).⁶⁵

The message...impugns the essential significance of the EZLN...[I]n my case I do not associate the rebellion of the indigenous of Chiapas with support for indefensible causes and with the language of intolerance, facile jokes and radical conceit...

In his letter, *Marcos* sadly moved away from critique and fell again and again into insult and aggressive generalizations, based on the absence of specific reasoning.... *Marcos* should be explicit: what is the “legitimate cause” of the Basque people, which Garzón is denying?⁶⁶ Independence or the stubborn defense of ETA, one of the most justifiably discredited groups in the world? How can *Marcos* believe that those epithets, that tone,⁶⁷ those fanatical defamatory remarks, would benefit a cause so rooted in the struggle for peace? Why bestow on the EZLN what does indeed seem to be his very personal points of view?

...With his belligerent intent and in his failed style, *Marcos*’ text does not contribute in the least to the EZLN’s cause...This time *Marcos* has preferred...invectives, leaving open an interpretive possibility: his support for a loathsome group. By doing so, he is ignoring those of us who believe in indigenous rights, who criticize government racism and who conceive of the dignified peace as a full-time process, but who do not share these positions.

With this, Monsiváis effectively terminated his relationship with

⁶⁵ Posted on the Internet at:

<http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2002/11/27/008a1pol.php?origen=index.html>.

⁶⁶ See *Marcos*’ June 2006 interview with Jesús Quintero (2007, 94-95), in he which acknowledged that his plan to initiate a dialogue with the Basques was an “error,” but defended his calling Baltasar Garzón a fascist.

⁶⁷ Castellanos (2008b, 35) describes the comuniqué as exhibiting “a rare acid tone.”

Marcos. Although the Subcommander would proceed in his December communiqués to assert that, though he believed the Basque cause to be just, he utterly rejected ETA's means, and despite the fact that Marcos would end up, in January 2003, acidly breaking off his epistolary exchange with ETA in a communiqué in which he concluded, "I shit on all the revolutionary vanguards of this planet,"⁶⁸ there were to be no subsequent face-to-face interviews, nor even any exchanges in the pages of *La Jornada*, between Monsiváis and Marcos. In a November 2007 interview with journalist Laura Castellanos (2008a, 104), the reporter asked the Subcommander his opinion of Monsiváis:

SM: The sharpest and most brilliant critic of the right in Mexico.

LC: How are things between you and Monsiváis? Have you also broken off ties with him? [I found out that the omnipresent intellectual of Mexico had distanced himself from the EZLN.]

SM: Monsi distanced himself from us anyway, a long time ago, since the time of [the incident with] the Basques... And anyway, he has always maintained a certain distance from us. Monsi is an activist of civil participation (*ciudadanización*), and they are very offended by weapons. But that does not take away from his continuing to be the critic of the Mexican right, the sharpest, the one with the most teeth.

Two points of particular interest emerge here. The first is that Marcos clearly retained a deep-seated respect for Monsiváis. The second is illustrative of the Press' treatment of relations between Mexico's intellectuals and Marcos: namely, journalists, when portraying a rift arising between the Subcommander and certain intellectuals, have sometimes emphasized the part played by the former while underplaying the role of latter. Here, although Castellanos clearly states that it was Monsiváis who had distanced himself from the Zapatista movement ("the omnipresent intellectual of Mexico had distanced himself from the EZLN") and not vice versa, she does not ask the Subcommander why he thinks Monsiváis made the decision to break with him, but rather asks Marcos, "Have *you* also broken off ties with *him*?" (my emphasis).

⁶⁸ Posted on the Internet at:

http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/2003/2003_01_09.htm (in Spanish); and <http://struggle.ws/mexico/ezln/2003/marcos/etaJAN.html> (in English).

