

The Zapatistas' Struggle against "Free Trade"

A Review of John Ross' Zapatistas

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John Ross is a Latin American correspondent and activist who's been living in and writing about Mexico for nearly four decades turning out some of the most important and incisive analysis of events there of anyone covering the country, its history, politics and people. Few writers anywhere make the country come alive like he can. He lives among the people and knows them well including Zapatista leader Subcommandante Marcos who may have given Ross his first ever interview.

Ross has written eight books of fiction and non-fiction and is one of the few surviving Beat poets with nine chapbooks of poetry in and out of print, the latest of which is due out soon called Bomba. He's also been called a new John Reed (who wrote the classic 10 Days that Shook the World on the Russian Revolution) covering a new Mexican revolution playing out around the country from its most indigenous, impoverished South in Chiapas and Oaxaca to the streets of its capital in Mexico City.

Ross' books include the Annexation of Mexico, From the Aztecs to the IMF and his eyewitness frontline trilogy on the Zapatista rebellion beginning with Rebellion From the Roots, Indian Uprising in Chiapas in 1995 for which he received the American Book award; The War Against Oblivion, The Zapatista Chronicles; and his latest work and subject of this review - Zapatistas, Making Another World Possible, Chronicles of Resistance 2000 - 2006 just published. It's subtitle is taken from the misnamed anti-globalization citizens' movement for global justice from Seattle to Doha, Genoa, Washington, Prague, Quebec, Miami, Cancun, Hong Kong and dozens of other locations everywhere where ordinary people are struggling for a better world against the dark neoliberal forces pitted against them.

The book's theme is the heroic ongoing Zapatista struggle for autonomy and liberation as "a dramatic and inspiring effort to make this possibility a reality" matched off against a made-in-Washington world of permanent wars for conquest and domination from the sands and streets of Iraq and desolate rubble of Afghanistan to the Israeli genocidal terror war against the Palestinians to the streets of Mexico City and Oaxaca and the mountains and jungles of Chiapas.

This book comes after Ross' Murdered by Capitalism, A Memoir of 150 Years of Life & Death on the American Left in 2004 for which he received the Upton Sinclair award. Ross is a gifted writer whose prose is passionate and poetic. From its beginning, he documented the Zapatista "rebellion from the roots," and in his latest book covers it from the July, 2000 election of corporatist Vicente Fox through the mid-2006 stolen presidential election, unresolved when the book went to press. He notes like all other elections in the country, it was orchestrated "before, during, and after the ballots (were) cast" just like they are in the belly of the bestial empire in el norte whose current high office incumbent Ross calls "an

electoral pickpocket (twice over)."

He also reminds us of past events that may foretell Mexico's future: "The metabolism of revolution in Mexico is precisely timed. It seems to burst from the subterranean chambers every hundred years or so - 1810, 1910, 2010? To be continued." And he notes the theft of the 1910 election from Francisco Madero triggered the Mexican Revolution led by Emiliano Zapata Salazar with readers left to wonder if Subcommandante Marcos is his modern incarnation. Stay tuned. As in Venezuela, the Mexican revolution will not be televised, but John Ross will chronicle it.

The Zapatistas' Chronicles of Resistance - From Its Beginning

Ross begins his book with a Preamble of the Zapatistas' own words saying: "We are the Zapatistas of the EZLN (who) rose up in January 1994 because we were tired of all the evil the powerful did to us, that they only humiliated us, robbed us, killed us, and no one ever said or did anything. For all that we said 'Basta' (enough) we weren't going to permit that they treat us worse than animals anymore." The Zapatista commentary continues saying they want democracy, liberty and justice for all Mexicans, and to get it they organized to defend themselves and fight for it. And so they have. Their spirit of resistance continues in their ongoing struggle for autonomy and freedom.

Ross begins volume three of his trilogy in year 2000, but let's go back to where it all began to understand its roots. The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) was founded in 1983 taking its name from the Liberation Army of the South led by Emiliano Zapata Salazar, the incorruptible Mexican Indian peasant rebel leader who supported agrarian reform and land redistribution in the battles of the Mexican Revolution. It began in 1910, went on till 1921, and saw Zapata betrayed and executed by government troops in 1919. It wasn't before he got new agrarian land laws passed that for a time returned to the people what President Porfirio Diaz confiscated to sell off to foreign investors the way things work today where everything's for sale under market-based rules. It's the reason for indigenous Mexican impoverishment today the way it is everywhere and why modern-day Zapatistas began their campaign to end centuries of imperial repression to liberate their people.

