

# The Zapatistas and the Electronic Fabric of Struggle

by

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## Note

This is an html version of the original draft of a chapter for John Holloway and Eloína Peláez (eds.), *Zapatista! Reinventing Revolution in Mexico*, London:Pluto Press, 1998. The article published in that book is a somewhat shorter, edited version of this original draft. The book consists of a collection of new articles, mostly from Mexican scholars and political analysts. See [background](#) on this article. All constructive comments to the author are welcome.

## Text begins:

In the narrow terms of traditional military conflict, the Zapatista uprising has been confined to a limited zone in Chiapas. However, through their ability to extend their political reach via modern computer networks the Zapatistas have woven a new electronic fabric of struggle to carry their revolution throughout Mexico and around the world.

Initially the Mexican state tried to restrict the uprising to the jungles of Chiapas, through both military repression and the limitation of press coverage (most Mexicans get their news from the state controlled TV network, Televisa). Those efforts failed. First through written communiqués and personal interviews with independent journalists which were flashed around the world by fax and electronic mail, then through more detailed reports by Mexican and foreign observers circulated in the same manner, the Zapatistas were able to break out of the state's attempted isolation and reach others with their ideas and their program for economic and political revolution. As vast numbers of Mexicans responded with sympathy and mobilized in support, the Chiapas uprising kindled a more generalized pro-democracy movement against the centralized and corrupt Mexican economic and political system. Inspiring many others outside of Mexico, the Zapatista uprising set in motion a new wave of hope and energy among those engaged in the struggle for freedom all over the world.

Despite its initial defeat, a key aspect of the state's war against the Zapatistas (both in Mexico and elsewhere) has been its on-going efforts to isolate them, so that they can be destroyed or forced to accept co-optation. In turn, the Zapatistas and their supporters have fought to maintain and elaborate their political connections throughout the world. This has been a war of words, images, imagination and organization in which the Zapatistas have had surprising success.

Vital to this continuing struggle has been the pro-Zapatista use of computer communications.<sup>(1)</sup> While the state has all too effectively limited mass media coverage and serious discussion of Zapatista ideas, their supporters have been able, to an astonishing degree, to circumvent and offset this blockage through the use of electronic networks in conjunction with the more familiar tactics of solidarity movements: teach-ins, articles in the alternative press, demonstrations, the occupation of Mexican government consulates and so on. Over time the state and its strategists have become acutely aware of the effectiveness of this new form of struggle and have begun to take steps to counteract it. Both sides are now active in the cyberspatial dimension of a war which has raged out of Chiapas across Mexico

and the world. The ways in which these networks have been effectively used within the larger framework of struggle deserve the closest attention by all those fighting for a democratic and freer society. The measures now being taken by the Mexican state to counter them also need to be understood in order to be dealt with effectively. The description and analysis of this new dimension of revolution and counterrevolution are the objects of this chapter.

## Networks and Struggles

Properly understood, the working relationship that has developed between the indigenous and peasant struggles in what most people think of as "primitive" or "backward" Chiapas and the "modern, high-tech" world of computer communications systems is not as surprising as many seem to think. Well before the uprising, Chiapas and its people were already connected to the rest of the world and had developed forms of grassroots organization which made such symbiosis an extension of pre-existing forms.

Chiapas has been an integral part of Mexican and global capitalism for a long, long time. The workers of Chiapas have provided the rest of Mexico and the world with agricultural exports such as lumber, coffee and beef and their own labor power through migration north. For quite some time, they have also been providing hydroelectric power and oil, essential components of "modern" Mexican industrialization. Locally, they have labored in that most contemporary sector of post-industrial society --the tourist industry-- providing the services required, and coming into constant contact with people from all over the world. The people of Chiapas have moved in and out of capitalist labor markets (local, national and international) with increasing sophistication, even as they have fought for land so that they could be independent of them. Behind all this waged labor lies another enormous quantity of labor which has also been integrally related to the rest of the world: the unwaged labor of reproduction --mostly performed by the women of Chiapas-- which has procreated, reared and repaired the labor power of those who have been exploited directly.(2)

Being at the bottom of the national and international wage and income hierarchy does not make the people of Chiapas either primitive or backward, only oppressed and exploited. Being part of that hierarchy --no matter which part-- means that their work and their struggles can only be understood properly within larger contexts, as the Zapatistas have so properly insisted.