Elena Poniatowska

In his biography of Elena Poniatowska, Michael K. Schuessler (2007, 218-219) observes: “Almost immediately, the EZLN enjoyed great popularity among even the most moderate left-leaning intellectuals, artists, students, and politicians, and Elena was no exception. Thanks to the Zapatista movement, she realized her dream of directly participating in a revolution where her journalistic work would have the power to help change a despicable reality...” Similarly, Volpi (2004, 178) notes how “Poniatowska...was the first and most enthusiastic defender of Marcos and of the zapatistas, to whom she never hesitated to lend all her support, intellectual and even material,” adding, “If for Marcos, Monsiváis was that distant teacher whom one went to efforts to imitate and adulate, Poniatowska represented more the role of wise mother, comprehensive and fair, always ready to justify the conduct of her offspring.”

Importantly, Poniatowska’s admiration for the Subcommander proved by no means one-sided. Five months into the uprising, on July 14, Marcos wrote a florid invitation for Poniatowska to meet him:

May your beauty receive multiple and spectacular reverences... Let my mare Rocinante approach the sill of thy window and my intrepid daring reach up to thy balcony so that I might...formally invite you to condescend to place upon these rebellious and threatening lands the tender sole of thy foot.⁶⁹

The same invitation included the following telling statement: “If the date we suggest is not convenient, not to worry, transgressors have no set schedules; we work piecemeal, that is, full time, throughout the duration of the “sabbatical” which we traded in years ago for our truly “jungle existence.” This, I believe, reveals the Subcommander’s acute awareness of the sacrifices he had made in rejecting the (comparatively comfortable) lifestyle of an academic in favor of enduring the hardships of a rural guerrillero.

Poniatowska accepted Marcos’ invitation, and subsequently published the invitation, an account of her journey, and the typescript of

⁶⁹ The translation here, and the one that follows, are those of Schuessler (2007, 219-220); the original Spanish version of this invitation was published in *La Jornada* (July 30, 1994) and can be found on the Internet at: http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/1994/1994_07_14.htm.

her lengthy interview with the Subcommander, in *La Jornada*.⁷⁰ Two weeks later, while covering the Zapatistas' CND held August 6-9, Poniatowska wrote a piece, subsequently published in *La Jornada*, in which she described Marcos as a "man who has a God inside."⁷¹

Poniatowska's most glowing appraisal of the Subcommander, however, came the following year. In 1995, she waxed lyrical on Marcos' virtues, dubbing him "the most charismatic man in Mexico." In addition, having noted the Subcommander's refusal of access to the pro-government television monopoly, *Televisa*, she concluded "...thanks to Subcomandante Marcos, a cleansing is taking place of Mexico's often corrupt communications media, and Mexican journalists, inspired by the process, are trying to redeem their media." Finally, Poniatowska wrote:

In a country hungry for figures worthy of looking up to, the element of ethics in Marcos' identity is definitive. He has...made our young people grow up, he has raised our society's consciousness, he has made that society participatory. Thanks to him, and I don't blush to say it, I think we are better people. At least Marcos hasn't lied to us, he has not betrayed anybody, and he has lived according to his ideas, which seems to be a lot to ask in our country.⁷²

Poniatowska's admiration for the Subcommander continued unabated for over a decade. For example, she declared her admiration for the Subcommander in an interview conducted on June 8, 2001 with "La Espectador," Uruguay's first radio station broadcasting via the Internet.⁷³ In another interview, given on April 18, 2005, she again praised the Subcommander, attributing to him the significant improvement in the lives of Chiapan women, and the fact that the country now cares about both Chiapas and Mexico's indigenous people: "He is the one, Marcos, I think he is the author of all of these changes. I think he has done it for them, no?"

⁷⁰ See Poniatowska's "Entrevista del Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos con Elena Poniatowska 24 de julio de 1994," printed in *La Jornada* (July 30, 1994) and posted on the Internet at: http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/1994/1994_07_24.htm.

⁷¹ The piece was entitled "La CND: de naves mayores a menores," and appeared in *La Jornada* (August 16, 1994); it was reprinted in *EZLN* (1994, 324-328).

⁷² Poniatowska ([1995] 2002, 376-378).

⁷³ Poniatowska stated: "Admiro al subcomandante Marcos;" interview posted on the Internet at: <http://www.espectador.com/text/clt06081.htm>.

That's been wonderful."⁷⁴ Thus, unlike in the case of Rodríguez Araujo and Monsiváis, Marcos' opinions on the UNAM strike and his epistolary exchanges with ETA appear not to have significantly affected Poniatowska's highly positive appraisal of the Subcommander.

