

Subcomandante Marcos

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Subcomandante Marcos was the *nom de guerre* used by **Rafael Sebastián Guillén Vicente** (born June 19, 1957)^[1] who was the leader and primary spokesman of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) during the Chiapas conflict.^[2] Marcos has used several other pseudonyms; he referred to himself as **Delegate Zero** during the 2006 Mexican Presidential Campaign, and in May 2014 announced that Subcommandante Marcos "no longer exists," adopting the name **Subcomandante Galeano** instead.

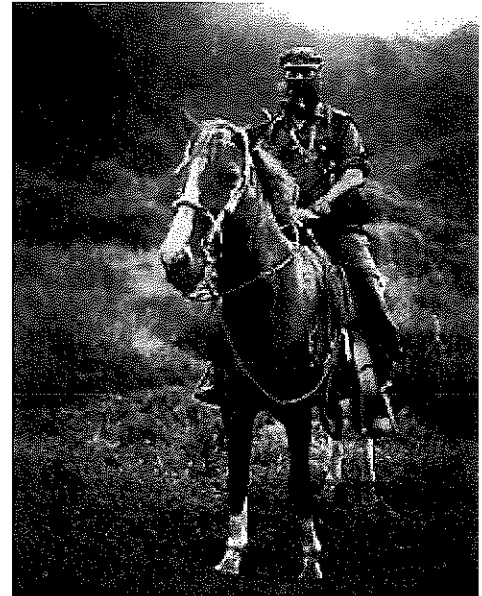
Born in Tampico, Tamaulipas, Marcos earned a degree in sociology and a master's degree in philosophy from National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM),^[3] and taught at the Autonomous Metropolitan University (UAM) for several years during the early 1980s.^[1] During these years, he became increasingly involved with a guerrilla group known as the National Liberation Forces (FLN), before leaving the university and moving to Chiapas in 1984.^[1]

The EZLN was founded in the Lacandon Jungle in 1983, initially functioning as a self-defense unit that was dedicated to protecting Chiapas' Mayan people from evictions and encroachment on their land. While not Mayan himself, Marcos emerged as the groups leader, and when the EZLN - often referred to as Zapatistas - began their rebellion in January 1, 1994, Marcos served as the Zapatistas' spokesman.^[2]

Known for his trademark ski mask and pipe, and for his charismatic personality, Marcos led the EZLN during the 1994 revolt and the subsequent peace negotiations, during a counter-offensive by the Mexican Army in 1995, and throughout the decades that followed. In 2001, he led a group of Zapatista leaders into Mexico City to meet with President Vicente Fox, attracting widespread public and media attention. In 2006, Marcos made another public tour of Mexico, which was known as The Other Campaign. In May 2014, Marcos announced that the persona of Subcomandante Marcos had been "a hologram," and no longer existed. Many media outlets interpreted the message as an announcement that Marcos had retired as the Zapatistas' leader and spokesman.^[4]

Marcos is also a prolific writer, and has published hundreds of essays and multiple books. Most of his writings focus on his anti-capitalist ideology and the advocacy indigenous people's rights, but he has also written poetry and novels.^[5]

Subcomandante Marcos



Subcomandante Marcos, smoking a pipe atop a horse in Chiapas, Mexico in 1996.

Other names	<i>Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano</i> , <i>Delegado Cero</i> (Delegate Zero)
Occupation	Spokesperson, writer
Organization	Zapatista Army of National Liberation
Title	Subcommander
Term	1994–2014
Website	http://www.ezln.org.mx/

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Early life

Guillén was born on June 19, 1957 in Tampico, Tamaulipas, to Alfonso Guillén and Maria del Socorro Vincente.^[6] He was the fourth of eight children.^[1] A former elementary school teacher,^[3] Alfonso owned a chain of furniture stores, and the family is usually described - including by Guillén himself - as middle class.^{[7][6]} In a 2001 interview with Gabriel García Márquez and Roberto Pombo, he described his upbringing as middle class, and "without financial difficulties." According to Guillén, his parents fostered a love for language and reading in their children.^[8]