Moreover, as part of their struggles to resist exploitation and oppression and to develop their own ways of life and community structures, they have developed their own forms of self-organization which turned out to be complementary to the computer systems with which they would link up. In efforts that have been renewed throughout their history, long before the beginnings of Zapatista organizing, they have drawn on old communal customs and invented new ones as alternatives to co-optation by the Mexican party-state, e.g., the conversion of local leaders into *caciques* working for the long governing Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). Within the dynamics of such dramatic changes as hydroelectric development and jungle colonization, the workers of Chiapas have also organized sectorially in ways independent of particular communities.(3) As the debt crisis of the 1980s and 1990s with its vicious state policies of austerity has deepened, such local and sectoral efforts have reached out to each other and developed networks of communication and mutual aid. This "networking" spread not only within Chiapas but linked to wider national and international efforts, especially those of campesinos and the indigenous. The Zapatistas must, therefore, be seen as one visible moment of a more general struggle which was already deeply involved in networking before the uprising in January 1994.(4)

On the other side of the symbiosis, the cyberspace world of computer communication networks was itself already the terrain of manifold struggles and thus open to appropriation by those whose own

forms of organization were pre-disposed to building strength through linkages with others. While this is not the place to delve too deeply into the antagonisms and class conflicts of the computer industry, it is important to recognize and remember that, like all other capitalist industries, it has developed as an integral part of the changing international division of labor power. Its workers --from semiconductor engineers through hardware assemblers to programmers-- can be found in both North and South. Within this context there has been a complex set of ongoing struggles between those who do the work and those who make the profits.

While the public relations managers of the industry have celebrated the workaholic entrepreneurs of Silicon Valley, they have glossed over the continuing struggle between management and its labor force --not only the line workers who produce and assemble the hardware and multiply the software, but also many of those who work primarily with their minds, inventing and designing new hardware, solving new puzzles, writing new software, and so on. While business apologists may pretend that "commerce is the engine of technology change",<sup>(5)</sup> its managers know that the real, material source of change is the creative power of those fascinated with and dedicated to the development of computers in all their aspects.

The elaboration of widespread computer networks has occurred only on the basis of the personal computer which has made it possible for literally millions of people to form a populous "cyber" space. The personal computer industry itself was built on the subordination of what was originally a non-commercial "hobby" to the mandates of profit-maximizing capital. Maintaining that subordination required the harnessing of imagination, the power of invention, the creativity and the labor of vast numbers of people, at every stage of design, production and use. It involved, in other words, the conversion of whole new realms of self-activity into new forms of labor power, willing and able to work for business.

Business now grapples with how to manage an entirely new kind of workforce --one which cannot be "deskilled" without being destroyed, one whose control of both the tools and processes of production necessitate an uncomfortable reorganization in structures of command away from the rigid hierarchies that developed with the Taylorist and Fordist organization of manufacturing.<sup>(6)</sup>

In fact, as the use of personal computers has spread in the United States and across the world the numbers of those involved in activities such as writing software have grown much faster than the ability of industry to harness their labor. Its failure to subordinate so many of their efforts to the criteria of profit has been manifest in the proliferation of "free-ware" and "share-ware" produced by those who want none of capitalist constraints and who are dedicated to the free flow of ideas and exchange of imagination.<sup>(7)</sup>

What has been true in the computer industry of the struggle between free activity and the subordination of that activity to profit-producing work, has also been true in the sub-space of computer networks. The same dynamics of struggle between self-activity and work for outside authority have multiplied through both public and private sectors of cyberspace. The state and private corporations are constantly chasing after the new electronic frontiers being created by imaginative pioneers. They seek to enclose the frontiers for purposes of power and profit, e.g., restricting access to "classified" information or industrial secrets, commercializing as much of the informational and communicative flow as possible as well as the infrastructure through which it flows.<sup>(8)</sup>