As late as January 14, 2006, in an interview in *El País*,⁷⁵ Poniatowska was still acknowledging the Subcommander's significance:

Interviewer: What do you think about the figure of Subcomandante Marcos today?

Poniatowska: A figure of great importance...

Interviewer: But Marcos criticizes López Obrador, the candidate for whom you are an advisor.⁷⁶

Poniatowska: The left always destroys each other, they criticize each other, while the right does not badmouth each other, they cover. The left is tremendously destructive. Marcos' criticisms demonstrate his independence.

This situation changed, however, as 2006 wore on. The first sign of trouble came on May 1, during an event in the Zócalo that both were attending. I shall examine this more closely below, but first it is important to observe how the incident was reported in the Press. On May 17, the Mexican news publication *Milenio* ran a story in which it stated:

The writer Elena Poniatowska said that Subcomandante Marcos threw her out on May 1 from the Zócalo's grandstand owing to her sympathies for...Andrés Manuel López Obrador... When she arrived she found that the self-named delegate Zero [Marcos' most recent alias] was not willing to begin the event if the author of *La piel del cielo* did not withdraw...According to the journalist's version, a

⁷⁴ A typescript of the interview appears on the webpage of *Democracy Now*, at : http://www.democracynow.org/2005/4/18/an_hour_with_mexican_writers_ele_na.

⁷⁵ Posted on the Internet at: http://www.elpais.com/articulo/semana/revolucion/mexicana/hizo/tren/elpepuc/20060114elpbabese_1/Tes.

⁷⁶ Poniatowska also featured in a televised election campaign slot defending López Obrador against accusations made by the Partido Acción Nacional; posted at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MjPju-mPyMQ>.

Zapatista messenger gave her the message. The words resounded in her ears, but...she withdrew.

Poniatowska was then quoted as saying: "Yes, Subcomandante Marcos told them to get me out of the Zócalo, since I was representing a candidate, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, and he was not willing to start the session in my presence."⁷⁷

Carlos Tello Díaz (2006, 72), in a piece for *Proceso* published on May 28, partially reproduces the same quotation ("Subcomandante Marcos told them to get me out of the Zócalo...he was not willing to start the session in my presence"), and comments that:

It was the conclusion of an exchange of words that took place a year ago, when Poniatowska courageously criticized...the disparagements the head of the EZLN...made against those supporting López Obrador. This time, however, the writer showed docility in the face of the Subcomandante's rudeness, who, 12 years later, still seems to her, she says, equally "seductive."

The "exchange of words" to which Díaz refers, we must guess (since he does not specify his sources), was in all probability Poniatowska's comments, reported in *La Jornada* on August 9, 2005.⁷⁸ The newsarticle piece, entitled "Críticas de Marcos a López Obrador dividen a intelectuales de izquierda," ran as follows:

"What Marcos is doing is dividing the left, which seems absurd to me," said writer Elena Poniatowska, a figure close to the Zapatista struggle and to López Obrador. For Poniatowska...Marcos' attitude is a "mistake," because it would be good for him if "López Obrador were in power, since he has said that the first thing he is going to do

⁷⁷ The original story is not accessible on the Internet, and copies of *Milenio* are extremely difficult to obtain outside of Mexico; however, versions of this story can be found preserved on websites other than *Milenio*'s own, at: http://elsenderodelpeje.blogspot.com/2006_05_01_archive.html and http://www.congresozaq.gob.mx/lviiiilegislatuqa/content/Sintesis%20Informativa/SINT2006/mayo06/Prensa_Nac17%20-mayo-06.htm. Rodríguez Araujo ([2006] 2008, 113, n. 10) notes that this story was brought to light by Francisco Garfias in *Excelsior* (May 9, 2006) and was then picked up by Blanca Valadez in *Milenio* (17/05/2006).

⁷⁸ Posted on the internet at: <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2005/08/09/011n1pol.php>.

is to carry out the San Andrés Accords...” Poniatowska said that the Zapatista leader’s aim is to discredit López Obrador’s authority as a figure of “great impact” among young persons and at the international level. “I believe that some people are going to sympathize with what Marcos is saying. In some things he points out, he is correct, but, in general, I think it is a mistake. It is the eternal history of the division of the left,” she opined...