Guillén attended high school at Instituto Cultural Tampico, a Jesuit school in Tampico.^{[9][10]} Later, he moved to Mexico City and graduated from UNAM, majoring in Philosophy. There he became immersed in the school's heavy Marxist rhetoric of 1970s and 1980s and won an award for the best dissertation (drawing on the then recent work of Althusser and Foucault) of his class. He began working as a professor at the Autonomous Metropolitan University (UAM) while finishing his dissertation at UNAM, but after a couple of years left. It is thought that it was at UAM where Rafael got in touch with the Forces of National Liberation, the mother organization of what would later become the EZLN.

As a young man, Marcos was politically radicalized by the Tlatelolco massacre (2 October 1968) of students and civilians by the Mexican federal government; consequently, he became a militant in the Maoist National Liberation Forces. In 1983, he went to the mountains of Chiapas to convince the poor, indigenous Maya population to organize and launch a proletarian revolution against the Mexican bourgeoisie and the federal government.^[11] After hearing his proposition, the Chiapanecs "just stared at him", and replied that they were not urban workers, that, from their perspective, the land was not property, but the heart of the communities.^[11] In the documentary *A Place Called Chiapas* (1998), about his early days there, Subcommander Marcos said:

“ Imagine a person who comes from an urban culture. One of the world's biggest cities, with a university education, accustomed to city life. It's like landing on another planet. The language, the surroundings are new. You're seen as an alien from outer space. Everything tells you: "Leave. This is a mistake. You don't belong in this place"; and it's said in a foreign tongue. But they let you know, the people, the way they act; the weather, the way it rains; the sunshine; the earth, the way it turns to mud; the diseases; the insects; homesickness. You're being told. "You don't belong here". If that's not a nightmare, what is? ”

There are several rumors that Marcos left Mexico in the mid 1980s to Nicaragua to serve with the Sandinistas under the nom de guerre El Mejicano, and after leaving Nicaragua in the late 1980s to return to Mexico, helped form the EZLN with support from the Sandinistas and the Salvadoran leftist guerrilla group FMLN^{[12][13][14]} Some believe that this contradicts the view that the first Zapatista organizers were in the jungle by 1983, however it is known that the real founders of the EZLN *foco* were the brothers Fernando (aka. *German*) and Cesar (aka. *Pedro*) Yañez-Muñoz, who previously were part of the FLN guerrilla. Marcos took over the FLN remnants after Pedro was killed, and German captured.^{[15][16][17]}

Guillén's sister Mercedes del Carmen Guillén Vicente is the Attorney General of the State of Tamaulipas, and an influential member of the Institutional Revolutionary Party.^{[18][19][20][3]}

Military site

Once Subcomandante Marcos was identified as Rafael Sebastián Guillén Vicente, on 9 February 1995, President Ernesto Zedillo decided to launch a military offensive to capture or annihilate Marcos and the Zapatistas. »^[21] Arrest warrants were issued for Marcos, »^[22] Javier Elorriaga Berdegue, Silvia Fernández Hernández, Jorge Santiago, Fernando Yanez, German Vicente, Jorge Santiago and other Zapatistas. The Zapatista Army of National Liberation were besieged by the Mexican Army in the Lacandon Jungle.



Subcomandante Marcos (center, wearing brown cap) in Chiapas

Marcos resolve was put to the test, in his camp in the Lacandon Jungle when the Zapatistas were under the Mexican Army military siege. Marcos response was immediate, sending Esteban Moctezuma the following message: "See you in hell". Conflicting signals got strengthened in favor of a fast military solution. The facts seemed to confirm Manuel Camacho Solis 16 June 1994 accusations that the reason for his resignation as the Chiapas Peace Commissioner, was due to sabotage done by the presidential candidate Ernesto Zedillo.