This enclosure resembles that of other capitalists who have fenced off agricultural land or industrial space in order to control it. In cyberspace just as in the geographical frontiers of the Americas (the North American West, the South American Pampas or Rainforests) there has been a dynamic struggle between the pioneers and the profiteers. Just as mountain men, gauchos and poor farmers have sought independence through the flight to and colonization of new lands, so cyberspace pioneers have carved

out new spaces and filled them with their own activity. Just as big capital (agribusiness, railroads, etc.) has come hard on the heels of homesteaders, seeking to take over their lands, forcing them out or reducing them to waged labor, so too has business chased after the new electronic frontiers with the object of buy-out or take-over. Those threatened with enclosure, of course, have always fought back. As a result, just as the campesinos of Morelia under the leadership of Zapata cut barbed wire to liberate the land in 1910, electronic hackers have chopped down electronic barriers and liberated information, creating a pirate underground of free activity constantly slipping beyond corporate and state control. So too have the colonists of cyberspace defended their own spaces against monopolization in other ways, including public campaigns both legal and political against big business and state control.(9)

The first working computer network was ARPANET (on-line in 1969), financed by the Advanced Research Projects Agency in the U.S. Defense Department. ARPANET grew out of a line of Cold War research on making Western military communications possible in the event of nuclear war, i.e., in the event that much of the communications system itself would be destroyed by Soviet nuclear weapons. The design that was developed within this context of military conflict was a highly flexible, geographically dispersed web of multiple linkages. The organization of that web allowed specially formatted information to move from any point to any other point through many, many possible routes. Thus, even if many of those possible routes were destroyed, many others would still be functioning and the information would get through.(10) In the absence of war, ARPANET was developed to facilitate the long distance sharing of computer time by researchers working on military and other government projects. The supersession of ARPANET by a network of interlinked networks (The Matrix or The Net) has involved the multiplication of linkages and increased both the flexibility and certainty of communication for anyone and everyone using it --military AND the ever more numerous civilian users. When the Mexican state sought to block the flow of information about the uprising in Chiapas it was outflanked every bit as effectively as any Soviet strike might have been. It could keep Televisa from reporting the facts, but it couldn't prevent thousands of independent computer operators from passing them on to all who wanted to know.

Beyond an understanding of this flexibility, it is important to recognize that The Net does not exist independently of what are often called its "users". The Net is not some objective or politically neutral technology to be "used" in this way or that. It is not a "form" to be filled arbitrarily with "content"; both form and content are constantly being autonomously reinvented and transformed. Networks have been put to uses which have escaped the intentions of their designers and thus become something new, while new networks have been created for purposes unimagined by the designers (and vendors) of the hardware and software employed. These things have made any assertion of "objectivity" or technological determinism less and less credible.

ARPANET, for example, was conceived as a military weapon and a political tool of the Cold War. It was supposed to link government-paid researchers to shared computers. It was, however, soon transformed by its "users" into an interactive electronic post-office linking them to each other. The machines ceased to be the focal point and were demoted to the means for human-to-human connections. ARPANET's major traffic ceased to be defense-related long distance computation and became whatever its individual "users" created: from personal correspondence to science-fiction discussion groups. "In no time at all, the ARPANET developed into a free-swinging intellectual community in which nearly anything could be said and often was."(11) The struggle over the content, and thus the nature, of cyberspace emerged at the moment of its birth and has continued ever since.

As The Net has become larger and more complex, its cyberspace has come to contain an incredible diversity of people, purposes and activities, generally co-existing side by side but sometimes diametrically opposed. For example, whereas ARPANET grew out of military purposes, today The Net provides cyberspaces for anti-war, pro-peace groups to share ideas and experiences and organize their

opposition to military options around the globe. Indeed, one sub-network of The Net is PeaceNet, named and created for just such purposes.