Importantly, the article, while quoting other intellectuals, such as Octavio Rodríguez Araujo, who harboured similar views to Poniatowska, also included statements by an intellectual who was more sympathetic to the Subcommander’s position:

For researcher and historian Carlos Montemayor, an expert in insurgent movements, Marcos’ criticisms should not be interpreted as an offensive against a party or a candidate, but rather against an entire political system which has moved away from the people. “I believe that what is most important is that at this moment politics in Mexico is a matter...of elites. What is most notable about Marcos’ call for another way of doing politics is that it is positing the possibility of imagining a better country in a dialogue with the bases,” he said. For the author of books such as *Guerra en el paraíso*, the leader of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation’s (EZLN) message is “a good signal for everyone who feels they are of the left to reflect on what it is to be of the left.” “*Subcomandante Marcos* is good at analysis,” he said, and his proposal for taking politics to the bases is “the only alternative the country will have for changing for the good.”

Nor was Montemayor the only intellectual to show a degree of sympathy with Marcos’ position vis-à-vis the PRD’s presidential candidate and former Mexico City mayor. Laura Carlsen (2005, 25), among others, noted “...the zapatistas correctly pointed out that López Obrador has not taken a clear stand against capitalism, neoliberal globalization, or U.S. domination, and that for his campaign manager he chose the man who helped orchestrate the congressional counter-reform on indigenous rights.”

But what actually happened between Poniatowska and Marcos on

May 1, 2006? In an interview with journalist Laura Castellanos (2008a, 57-58) dating to November 2, 2007, Marcos gave his version of events:

LC: Is it true they took Elena Poniatowska down off the grandstand at an event in the Zócalo? – I asked him about a supposed incident that bothered the intellectuals for the way the famous writer who supported the EZLN, but who had distanced herself from it when she joined with López Obrador, was treated.

SM: It's a lie! – he answered emphatically – I'm going to tell you what happened, she wasn't even in the Zócalo. She was at a meeting in the Magdalena Contreras delegation in Mexico City. I had a meeting with children and then one with women. It was an entire day of meetings, and they told me Elenita was there. They asked me if she could go in, and I said there was no problem. There was a story for the children there, meetings with scientists, one with women. And a compañero sent me a message at that meeting: "What a pain you are, why did you kick Elena out." And right there I wrote him: "I don't kick anyone out." The most I did was, if anyone from the PRD came in, I asked that they let them know that if they said anything, I was going to respond. I don't kick anyone out, I don't know who said that. And they took that note to Elena the same day and she knew that wasn't true. Then it came out in the newsarticle *Milenio* that she had been in the Zócalo on May 1 and that I had said for her to go and that is a total lie.

In September 2006, the relationship between Elena and Marcos apparently deteriorated further when Poniatowska was said, by a *La Jornada* correspondent, to have accused the Subcommander (and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas) of not supporting the former mayor and now PRD presidential candidate, López Obrador, out of envy.⁷⁹ Again, however, one

⁷⁹ See "Marcos y Cárdenas no apoyaron a AMLO por envidia," in *La Jornada* (September 10, 2006) in which correspondent Saúl Maldonado noted: "Subcomandante Marcos, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and Patricia Mercado did not support the presidential candidacy of Andrés Manuel López Obrador out of 'jealousy' of his popularity and acceptance by society, said writer Elena Poniatowska. 'If these three people had joined...there would not have been the slightest doubt of López Obrador's victory, but they did not do so out of jealousy,' she noted during the presentation of her latest book...;" posted on the Internet at: <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2006/09/10/index.php?section=politica&article=0>

wonders if the Press' presentation of Poniatowska's accusation accurately reflected her views, or whether by publishing it in the form of a headline *La Jornada* was giving unnecessary weight to what may have been impromptu comments made during a book presentation. Indeed, this is what Poniatowska (2007, 351-352) herself suggests when responding to the newsarticle piece: "I scratch my head trying to remember how and when I said that about jealousy. I never wrote it. I'm sure it was a question tossed-out (*al aire*) among others, and I also responded by tossing out (*un poco al aire*) something like maybe it was jealousy but it was not a political answer, far from it."