Under the big political pressure of a highly radicalized situation Mexico Secretary of the Interior Lic. Esteban Moctezuma believed a peaceful solution was possible, he championed to reach a peacefully negotiated solution to the 1995 Zapatista Crisis betting it all on a creative strategy to reestablish the Mexican Government Zapatista Army of National Liberation dialog to search for peace by demonstrating Marcos natural peace vocation and the terrible consequences of a military solution. Making a strong position against the 9 February actions against Peace, Secretary of the Interior Esteban Moctezuma defender of a political solution, to the 1995 Zapatista Crisis submit his resignation to the President Ernesto Zedillo which he does not accept it and asks the Secretary of the Interior Esteban Moctezuma to try the improbable task of restoring the Conditions for dialog to reach a negotiation. For

these foregoing reasons the Mexican army, ease actions, giving an opportunity that Marcos capitalized to escape the military site em placed in the Lacandon Jungle. Faced with this situation, Max Appedole, Rafael Guillén, childhood friend and colleague, at the Jesuits College Instituto Cultural Tampico asked for help from Edén Pastora the legendary Nicaraguan "Commander Zero" to prepare a report for under-Secretary of the Interior Luis Maldonado; the Secretary of the Interior Esteban Moctezuma and the President Ernesto Zedillo about Marcos natural pacifist vocation and the terrible consequences of a tragic outcome. »^[23] The document concluded that the marginalized groups and the radical left that exist in México, have been vented with the Zapatistas movement, while Marcos maintains an open negotiating track. Eliminate Marcos and his social containment work will not only would cease, but will give opportunity to the radical groups to take control of the movement. They will response to violence with violence. They would begin the terrorist bombings, kidnappings and belligerent activities. The country would be in a very dangerous spiral, which could lead to very serious situations because not only there is discomfort in Chiapas, but in many places in Mexico. »^[24]

Presidential Decree for the Dialog, the Reconciliation, and a peace with dignity in Chiapas Law

On 10 March 1995 President Ernesto Zedillo and Secretary of the Interior Esteban Moctezuma sign the Presidential Decree for the Dialog, the Reconciliation and a peace with dignity in Chiapas Law. It was discussed and approved by the Mexican Congress. »^[25]

Restoration of the peace talks

It was the night of 3 April 1995 precisely at 8:55 pm when the first meeting between representatives of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation which had declared war on the Mexican State the first minute of 1994, and the representatives of the government of President Ernesto Zedillo. His Secretary of Interior, Lic. Esteban Moctezuma, had sent a high rank officer, who delivered a letter to representatives of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, who did not lose radio communication, with Marcos. The letter expressed the Secretary of Interior commitment with a political path to resolve the conflict. The messenger was Luis Maldonado Mexico under Secretary of Interior. »^[26] This was how the 3 April 1995 in Prado Pacayal, Chiapas a place located in the Lacandon Jungle near Ocosingo, the secret negotiations prior to restart the dialog between the Zapatista Army of National Liberation and the Mexican government were initiated, this happened with Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Batel as witness of honor for the negotiations between Marcos and Luis Maldonado, Mexico under Secretary of the Interior on behalf of Lic Esteban Moctezuma Mexico Secretary of the Interior. These negotiations took place with the purpose of establishing parameters and base for the peace dialog between the parties. After several days of unfruitful negotiations, without reaching any specific agreements, it was very early in the morning nonstop in to the next day., in a strategically calculated move, as a conclusion Luis Maldonado proposed a definitive suspension of hostilities and measures of distention always proportionally higher to the Mexican government to the Zapatista Army of National Liberation On his way out, Luis Maldonado said:

“If you do not accept this, it will be regretted not having made the installation of the formal dialog in the time established by the Peace Talks Law”.

Marcos took this as a direct threat, so he did no longer reply.