While military researchers and peace activists may have the same kind of personal computers sitting on their desks and send mail and information using the same transmission protocols, they are continually constructing and reconstructing two very different kinds of cyberspace. Every piece of hardware and software is subject to the subversion of the purposes for which it was designed.(12)

Such transformations of The Net derive from an openness to mutability that is much greater than traditional organizational forms. Within existing forums on The Net, persuasive or even just provocative intervention is sometimes all it takes to draw a variety of people into a new set of discussions. This can, in turn lead to the creation of new "spaces" for public or private discussion, e.g., new usegroups or lists (open or closed). Old discussions (and even forums) may fade away as attention coalesces around new issues or voices. No formal agreement is necessary, no quorums, no vote need be taken for substantive change to occur. These changes seem to happen in ways similar to the kind of informal shifts in leadership the Zapatistas have described in Chiapaneco villages or others have found in urban barrios.(13)

Alternatively, participants in social conflicts in society have extended their struggles from other zones of human space into cyberspace. Groups of individuals who have already organized discussion and action outside of cyberspace --such as the indigenous and campesino groups in Chiapas and their supporters-- can reach others through it. Reaching others may involve drawing individuals into their organizing efforts and it may involve creating new connections with other groups for collaborative efforts. Those groups whose members generally have individual access to The Net can use it to enhance their own internal communications. Such "networking", as we have seen, predates cyberspace, but The Net (like mail, telephone and fax before it) has dramatically extended and speeded up the process.

Just as important has been the internationalization of cyberspace and the networking it facilitates. On the one hand, business has had increasing recourse to computer communications to co-ordinate its multinational operations of production, finance and sales. This has made it easier to move operations out of areas of high wages and militant environmental or consumer groups into areas of low wages and weak regulations. On the other hand, given access to computers and electronic networks, activists located physically in different countries can link up more easily than ever before. They can share their own experiences, ask for and receive information, compare and contrast struggles, discuss alternative tactics and coordinate strategies as easily as those in the same country.

"Access", unfortunately, is not "given" to most people in the world. Indeed, most people are excluded from direct participation in cyberspace because of lack of access to The Net.(14) This problem is particularly acute in rural areas and among the world's indigenous peoples who often lack even electricity or phone lines, much less computers or the skills to operate them. Many, many communities in Chiapas, for example, are in this situation and their ability to connect to the wider world through computers depends entirely on their connections with a limited number of possible intermediaries who are connected.(15) The spread of community "Free-Nets" is one attempt to deal with this, but, as with most of computer communications, this spread has occurred primarily in the United States.(16)

This problem of access is great in Chiapas and for the Zapatistas. Despite all the media hype which came with the discovery of the role of cyberspace in circulating Zapatista words and ideas, Subcommandante Marcos is not sitting in some jungle camp uploading EZLN communiqués via mobile telephone modem directly to the Internet. Zapatista messages have to be hand-carried through the lines of military encirclement and uploaded by others to the networks of solidarity. Similar problems of access exist within those networks. Many who might be sympathetic to the Zapatistas, e.g., various rural and urban communities of Native Americans, Mexicanos and Chicanos in the U.S. and

Canada, have few means to plug into The Net. There too, access for most people must be mediated by groups of humanitarian or political activists who download EZLN Communiques and upload expressions of solidarity from off-line organizing.(17)

Moreover, even accessible computer communications don't magically produce collaboration --all the usual obstacles to mutual understanding and solidarity must still be faced by those involved in struggle, e.g., differences in language, politics, background knowledge, experience, national identity and relative position in the global wage/income hierarchy. The Net provides new spaces for new political discussions about democracy, revolution and self-determination but it does not provide solutions to the differences that exist; it is merely a means to accelerate the search for such solutions.

The most directly relevant struggle in which the power of such international linkages began to become apparent in the period before January 1994 was in the organization of resistance to the North American Free Trade Agreement.(18) Coalitions of dozens of groups of workers, farmers, women, students, environmentalists, and the indigenous concerned with the threats posed by the neo-liberal strategy of "free trade" were able to establish working relationships --periodically through meetings and regularly through The Net.(19) The need to form a common front provided a great incentive to confront and wrestle not only with the interrelationships among a diverse array of issues (e.g., runaway shops, international environmental standards, ethnic autonomy and so on) but also with the different perspectives of the North and the South (e.g., those of workers laid off by runaway shops and those of workers offered jobs by those shops' arrival in their communities). Given the urgency of the collectively perceived threat, discussion of such interrelationships and differences developed faster and more productively than ever before in the history of North America. The cyberspatial connections that were forged and strengthened during that struggle were still in place and functioning when the Zapatistas declared NAFTA a "death sentence" for the indigenous and campesinos.