Poniatowska later reaffirmed her fondness for Marcos during a 2009 interview in which she put forward her view of what occurred in the Zócalo on May Day 2006, responded to Marcos' depiction of the incident, and confirmed her respect for and commitment to both the Zapatista cause in general and the Subcommander in particular:

MC: ...will there be a break with the Zapatista Movement?

EP: Not at all, I'm not capable of breaking off with anyone...What happened with the EZLN is that I'm very naïve. I thought it would be very easy to go and greet Subcomandante Marcos during the Other Campaign in Mexico City, I even returned early from San Luis Potosí in order to be able to talk with Subcomandante Marcos. Then they told me in a meeting in the Magdalena Contreras delegation that they were not going to start if I were there. The reason is I was supporting López Obrador.

MC: Allow me to clarify the misunderstanding. In an interview with Laura Castellanos, Subcomandante Marcos said: "They advised me that Elenita was there. They asked me if she could come in, and I said there wasn't a problem, I don't kick anyone out." (*Corte de caja*, 2008)

EP: I hadn't even read that statement by Subcomandante Marcos, how great it is to read it firsthand.

MC: Are the Zapatista Movement and the López Obrador Movement irreconcilable?

EP: It doesn't seem so to me, far from it. I like the EZLN very much, Sub Marcos knows that. My...family likes Subcomandante Marcos

[08n4pol](#). See too, Castellanos (2008b, 35), no doubt drawing on this *La Jornada* story.

very much....⁸⁰

Thus, although relations between Poniatowska and Marcos appear to have experienced some turbulence, especially as presented in the pages of certain *newsarticles*, it seems that much still binds them. Poniatowska was clearly able to put her disagreement with Marcos over López Obrador into perspective, and see it as a momentary difference of opinion within an amicable relationship that had lasted over a decade.

Pablo González Casanova

Finally, we come to Pablo González Casanova, an academic who, although by no means unique (one thinks, for example, of the late Andrés Aubry and Carlos Montemayor, among others⁸¹), perhaps best represents those intellectuals who have enjoyed continuously cordial relations with Marcos. Casanova's connection with the Chiapas uprising came very early. By January 12, less than two weeks into the rebellion, he was acting as an advisor to Bishop Samuel Ruiz, and became a member of the Commission for Peace by invitation of the government-appointed Peace Commissioner, Manuel Camacho Solís. Interviewed that day in the town square of Ocosingo, Casanova stated something that the Subcommander himself would repeatedly emphasize: "Chiapas should not be viewed or understood as something isolated. To think in such a way would be an error. Chiapas should be the beginning of a general, new politics..."⁸²

Casanova went on to argue that this new politics would mean the democratization of the state, and that this democracy should be multiethnic. Given this similarity of opinions between Casanova and the Subcommander, it is hardly surprising that the two would enjoy very warm relations.

It is well beyond the scope of this *article* to examine all that Casanova, a prolific writer, has written in solidarity with the Zapatista position. Instead, I shall restrict myself to looking at two early pieces by

⁸⁰ The interview dates to May 31, 2009, and is posted on the Internet at: <http://www.fondodeculturaeconomica.com/prensaImprimir.asp?art=26348>.

⁸¹ E.g. Carlos Aguirre Rojas, Gustavo Esteva, Paulina Fernández Christlieb, Luis Hernández Navarro, Sylvia Marcos and Luis Villoro.

⁸² Quoted in *La Jornada* (January 13, 1994), "La paz, sólo el primer paso para solucionar el conflicto chiapaneco," Oscar Camacho Guzmán; reprinted in *La Jornada Ediciones* (1994): 375.

Casanova and successive utterances by the Subcommander in praise of this Zapatista stalwart.