The Subcomandante Marcos gave a message to the Witness of Honor Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Batel: "You have been witness to the fact that we have not threatened or assaulted these people, they have been respected in their person, property, their liberty and life. You have witnessed that the Zapatista Army of National Liberation has a word and has honor; you have also been witness to our willingness to engage in dialog. Thank you for taking the trouble to come all the way down here and have contributed with your effort to a peaceful settlement of the conflict, we hope that you will continue contributing in this effort to avoid war and you and your family, continue accepting to be witnesses of honor in this dialog and negotiation process." Finally, he asked the witness of honor to accompany Secretary Moctezuma negotiator Luis Maldonado in his way out, all the way to Ocosingo, to verify they are leaving well and unharmed. (The 7 April 1995 meeting ended at 4:00 am). »^[27]

Peace

Without much hope of dialog, it was already in hostile conditions as the Secretary of Interior negotiator Luis Maldonado began his return to Mexico City. When passing by the Ejido San Miguel a patrol of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation beckoned them to stop, surprised without even knowing what was happening, he was handed a radio, by means of which Mexico under-Secretary of Interior Luis Maldonado achieved with the Subcomandante Marcos the re-initiation of the Dialog with all the necessary agreements in accordance with the Law to start the formal Peace Talks dialog between the Zapatista Army of National Liberation and the Mexican government. The charismatic leader of the Zapatistas the Marcos led the Zapatistas movement to leave arms a side and start the dialog for a peace agreement. »^[28] »^[29]

Protocol

By 9 April 1995, the Bases for the Dialog Protocol and the harmony, peace with justice and dignity agreement Negotiation between the Mexican Government and the Zapatistas got signed. On 17 April 1995 the Mexican Government appoints Marco Antonio Bernal as Peace Commissioner in Chiapas. »^[30] the Mexican Government and the Zapatistas Peace Talks started in San Andrés Larráinzar on 22 April 1995. The Zapatistas rejected the Mexican Government proposal. Peace Talks Dialog re initiated on 7 June 1995 they agree with Alianza Cívica Nacional y the Convención Nacional Democrática to organize a national Consultation for Peace and Democracy. The Bases for the Dialog Protocol was re negotiated, in La Realidad Chiapas. 12 October 1995 Peace Talks Dialog is resumed in San Andres Larráinzar, Chiapas. »^[31]

The Other Agenda

The rocky road to Peace between the Mexican Government and the Zapatistas were due mostly to the initiatives promoted by the PGR. On 23 October 1995, with the purpose to derail the Peace Talks Dialog, the PGR arrested and send Fernando Yañez Muñoz to prison. Once again, not only the Peace Talks got seriously disturbed this actions violated the governing peace talks Law which granted guarantee of free passage to all of the Zapatistas during the negotiations and suspends all the arrest warrants against any of them. On 26 October 1995, the Zapatista National Liberation Army denied any association with Fernando Yañez Muñoz; Announces a Red Alert. Marcos returns to the mountains. On 26 October 1995, the PGR drops all charges against the alleged Comandante German. The COCOPA agreed with the determination. The next day on 27 October 1995 Fernando Yañez Muñoz was freed from the Reclusorio Preventivo Oriente. »^[32]

"I was arrested for political reasons and I guess I am set free for political reasons, my arrest was with the objective purpose of sabotaging the peace talks "

Yanez said to the press. "[33] The next day on 29 October 1995. The Zapatistas lifts the Red Alert and the negotiations where re installed.

Secret meetings

Steps Toward Peace

In contrast with many other talks, with a broad media exposure, strong security measures and great ceremony. Secretary of the Interior Esteban Moctezuma, went for the secret talks, alone, without any security measures, without the reflectors glitter, which could disrupt the talks, so he went to find a solution in the Lacandon Jungle to meet with Marcos. Important agreements were reached between the two, they called them: Steps Toward Peace. They demonstrated their sense of will, affinities and confidence where dispensed with a mutual respect and a significant track of understanding got established.

Secret Negotiations.