The result of such processes interweaving cyberspace and other zones of human space is a new composition of social relationships increasingly difficult for capitalists and the state to manage. Precisely to the degree that its self-elaboration has been outstripping the ability of managers of capitalist society to repress or co-opt, this growing "social" composition has moved beyond a "class" composition. It is not merely the self-reconfigured structure of power by workers against their exploiters; with new threads and new weaves the social fabric is being rewoven into textures with less and less of a "class" character. This self-activity, of course, continues to be constrained by the oppressions of class but it increasingly weaves according to its own innovative designs.(20)

The Zapatistas and the electronic fabric of struggle When the Zapatistas suddenly appeared in San Cristobal de las Casas and several other cities of Chiapas in the early hours of January 1, 1994, they brought with them a printed declaration of war against the Mexican state and for the liberation of the people of Chiapas and Mexico. News of that declaration went out through a student's telephone call to CNN, and then as journalists arrived to investigate, stories went out via the wire services, newspaper reports and radio and television broadcasts all over the world. For the most part, however, readers and viewers of that reporting saw and heard only excerpts from the Zapatista declaration of war. They never saw the whole declaration, with all of its arguments and explanations for what were obviously dramatically surprising and audacious actions. Except for the rare exception, such as the Mexico City daily newspaper *La Jornada*, they only got what the editors wanted them to get, according to their own biases.

As the Mexican state poured 15,000 troops into Chiapas and the fighting escalated, this kind of reporting continued. Even after the cease-fire when the emphasis of the Zapatista offensive shifted from arms to words, the commercial media overwhelmingly refused to reproduce the striking and often eloquent communiques and letters sent out by the EZLN. With the distribution of *La Jornada* --which did continue to publish Zapatista material in full-- sharply limited, especially outside of Mexico City,

this refusal of the world's media was a serious blockage to the ability of the Zapatistas to get their message out.

For those in Mexico who read those messages and found them accurate and inspiring, this blockage was an intolerable situation which had to be overcome in order to build support for the Zapatistas and to stop the government's repression. What they did was very simple: they typed or scanned the communiqués and letters into e-text form and sent them out over The Net to potentially receptive audiences around the world.<sup>(21)</sup> Those audiences included, first and foremost, UseNet newsgroups, PeaceNet conferences, and Internet lists whose members were already concerned with Mexico's social and political life,<sup>(22)</sup> secondly, humanitarian groupings concerned with human rights generally,<sup>(23)</sup> thirdly, networks of indigenous peoples and those sympathetic to them,<sup>(24)</sup> fourthly, those political regions of cyberspace which seemed likely to have members sympathetic to grassroots revolt in general<sup>(25)</sup> and fifthly, networks of feminists who would respond with solidarity to the rape of indigenous women by Mexican soldiers or to the EZLN "Women's Revolutionary Law" drafted by women, for women, within and against a traditionally patriarchal society.<sup>(26)</sup> Again and again, friendly and receptive readers spontaneously re-posted the messages in new places while sometimes translating the Spanish documents into English and other languages. In this way, the words of the Zapatistas and messages of their communities have been diffused from a few gateways throughout much of cyberspace.

As journalistic, humanitarian, religious and indigenous observers have visited the conflict zone in Chiapas and written up what they have found, their reports --often embarrassing to the Mexican government and its supporters because confirming Zapatista statements-- have been circulated through the same computer networks providing vital material for the growing network of solidarity organizations. When grassroots groups came together at the behest of the Zapatistas in early August 1994 at the new Aguascalientes carved out of the jungle to form the Convencion Nacional Democratica, and then again later at San Cristobal, Chiapas (October 11-13, 1994), Tuxtla Gutierrez, Chiapas (November 4-6, 1994) and Queretaro (February 1-5, 1995) speeches, reports and convention documents were circulated on The Net. Much of this material certainly deserves being labeled with the term used by Italian militants: "contro-informazione" (counter-information) opposed to the official reports of governments and commercial mass media.