They planned quietly for years learning from successes and failures of earlier peasant struggles. They were all crushed or co-opted by the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) showing real change in Chiapas could only come through struggle from outside the political process that time and again proved those in power can't be trusted even though the Zapatistas gave the system a chance to prove otherwise knowing it would let them down which it did. It's the way it is in all developing states and most elsewhere as well. Mexico is no exception, and it may be one of the worst under repressive oligarch rule for the privileged and the people be damned, especially the indigenous Indian ones Mexico has plenty of.

Ross chronicled the Zapatistas' struggle in two previous books beginning January 1, 1994 when 2,000 from the EZLN marched into San Cristobal de las Casas and five other municipal seats in Mexico's Chiapas state. They seized control stunning the nation's leaders who knew something was up but kept it under wraps so as not to affect passage of the NAFTA that brought it on. The EZLN declared war on the Mexican state and its long-standing contempt for ordinary peoples' rights and needs now with new harsh neoliberal trade policies in place that could cost them their lives. Their struggle would highlight the plight of Mexico's 70 million poor and 20 million indigenous people including in the most indigenous city in the

world plagued by poverty – Mexico City.

Rebellion for change erupted in the open the first day NAFTA went into effect. Zapatistas in Chiapas called it a “death sentence.” It would threaten their agriculture and way of life creating even more hardship than Indian campesinos already face. Chiapas is the poorest of Mexico’s 31 states where most people live off the land earning a meager living in the best of times growing crops, the staple of which is corn, “maiz.” The state is predominantly rural with 70% of its 4.3 million people living in 20,000 localities in 111 municipalities mostly in the countryside. The state capital of Tuxtla Gutierrez is its one major city with a population of 250,000 while several others have populations half that size or less, one of which is San Cristobal de las Casas in the mountainous central highlands that was one of the six municipal seats the EZLN took in its 1994 rebellion from the roots against the Mexican government.

Their action stunned the nation and world, and President Carlos Salinas de Gortari responded ferociously against Chiapans cutting short his planned celebration. The Zapatistas weren’t to be denied as they stated in their manifesto that “We are a product of 500 years of struggle...against slavery....against Spain (and then) to avoid being absorbed by North American imperialism... later the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz (so) people rebelled and leaders like Villa and Zapata emerged, poor men just like us (so we continue the struggle for our) inalienable right (under the Mexican constitution) to alter or modify their form of government (and set up) liberated areas (in which the people will have) the right to freely and democratically elect their own administrative authorities.”

They weren’t alone as hundreds of thousands of supporters flooded Mexico City’s vast Zocalo plaza near the country’s Palacio Nacional seat of power. They sent a strong message of solidarity to the “People the Color of the Earth” in the South forcing Salinas to abort his effort after 12 days without subduing the first major Global South blow against the neoliberal new world order that prevailed triumphantly unchallenged in Mexico following the dissolution of the former Soviet Union – until the New Year’s day rebellion from the roots changed things.

A single event may have inspired the EZLN’s shot heard round the world launching their armed rebellion for autonomy. It was the Salinas government’s 1992 decision to repeal Article 27 in the country’s constitution that came out of the 1917 Revolution. It gave only natural born or naturalized Mexicans the right to own land and water, stipulated all land is originally the nation’s property that can grant control of it to private citizens with restrictions, and that only the state may control, extract and process oil and its derivatives. It also returned stolen peasant lands to their owners and generally protected Mexican peoples’ land ownership rights from foreign exploitation.

Repealing Article 27 changed everything for what the Revolution had “giveth,” Carlos Salinas had “taketh” away by ending land distribution to the landless. His action drove a “final nail in the revolution’s coffin” polarizing indigenous peoples and igniting the uprising beginning the day NAFTA became law. Rewriting the Article was a key condition of NAFTA that would henceforth deny indigenous peoples’ right to the land so the state could sell or lease it to private investors (aka corporate predators), mostly from el norte.