From the very outset of the rebellion Casanova wrote contextualizing the uprising and explaining how an appalling historical record of oppression and exploitation, when coupled with the dire conditions in which the indigenous Chiapanecans lived, lay at the root of the 1994 revolt. In a 1994 article Casanova (1994, 270) argued that the indigenous "...rose up against the renewed violence that has tried to destroy the identity, the personality, and the dignity of men and women who have had their lands constantly torn from them." Casanova concludes (1994, 288-289):

The Zapatista Army's contribution aims to be modest, and at the same time it is ambitious: to defend by force of arms...the land, liberty and dignity that the rebels could not defend any other way, and initiate a change in the consciousness of the people of Chiapas and Mexico so that with democracy and peace the objectives of liberty and justice, dignity, and autonomy may be achieved not only in the rain forest, not only in Chiapas, but in the entire country...It may perhaps be brought to fruition; it will be a tragedy for humanity if it is not.

In 1997, having attended the Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism (July 27-August 3, 1996), Casanova (1997, 90) wrote an exceedingly positive appraisal of what the meeting represented and what it was proposing, concluding, "The Theory of the Rain Forest Against Neoliberalism and For Humanity is the first universal democratic utopia to come from the South and the bottom of the world."

Casanova showed no signs of breaking with the Subcommander in the following years over the UNAM strike, the issue of ETA, or López Obrador's presidential candidacy. Indeed, in an article, "El conflicto de la UNAM: una historia inconclusa," which he later included as a chapter in his 2001 book *La universidad necesaria en el siglo XXI* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era),⁸³ Casanova quoted one of Marcos' later, more moderate

⁸³ The original article appeared in the Argentine journal *Observatorio Social de América Latina* (OSAL), Número 1 (junio 2000): 38-41, and is posted on the Internet at: <http://bibliotecavirtual.clacso.org.ar/ar/libros/osal/osal1/mexico.pdf>.

utterances on the strike:

Already in mid-November Subcomandante Marcos had told a group of strikers who had gone to visit him: "I'm crazy about all of you and I'm always going to support you to the end, but you should stop acting out the old political practices of not listening and of closing yourself off to dialogue...you should permit divergent opinions and not stifle the students who think in a different way" (*El Día*, January 24, 2000).

Exactly a month after Marcos had given this advice, on February 24, 2000, the Subcommander sent a communiqué to Casanova praising him for his "courageous stance recently," adding "The firm distance you have taken from the violent and authoritarian attitude of those who head the government and the UNAM is worth much..."⁸⁴ He continued:

Know that our having been close to you fills us with pride. Your today is but the confirmation of what your life has been. Even before the time when you acted as a member of the National Intermediation Commission [CONAI], your words helped us understand this sorrow we call "Mexico"...It is for all of this that, today, Don Pablo, we applaud you. You and all those who, like you, have expressed their repudiation of the soldiers disguised as police ("paramilitaries" in the strictest sense) entering the university campus...

PS - We read here that the imprisoned students are asking for books to be sent to them. Send them that one that is entitled *Democracy in Mexico*.⁸⁵ It is as valuable today as yesterday, and it is one of those books that produce fertile sorrows.

The following month, March 2000, Marcos again wrote to Casanova, stating:

...In recent days, the intellectual front against the university movement suffered a serious setback. The blow came from a

⁸⁴ Posted on the Internet at:
http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/2000/2000_02_24_c.htm (in Spanish);
and at:
http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/2000/marcos_uni_soldiers_feb.html (in English).

⁸⁵ Marcos refers here to Casanova's renowned work of that title.

university professor—an intellectual and from the left—called Pablo González Casanova...If being a leftist was already something unforgivable in González Casanova, the fact of his working in congruence with his ideas was now too much. The “cardinals” of intelligentsia sent their pawns...to go after Don Pablo.

No doubt the esteem in which Marcos held Casanova, and the respect he had for the scholar’s views on the UNAM strike in particular, derived from Casanova’s progressive track record while rector of the UNAM from May 1970 until end of 1972. Casanova, very much in keeping with his views on Mexican society as a whole as expressed in his *Democracy in Mexico*, believed in democratizing the university.⁸⁶

In 2003, Casanova ([2003] 2005) again sang the praises of the Zapatista project, concluding ([2003] 2005, 92):

Zapatismo...proposes a worldwide alternative, not only to the oppression and dictatorial domination of peoples, but also to the colonialist offensive of neoliberal imperialism and to the world capitalist system...The new universal project, born among poor peoples, tends to bring together all existing struggles and to enrich them with struggles for political morality and for the autonomy and dignity of individuals and communities...