As the number of people involved in these processes of uploading, re-posting, translating, etc. has grown, so has their self organization. What began as, and to a degree still is, an interlinked set of spontaneous actions has become more organized. On some lists, for example, a cooperative division of labor has emerged so that a dozen or more people take individual responsibility for tapping and reposting relevant material from particular sources to a single site in cyberspace.<sup>(27)</sup> In this way the skills and resources of many separate individuals and computer systems are connected in ways that benefit everyone tapping the pooled information. In another case, the best material from a few such poolings is reposted to those who need the information but don't have time to search out even a reduced number of sites.<sup>(28)</sup> As a result of such co-operation, the work of culling The Net has been drastically reduced for the vast majority of those needing and using information about the struggles in Mexico for purposes of mobilization and solidarity.

Such co-operation has also made it possible to crystallize some of this continuing flow of useful information into new, hybrid electronic products. One such is the electronic book *Zapatistas! Documents of the New Mexican Revolution* which was put together by an e-mail coordinated team translating material largely gathered from The Net. Although the anti-copyrighted, electronic book was subsequently published in hard copy, it first became available, and continues to be available in its entirety on The Net.<sup>(29)</sup> A second such collaboration is presently underway to produce an electronic English translation of the only existing collection of materials on the activities and thoughts of women

in Chiapas since the uprising began.(30) A third collective effort is the construction of a multimedia compact disk on the Zapatistas that draws much of its textual material and many images from The Net while combining them with music and video and other, newly created material. The resultant package of information is organized to permit a free ranging exploration of nearly a gigabyte of information on the Zapatista uprising, its background and its effects.(31)

Throughout this whole process, the circulation of Zapatista materials and reports from independent observers on The Net has been accompanied by increasingly systematic reposting of commercial media stories. While the commercial media has largely ignored The Net as a source of information and understanding about what has been happening in Chiapas, the reverse has not been the case.

On the contrary, given the obvious bias and incompleteness in such reporting, those circulating material on The Net informally adopted the practice of posting *everything* available. As a result, those who have tapped The Net for their organizing around the issues of the Zapatista struggle, and the movement for democracy in Mexico more generally, have been far better informed and far more able to shape critical assessments of any given event than the consumers of a limited sampling of mass media. Where casual readers may have access to one story in a local newspaper (often bought from the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*), those subscribed to the relevant conferences or lists will receive anywhere from two or three to more than a dozen, both from the media and from unpublished sources. Good stories by independent reporters, e.g., those written by John Ross for the small circulation *Anderson Valley Advertiser*, have been made as assessable as those of *New York Times* reporters Tim Golden and Anthony DePalma. Otherwise totally obscure reports from Human Rights groups both local (e.g., the Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Bartolome de las Casas ) and international (e.g., Human Rights Watch) have been made as available as Mexican and U.S. government propaganda.

Beyond this access to more diverse and critical sources of information, the various conferences and lists in cyberspace have generally archived all this material, making it permanently available for reference and study. Whereas the single story in a local or national newspaper or newsmagazine usually disappears into the trash or recycling bin in fairly short order, the archives of reg.mexico or Chiapas95 can be accessed through The Net easily and efficiently. Whereas throughout most of this century old newspaper stories or published reports had to be painstakingly dug out of microfilm files or book stacks by the few dedicated people who could make the time, this material has been kept available --for reading, downloading, or forwarding-- via a few keystrokes.(32) Such archives have generally been stored as easily transferable files at FTP and gopher sites.(33) As World Wide Web browsers such as Mosaic and Netscape have become more widely available, a variety of Web home pages have been created facilitating the interface with archived materials. These Web pages are not only more colorful --often containing photographs and other images-- but their hypertext programming makes movement among them wonderfully quick and easy through a click of the mouse button.(34)