Mexico’s poor, including its rural indigenous population, suffered terribly in the last generation from the disastrous effects of global restructuring tight monetary and fiscal policies, unfair “neoliberalized trade laws, privatizations of state enterprises, and

abandonment of earlier economic and industrial development strategies. The result was regional growth collapsed throughout Latin America. From 1960 – 1980, regional per capita GDP grew 82% falling to 9% from 1980 – 2000 and 4% from 2000 – 2005.

It meant trouble always affecting the most vulnerable poor the most. It hit Mexico with falling oil prices, high interest rates, rising inflation, an overvalued currency, and a deteriorating balance of payments causing capital flight that by 1982 saw the peso collapse and economy hit hard. IMF and World Bank-imposed mafia-style loan arrangements followed imposing their special kind of austerity to people least able to tolerate it. It included structural adjustments with large-scale privatizations of state-owned industries, economic deregulation, and mandated wage restraint allowing inflation to grow faster than personal income with the poor feeling it most again.

As predicted, things got much worse under NAFTA-imposed trade rules. They hit the rural poor the hardest especially the country's farmers crushed under the weight of heavily subsidized Northern agribusiness they can't compete against including for corn, "maiz," the sacred crop, the struggle for which went to the root of the Zapatista rebellion also against made-in-the-USA neoliberal new world order rules of the game rigged against them.

They include Washington Consensus market uber alles diktats that led to Mexico's growing dependency on capital inflows with lots of "hot money" free to enter and leave the country under its deregulated financial markets. Again it caused an unsustainable current account deficit and peso collapse in early 1995 resulting in the country's worst economic depression in 60 years after experiencing the same type collapse 14 years earlier.

The Zapatistas got hammered by it with no relief when economic conditions improved. It caused mass discontent and anger making the country ripe for rebellion as an elite few grew rich at the expense of the great majority sinking deeper into poverty and no where more than in indigenous rural areas like Chiapas.

The Oakland Institute think tank specializing in social, economic and environmental issues documented the harm done. Their researchers reported heavily subsidized US corn exports to Mexico tripled after NAFTA and in 2003 topped 8 million tons. It came at the expense of Mexico's farmers where corn is the country's staple. It drove over two million of them off the land that was predicted in advance and allowed to happen anyway. It ruined lives and led to suicides but not like in India where WTO-imposed trade rules caused 100,000 deaths because of farm foreclosures from indebtedness.

The worst is still to come in Mexico if UCLA professor and Research Director of the North American Integration and Development Center Raul Hinojosa's worse case prediction comes true. He believes NAFTA will eventually force 10 million poor farmers off the land with Ross saying it's already over 6 million people in a country where farm families average five members and they're all counted in the bloodletting.

Ross laid out the other ugly damage from NAFTA's first 10 years through 2003:

- All Mexican banks controlled by foreign corporate giants, mainly from the US.
- All the railroads sold off to Union Pacific with former President Ernesto Zedillo now on its board as his reward.

- The country's mines and airlines in private hands.
- Two million hectares of tropical forest destroyed for private development with junk tree plantations sprouting up throughout Southern Mexico controlled by corporate behemoths like International Paper and Temple-Inland.
- Homegrown industries, especially in textiles and plastics, shut down unable to compete with US giants.
- Even the "Maquiladora Miracle" once creating 2 million jobs on the US border losing out to China and other lower wage countries in the inevitable race to the bottom WTO one-way trade deals always cause to countries from North and South.
- Real wages down 20% over 10 years with the disparity of wealth far greater than in 1994 when the Zapatista struggle began.
- 600 Wal-Mart megastores crushing small homegrown retailers and Mexican chains. Wal-Mart de Mexico SAB is the country's largest private employer and biggest retailer in Latin America far and away. This predatory colossus dominates Mexican retailing (like it does up North) with forecasted 2007 sales of \$21 billion and soaring profits gotten at the expense of its workers even more than in the US because in Mexico Wal-Mex can get away with anything.
- The Mexican landscape littered with thousands of McDonald's, Burger King's, Wendy's, and other US retail chains destroying local culture and homogenizing markets to sell the same stuff in Mexico as in Milwaukee, Missouri and Maine.
- The importation and consumption of genetically modified (GMO) corn presenting a clear danger to "the People of the Corn" by displacing and contaminating locally-grown varieties cultivated for thousands of years as dietary and cultural staples. The GMO poison from el norte is now spreading like an uncontrollable infestation from indigenous cornfield to cornfield.