When the Zapatistas launched their “Other Campaign” in 2006, Casanova, in a piece in *La Jornada*, proclaimed his support for it.⁸⁷ His enthusiasm was clearly undaunted by the Subcommander’s recent attack on López Obrador. Indeed, in a November 2007 interview with Laura Castellanos (2008a, 57), when responding to the question of whether all intellectuals had broken with the Subcommander over his criticisms of López Obrador, Marcos replied: “...There was Don Pablo González Casanova’s group. They tried to understand and even share the criticisms we made of López Obrador’s program. Don Pablo was very radical in his

⁸⁶ For a positive appraisal of Casanova’s tenure as rector, and significantly his conciliatory handling of a student occupation of his offices and strike, see Joseph A. Kahl (1988, 78-79).

⁸⁷ Pablo González Casanova, “Las ciencias sociales y la democracia en México (lo que sí dije),” *La Jornada* (May 22, 2006); posted on the Internet at: <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2006/05/22/index.php?section=opinion&article=024a1pol>. He stated: “As for me, as all of you know, I am with the Other Campaign.”

writings in that regard.”

In December 2007, the EZLN, the magazine *Contrahistorias*, and the University of the Earth (located on the outskirts of San Cristóbal de las Casas) organized an international colloquium in honor of the late Andrés Aubry, which gathered together speakers such as John Berger, Naomi Klein, Immanuel Wallerstein, and Pablo González Casanova, in order to discuss the planet's future and the role played by anti-system movements in it. During this colloquium the Subcommander made a speech in which he praised Casanova's wisdom and affability, and stated: “Our collective admiration and respect for Don Pablo, is also personal. I tend to say that, when I grow up, I want to be like Don Pablo González Casanova. I should also add that he is one of those who provokes chauvinistic relapses and who makes us say that it is an honor to be a Mexican.”⁸⁸

Most recently, on January 5, 2009, the Subcommander expressed his gratitude towards, and admiration for, Casanova in a speech he gave in front of the former rector and other intellectuals whom he had invited to Chiapas to attend the Primer Festival Mundial de la Digna Rabia:

He is with us today, by our side, as he has been for 15 years, compañero Don Pablo González Casanova. Of his intellectual capacity, of the brilliance of his analysis, of his position by the side of those who struggle, we are not going to speak... We all know it. His simplicity and modesty towards us has not ceased to astonish us, the Zapatistas. I hope it does not offend, but he does not seem to be an intellectual...We say to you clearly: for us, this man is a wise man. And, as such, he has had, at least with us, a humility and modesty that identifies him more with the *sabedores* (knowing ones) among the Indian peoples than with the arrogant “specialists” who, from the comfort and privilege of academia, judge and condemn a reality to which they have always been aloof.

Unlike many of the “great brains”...Don Pablo...has never tried to tell us what we should do, “throw us a line,” give us orders or direct us...

⁸⁸ The original is posted on the Internet at: <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/comision-sexta/860>; an English translation appears at: <http://nymaa.org/node/650>.

In many cases, we have been in agreement, and his words have enriched our heart... In other things we have disagreed and we have debated. And even then we have been astonished by his modesty and sense of humor...⁸⁹

This speech is important both for confirming the esteem Marcos has for Casanova, and for illuminating precisely what qualities the Subcommander values in intellectuals: loyalty, humility and modesty (which he mentions three times). Crucially, however, it also demonstrates convincingly that Marcos has proved capable of maintaining harmonious relations with certain intellectuals for more than a decade-and-a-half.