To which under-Secretary of Interior Luis Maldonado attended to find a solution, alone, without any security measures, or media coverage, he went to the Lacandon Jungle to negotiate with Marcos and that he did, Luis Maldonado restored the conditions for the Peace Talks. These simple acts of courage, determination and confidence, were later matched by Marcos probing to be useful to help keep the faith in the works for a peace solution, through negotiation, champion by Esteban Moctezuma, from the Mexican Secretary of Interior during the series of clashes promoted by the PGR to derail peace.

Executive decision

Time showed that the fight against a military solution to the conflict and the strategy to achieve a peaceful solution to the 1995 Zapatista Crisis was legal, politically and honorably correct, saving many lives in México. After a rocky start because of conflicting intelligence that caused the 1995 Zapatista Crisis President Ernesto Zedillo was heading to a Military solution, and when the intelligence issue was cleared, confirming that Subcomandante Marcos was no terrorist but a pacifist by nature, as well as all the other conclusions that Secretary of Interior Esteban Moctezuma also gave to the President Ernesto Zedillo with the purpose of trying to avoid a bloodbath of the Mexican indigenous people, as well to prevent other also terrible repercussions of an immoral and unnecessary tragic outcome.

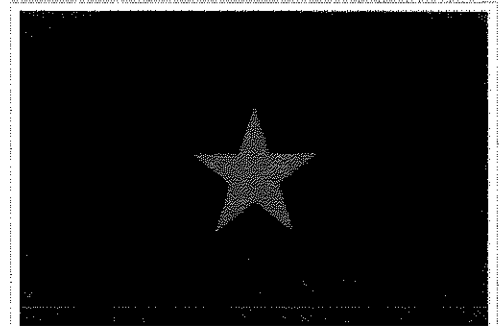
President Ernesto Zedillo to avoid innocent blood shedding, change course of action doing the opposite of his 9 February 1995 television appearance. For that Zedillo endured heavy political criticism at the time, he demonstrate humility of a Man of State, President Ernesto Zedillo did not accept Secretary of Interior Esteban Moctezuma resignation and ask him to restore Dialog conditions to achieve a peaceful solution to the 1995 Zapatista Crisis. On 10 March 1995 President Ernesto Zedillo and Secretary of Interior Esteban Moctezuma sign the Presidential Decree for the Dialog, the Reconciliation and a peace with dignity in Chiapas Law. the governing Law that warrant to have only one agenda in all of President Zedillo Administration, as well the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional to achieve an honorable Peace and it is now a universal reference and example of respect to people honor and dignity.

Release of the prisoners

On appeal, the Court dismisses the previous condemnatory Sentence for the alleged Zapatistas Javier Elorriaga Berdegúe and Sebastian Etzin Gomez given on 2 May 1996 for the crime of terrorism, with 13 and 6 years of imprisonment respectively and they were released on 6 June 1996. »^[34] The EZLN suspends their troops Alert Status.

Political and philosophical writings

Marcos has written more than 200 essays and stories and has published 21 books documenting his political and philosophical views. The essays and stories are recycled in the books. Marcos tends to prefer indirect expression, and his writings are often fables, although some are more earthy and direct. In a January 2003 letter to Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (the Basque ETA), titled *I shit on all the revolutionary vanguards of this planet*, Marcos says "We teach [children of the EZLN] that there are as many words as colors and that there are so many thoughts because within them is the world where words are born...And we teach them to speak with the truth, that is to say, to speak with their hearts."^[35]



Flag of the EZLN

La Historia de los Colores (The Story of Colors) is a story written for children and is one of Marcos' most-read books. Based on a Mayan creation myth, it teaches tolerance and respect for diversity.^[36] The book's English translation was to be published with support from the U.S. National Endowment for the Arts, but in 1999 the grant was abruptly canceled after questions from a reporter to the Endowment's chairman William J. Ivey.^{[37][38]} The Lannan Foundation stepped in with support after the NEA withdrew.^[39]

Marcos' political philosophy is often characterized as Marxist and his populist writing, which concentrates on unjust treatment of people by both business and the State, underlines some of the commonalities the Zapatista ideology shares with Libertarian socialism or Anarchism.