Add to the above, former President Vincente Fox's Plan Puebla-Panama (PPP) that so far flopped but isn't dead. He proposed it early in his term as a multi-billion dollar development scheme to turn Southern Mexico (including Chiapas) and Central America all the way to Panama into a colossal free trade paradise displacing indigenous people, destroying their culture and sacred corn, and harming the environment for profit. He wanted to induce private investment by handing over to them the region's natural resources including its oil, water, minerals, timber and ecological biodiversity. Fox wanted to rip into the area with new ports, airports, bullet trains, bridges, superhighways, 25 hydroelectric dams, new telecommunication facilities, electrical grids, and a new Panama Canal – for starters, with more development to follow. He also wanted to open the country's wildlife reserves for bioprospecting in a giveaway to giant seed, chemical and drug companies and connect everything with new highways linking Mexico to Central America facilitating business throughout the region – meaning indigenous people had to make way for it.

The area planned for development is enormous and so far stalled. It covers 102 million hectares with 64 million inhabitants in eight countries few of whom would benefit from a scheme to exploit masquerading as infrastructure and private development and more without consent of the people the way it's always done. It's the reason the plan went

nowhere – so far. It's irrelevant to the poor, rural South gaining nothing except picking up the tab so corporate predators can take their land for private gain selling back to the people what's already theirs like Chiapas' fresh water that's 40% of the country's total Coca-Cola is dying to get its hands on. It would also destroy the last significant tropical rain forest in Chiapas' Montes Azules Integral Biosphere in the Lacandon jungle where the government wants to remove native Mayans from lands belonging to them.

An Enduring Struggle for Liberation and Autonomy

The EZLN struggled to win redress for their major demands, but the Zedillo government in the 1990s reneged on a promise to address them. The key betrayal came in 1996 when EZLN leaders thought they had a deal known as the San Andres Accords. It was a landmark document based on the International Labor Organization's Resolution 169, the universally accepted benchmark for defining an indigenous people stipulating they have both territory or habitat and "territoriality" meaning they have autonomy over their own lands free from government control.

Had it passed, it would have given Mexico's 57 distinct indigenous peoples local autonomy over all aspects of their lives – agrarian policy, natural resources, the environment, health and educational institutions, judicial system, and their overall social and cultural rights. It needed to be legislatively approved by changes in state, federal, local laws and the Mexican Constitution committing the government to eliminate "the poverty, the marginalization and insufficient political participation of millions of indigenous Mexicans." But like before and always, it wasn't to be as PRI President Zedillo, an "inflexible globophile" and technocratic servant of empire, upheld Mexico's business as usual mal gobierno (bad government) dark forces reneging on the deal as fast as he could unleash Mexican army troops against the people of Chiapas stepping up his "dirty war" on them to undermine their popular support and end the EZLN rebellion.

"PRIlista" Zedillo failed, biting off more than he could chew, because the Zapatistas then and now aren't giving up their struggle or going away. Their response was a greater effort to mobilize broader support throughout the country. In 1999, the collective Zapatista Revolutionary Indigenous Clandestine Committee (CCRI) leadership made up of 23 commanders and spokesperson Subcommandante Marcos organized a national consulta, or referendum, for indigenous rights and implementation of the San Andres Accords that were signed in 1996. More than three million Mexicans participated with 95% of them endorsing the EZLN's demands providing the kind of mass support hard to ignore.

In December, 2000, National Action Party's (PAN) Vicente Fox (and former Coca-Colaista big cheese) had to address it. He shook Mexico's political firmament in the July elections becoming the country's first president able to end the PRI's stranglehold single party 71 year rule under a system known as "Presidentialism." After taking office, he arrogantly promised to cut the Gordian knot deadlock with the EZLN and would meet with Subcommandante Marcos to "fix things up in 15 minutes" by committing to submit the San Andres Accords or La Ley Cocopa Indian Rights Law to Congress for resolution where almost for certain they'd be none.

Still, the Zapatistas and their supporters went on the road for it for 16 days going from Chiapas to Mexico City in February and March 2001. The climax was a mass rally of hundreds of thousands in the capital's Zocalo, to no avail as the Congress gutted the Accords ending the EZLN's hope for redress through the political process that was reinforced

when the nation's Supreme Court upheld the legislators 8 - 3 on September 7, 2002. It left the Zapatistas high and dry and more than ever determined to work for change outside the political process that works for the privileged, not the people.