Conclusion

I have traced the relationship between the Subcommander and certain public intellectuals in Mexico following the end of what I would identify as a honeymoon period between them. A cursory glance at this post-honeymoon period may yield the misleading impression that Marcos had simply not learned from the first year of the rebellion, and had successively alienated many of Mexico's intellectuals with his clumsiness, inappropriate comments, and even quarrelsomeness, all mistakes which the Subcommander had conceded in a November 1994 anniversary speech:

...we have made many errors. Some of them the result of our political clumsiness, our ignorance and the limitations of our being armed, faceless and surrounded. Other errors are the result of the prominent excesses of he who is the voice of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation [i.e. Marcos]. Our word has not been, many times, the most correct nor the most appropriate. He who has the voice and the ears of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation has made a mistake on not a few occasions, in his words and in his interlocutors...⁹⁰

However, the relationship between Mexico's intellectuals and Marcos has often been far more intricate and nuanced than it may initially appear.

At the general level, three polarizing events—the UNAM strike,

⁸⁹ Both the text and a recording of this speech can be found at: <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/comision-sexta/1271#Marcos>.

⁹⁰ In EZLN (1995, 136).

Marcos' correspondence with ETA, and the 2006 general election—provoked considerable and heated exchanges between Mexico's intellectuals and the Subcommander, all conducted very publicly in the pages of the national press, and ultimately became contentious issues that alienated several of Mexico's eminent intellectuals from Marcos. So too, there was the Subcommander's decision, following the legislative failure of 2001, to wipe the slate clean and rethink his previous practice of regarding the progressive intelligentsia as the Zapatistas' natural interlocutors.

At the specific level, there is the relationship between certain of Mexico's individual intellectuals and Marcos. Octavio Rodríguez Araujo, Carlos Monsiváis and Elena Poniatowska, initially had very good relations with the Subcommander that subsequently ran into difficulties following the three successive polarizing events mentioned above. And yet, closer inspection of these relationships reveals a more complex situation. Rodríguez Araujo, for example, had already been experiencing problems in his dealings with the Subcommander prior to the UNAM strike, while Elena Poniatowska's rift with Marcos appears to have arisen from a misunderstanding and proved short lived. Moreover, interestingly, whereas in Rodríguez Araujo's case the media, in particular the news *article La Jornada*, was merely the vehicle by which both he and the Subcommander played out their deteriorating relationship, in Poniatowska's case the media actually engendered turbulence in her relationship with Marcos. Thus, in some instances the role of the media was not limited to the airing of differences between Mexico's intellectuals and the Subcommander but rather extended to the provoking of them. Finally, it is worth emphasizing that, despite everything noted above, Marcos has proved capable of building and sustaining intimate and enduring ties with individual intellectuals including, but not limited to, Pablo González Casanova. Crucially, these four intellectuals, I would urge, should be considered paradigmatic, each one representing other intellectuals whose relationships with the Subcommander followed similar trajectories. Thus the individual relations examined in this article then, when taken together, can be said to be somewhat indicative of the spectrum of relations that have existed between Marcos and Mexico's public intellectuals.

Finally, I would like to return to Huffschmid's *Diskursguerilla*, and an interesting point she proffered having examined

Marcos' epistolary exchange with intellectuals during the first five years of the uprising: namely, that Marcos' considered citation of extracts from the works of certain intellectuals with whom he engages in correspondence should be seen as an intellectual activity, and one which creates a common intellectual ground, thus ultimately placing the Subcommander on a level with those intellectuals.⁹¹ Indeed, the notion of Marcos himself being an intellectual is one advocated by both James Petras (1999, 37 & 42) and Jorge Volpi (2004, 121 & 355). For my part, I would like to conclude by stating that, having extended the survey of Marcos' engagement with individual Mexican intellectuals by another decade, i.e. well beyond the end of their honeymoon period and through a series of successive polarizing events, I believe we can confirm concretely and with confidence the point Huffschnid (2004, 256) made implicitly: that the Subcommander should be considered an intellectual on the same level (*von gleich zu gleich*) as those intellectuals with whom he has interacted. After all, although several of the intellectuals we have examined above may have disagreed with the Subcommander over certain issues, distancing themselves temporarily or sometimes permanently from his standpoint or even his persona, the fact remains that they clearly deemed Marcos to be a fellow shaper of public opinion whose writings were worth reading and responding to, and who was himself worth engaging with intellectually.

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⁹¹ Huffschnid (2004, 256).

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