The elliptical, ironic and romantic style of Marcos' writings may be a way of keeping a distance from the painful circumstances that he reports and protests. In any event, his literary output has a purpose, as stated in a 2002 book title, *Our Word is Our Weapon*, a compilation of his articles, poems, speeches, and letters.^{[40][41]} In 2005 he wrote the novel *The Uncomfortable Dead* with crime writer Paco Ignacio Taibo II.

Fourth World War

Subcomandante Marcos has also written an essay in which he claims that the neoliberalism and globalization constitute the "Fourth World War."^[42] He termed the Cold War the "Third World War."^[42] In this piece, Marcos compares and contrasts the Third World War (the Cold War) with the Fourth World War, which he says is the new type of war that we find ourselves in now: "If the Third World War saw the confrontation of capitalism and socialism on various terrains and with varying degrees of intensity, the fourth will be played out between large financial centers, on a global scale, and at a tremendous and constant intensity."^[42] He goes on to claim that economic globalization has created devastation through financial policies:^[42]

"Toward the end of the Cold War, capitalism created a military horror: the neutron bomb, a weapon that destroys life while leaving buildings intact. During the Fourth World War, however, a new wonder has been discovered: the financial bomb. Unlike those dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, this new bomb not only destroys the polis (here, the nation), imposing death, terror, and misery on those who live there, but also transforms its target into just another piece in the puzzle of economic globalization."

Marcos explains the effect of the financial bombs as, "destroying the material bases of their [nation-state's] sovereignty and, in producing their qualitative depopulation, excluding all those deemed unsuitable to the new economy (for example, indigenous peoples)."^[42] Marcos also believes that neoliberalism and globalization result in a loss of unique culture for societies as a result of the homogenizing effect of neoliberal globalization:^[42]

"All cultures forged by nations—the noble indigenous past of America, the brilliant civilization of Europe, the wise history of Asian nations, and the ancestral wealth of Africa and Oceania—are corroded by the American way of life. In this way, neoliberalism imposes the destruction of nations and groups of nations in order to reconstruct them according to a single model. This is a planetary war, of the worst and cruelest kind, waged against humanity."

It is in this context which Subcomandante Marcos believes that the EZLN and other indigenous movements across the world are fighting back. He sees the EZLN as one of many "pockets of resistance."^[42]

"It is not only in the mountains of southeastern Mexico that neoliberalism is being resisted. In other regions of Mexico, in Latin America, in the United States and in Canada, in the Europe of the Maastricht Treaty, in Africa, in Asia, and in Oceania, pockets of resistance are multiplying. Each has its own history, its specificities, its similarities, its demands, its struggles, its successes. If humanity wants to survive and improve, its only hope resides in these pockets made up of the excluded, the left-for-dead, the 'disposable.'"

Marcos view's on other Latin American leaders, particularly ones on the left, are complex. He has expressed deep admiration for former Cuban president Fidel Castro and Argentine revolutionary Che Guevara, and given his approval to Bolivian president Evo Morales but has expressed mixed feelings for Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, whom he views as too militant but still responsible for vast revolutionary changes in Venezuela. On the other hand, he's labeled Brazil's former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Nicaragua's current president Daniel Ortega, whom he once served under while a member of the Sandinistas, as traitors who have betrayed their original ideals.^{[43][44]}

Popularity

Marcos is often credited with putting the impoverished state of Mexico's indigenous population in the spotlight, both locally and internationally.^[5] On his 3,000 kilometer trek to the capital during the Other Campaign in 2006, Marcos was welcomed by "huge adoring crowds, chanting and whistling."^[5] There were "Marcos handcrafted dolls, and his ski mask-clad face adorns T-shirts, posters and badges."^[5]