La Otra Campana - The EZLN's Other Campaign

The Zapatista's Other Campaign grew out of the organization's Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle (the Sexta) issued June, 2005 calling for a new approach outside traditional party politics the EZLN rejects because it doesn't work for ordinary people. The idea was to build a grand alliance of all jodidos (the "screwed" over people) to include Indians and the "real left" to join in solidarity from the bottom up outside the political process and call a constitutional convention to write a new anti-neoliberal document protecting the nation's land and resources as well as enact an Indian Rights law.

The Other Campaign went on the road to all parts of the country during the 2006 electoral period working outside the political process withholding support for opposition Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) presidential candidate and ex-PRlista Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, popularly known as ALMO.

Ross calls him El Peje, his nickname, noting while serving as Mexico City's popular mayor he eschewed ostentation; provided essential social services for the people like free milk for young mothers; shelters for the homeless; and jobs for tens of thousands. He also cut deals with the business class from Mexico's Council of Businessmen (CMHN) made up of the country's 37 richest men like he did with billionaire tycoon Carlos Slim showing he was a "demon in disguise, a demagogue, (a) dreaded politician. A danger, in short, for Mexico." A man who sleeps with the devil. Not anyone the Zapatistas could trust or support, and they didn't, sitting out the campaign to further their own to end Mexico's unjust economic system of corrupted predatory capitalism exploiting people for profit. Their goal is noble, and they're committed to it - to one day bring real social, economic and democratic change to the country but do it outside party politics within which it can never happen.

Working through the system always turns out the same. The dominant PRI and PAN are Mexico's Republicans and Democrats - two wings of the nation's property party exploiting the masses to serve the country's capital interests, latifundistas, and foreign investors from el norte. It hardly matters whether PAN or PRI rules with the PRD scarcely better as most in it are recycled "PRIANS" (formerly from PRI and PAN) - aka, Mexico's bipartisan criminal class with softer edges offering the people more crumbs, but still crumbs. In power they'd never address the Zapatistas' original 13 demands - land, work, labor, bread, education, health, shelter, communication, culture, independence, democracy, liberty, and peace as well as foster solidarity with the aggrieved.

Ross' criticism is even harsher calling the PRD "mortally flawed, venomously venial and vulnerable to splintering into brittle battle over scraps of power." In his judgment, if ALMO became president (he didn't, but it was unresolved at press time), the dominant business class, Washington, and even the Church would slap him down each time he proposed overly generous crumbs. And if he managed doing more than thought possible, Ross adds an exclamation point - "Think Salvadore Allende" who was no match for Nixon-Kissinger the way a Mexican progressive today would be out of his league against the demon-duo Bush-Cheney, even meaner and nastier than their uglier-than-sin predecessors.

They don't daunt the EZLN's 13 year resolve against mal gobierno, running strong and

gaining strength with the Other Campaign continuing throughout 2006. It's still ongoing in the new year with the country now under PAN president-by-mass-electoral-fraud Felipe Calderon. Ross will pick up the story in his next book, sure to come, continuing his chronicle of rebellion for a better world Zapatistas are in the vanguard for.

La Otra Campana grew out of planning meetings and is comprised of many thousands of supporters including Indians, farmers, workers, social movements, NGOs, autonomous collectives, all groups on the left and all others willing to join a social movement for change. The plan was to take Subcommandante Marcos (who's mestizo, not Indian) and a 16 member Sexta commission on a six month barnstorming blizzard, beginning January 1, 2006, to all 31 Mexican states to meet and listen to a diverse range of people, groups and organizations. They want their ideas as input to use toward building broader support toward the goal of real change in a country stultified by decades of corruption and mass exploitation.

This was the fifth time the Zapatistas left their Chiapas stronghold home taking their message to the country, the last time being in 2001 for the "March of Those Who Are The Color of the Earth" after Congress gutted the La Ley Cocopa or Indian Rights Law. This time the plan was much more ambitious with goals great enough to make Marcos tell his followers "we could be jailed, we could be killed. We may never return home" because at stake is the future of Mexico also playing out in the streets of Oaxaca since May for social justice long denied because getting it is never easy in a country ruled by powerful interests unwilling to sacrifice their privilege and till now never having to.

The Other Campaign aims high continuing into 2007. It calls for enacting a new constitution barring privatization of public resources and getting rid of the whole array of neoliberal poison served up by Washington-controlled international lending agencies and WTO one-way "bunko game" free trade deals unmasked as unfair. It also wants indigenous autonomy for Mexico's 57 individual Indian peoples and a nationwide public stage for the EZLN to spread its message to people in every Mexican state. It comes down to "the Other Campaign vs. Politics as Usual" meaning elections for sale to the highest bidder or easily stolen when the Mexican power structure controls them and won't tolerate power to the people in a country run by and for the privileged alone, the way it's always been. The EZLN renounces them all while knowing the PRI's return to power would be a big step backward in Mexico's glacial struggle for democracy that at best advances in mini-fragile steps easily reversible.

The Other Campaign is still ongoing aiming toward its longer range goal for a new constitution with regional autonomy run from the bottom up outside the political process it wants no part of. Today the EZLN is the most interesting, radical and important grass roots democratic movement in the world. Subcommandante Marcos believes new fraudulently elected Mexican president Felipe Calderon "is going to start to fall from his first day (December 1 and) we're on the eve of a great uprising or civil war." He believes the Mexican people will join him in "spontaneous uprisings, explosions all over, civil war" the way it's gone on uninterrupted in Oaxaca since May. "When we rise up (he says), we're going to sweep away the entire political class, including those who say they're the parliamentary left" as the political process corrupts them like all the others.

It's the way all social revolutions take root that begin from a committed core, then broaden into a unified network of mutual support for real democratic change. The spirit of resistance is alive in Latin America. It bubbled up in Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador, and in Mexico it's

electric and more alive than since Emiliano Zapata Salazar led the 1910 Revolution that ushered in a period of real change, albeit short-lived. Today Mexicans again are fed up with decades of fraud, corruption and abuse, and modern-day Zapatistas are in the vanguard of resistance for real social democratic change for people long denied it. No one knows how this will end and if it will turn out to be a watershed moment in the country's history. Those in power never yield it easily, so things may get ugly as events play out. For now, Mexico's future is unfolding on its streets and mountains and jungles of Chiapas that will chart the road ahead for better or worse to an uncertain time the Zapatistas are struggling to make a better one.

It isn't easy, and since early 2007 Zapatista communities have been up against increasing opposition from a government-allied paramilitary group called the Organization for the Defense of Indigenous and Peasant Rights (Opddic). It uses threats of violence, land invasions, crop thefts, beatings and kidnappings to expropriate Zapatista land so private developers can exploit natural resources and develop large tourist projects. Opddic has been around since the late 1990s but grew more powerful while Vincente Fox was president. It's present activities signal what's ahead from the Calderon government's policy to seize Zapatista land, weaken the movement, and give corporate predators an open field to develop the land indigenous Chiapans claim as their own.

Zapatistas say they'll defend their lands against Opddic incursions but up till now have avoided violence. That may not last as attacks continue that may be intended to provoke a response strong enough to set up the ominous possibility the government may step in with force making things very ugly.

It won't step in to help the Chiapas-based NGO Center for Economic Political Investigations of Community Action (CIEPAC) threatened by a late February note saying: "Enjoy your last day. We will kill you I am looking for you and now we have found you." This followed other incidents of threatening surveillance and harassment against CIEPAC members for several months. The organization takes the threats seriously and asks for "national and international organized groups (to join) in solidarity (to) maintain your vigilance in anticipation of events that might occur shortly, continue your solidarity with social movements in Mexico, and denounce the continuous violations to human rights that are affecting civil society in this country." Whatever may happen, John Ross will be there following the Zapatistas' struggle against the dark forces affecting them and ordinary people everywhere.

Ross ends his current chronicle in 2006 where it began - in Chiapas with the Mayan people the color of the earth and the corn, "maïs" in the "milpa" that's the core of their life. The country and people can't survive without it. He writes: "The Zapatistas are Mayans and the Mayans are the People of Maize, not just because it is the center of their universe but because they are actually made from it. And like the maize....the people the color of the earth return, renew themselves, are reborn and flourish." They won't allow the country's dark forces to take that from them. Their spirit is alive and so is their hope another world is possible. Their struggle for it continues, and Ross will be there chronicling it all for us.

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