All of this thorough and rapid circulation of news and observer reports of the situation in Chiapas led quickly to analytical and critical assessments of the origins and meaning of the Zapatista uprising. Here too cyberspace provided forums for informal discussion and debate. Alongside editorial pieces from the print or sound media appeared questions and opinions from a wide variety of concerned participants. Unlike "letters to the editor", every single one of these comments and feedback appeared in electronic "print", not days later but hours or even minutes after an original story or argument. The repressive response of the government, with its torture and killing, was subjected to widespread condemnation, while being very feebly defended, mostly with lies that were quickly exposed. Unlike government or editorial "retractions" which might be buried in some obscure corner of a newspaper, the exposure of lies within an ongoing "thread" of discussion in cyberspace emerges right up front where everyone can see it. Within this context of open debate, the Zapatistas were condemned by some and praised by many, dismissed by the apologists of the state and treated with great seriousness by those who studied



their communiques. Wild charges of "terrorism" (echoes of state propaganda) were dissected and demolished in plain public view.[\(35\)](#)

At first, the most pressing issues concerned the shooting war. Mass mobilization to stop the state's military repression and force a withdrawal of the Mexican army was organized on the basis of outrage generated by detailed reports on the bloody character of that repression. Information was downloaded from The Net, gathered from other sources and transformed into flyers, pamphlets, newsletters, articles and eventually books detailing the torture, rapes, summary executions, and other violence being perpetrated by the military, the various police forces and the private "white guards" --hired goons of the big ranchers. Such material fueled the organization of mass marches in Mexico City, San Francisco, New York and other cities around the world. They fired passions that led people to candle-light vigils, letter writing and fax campaigns, Mexican consulate takeovers and other forms of protest. Stories of these actions (often ignored by the media) were then uploaded to The Net and as the reports multiplied they encouraged local militants who could see their own efforts as part of a larger movement. Taken all together, this explosive movement of solidarity certainly forced the government to back off its military solution and to negotiate with the Zapatistas. This was true in January and February of 1994 and a year later in February and March of 1995 after the Zedillo government unilaterally ruptured negotiations with the EZLN and again resorted to military violence.

Over the months separating these dramatic events, the issues the Zapatistas were raising, e.g., NAFTA, poverty, land rights, justice, exploitation, environmental preservation, women's rights, democracy, and so on, tended to become more and more the subject of discussion. Issues such as the democratization of the Mexican political system, which was initially dismissed as a fantasy, became --through a multitude of political meetings, including such national events as the Convencion Nacional Democratica (CND)-- so central to public discourse as to dominate Mexican politics --to the utter dismay of the very undemocratic ruling party (the PRI). A pro-democracy movement developed the power to force a reformation, if not total revision, of the formal electoral system. Faced with the popular excitement stirred by the Zapatistas' vision of an open democratic system no longer monopolized by professional political parties and recognizing the autonomy of indigenous ethnic groups, the PRI (so internally divided as to assassinate its own leaders) began to cede ground.

As the dual phenomena of a rapidly growing pro-democracy movement and an increasingly unstable and desperate ruling party have become more and more apparent, peoples' sense that things could change significantly in Mexico has grown. As the multiplying flows of information, analysis and debate have provided the sense of collective concern and organizing necessary for committed forms of action, increased numbers of caravans and observers have gone to Chiapas, less to "learn what is happening" than to curb state abuses and bring aid and solidarity to those suffering the brutalities of the state's counterinsurgency strategy of so-called "low intensity warfare", i.e., a generalized terror campaign against all viewed as sympathetic to the EZLN and radical change. In turn, political innovation in Chiapas, from the CND through the formation of a Rebel Government of Transition to the EZLN's calls for a broad-based Liberation Movement and a general plebiscite have circulated to the rest of Mexico and beyond.

The result for business, the state and the ruling class generally is a continuing crisis of "governability" wherein virtually every historical mechanism of domination is being challenged and ruptured from below. The old combinations of repression and co-optation have not been working and the traditional elite coalitions are splitting apart. The PRI has had to accept electoral reforms, cede state governments to the opposition Partido Accion Nacional (PAN), tolerate public denunciations from its own human rights commission, suffer repeated exposures of massive state corruption, while watching the center of gravity of public political debate and action shift toward radical groups like the EZLN or moderate groups like Alianza Civica. Desperate in the face of so many crises, the fragmenting ruling alliance has

struck back with its usual violence --military repression in Chiapas, police state repression all over the place. At the same time, unfortunately, it has not collapsed and is hardly without resources --both financial and human-- even in extremis. As a result we have begun to see some new efforts to fight back on various fronts, including that of cyberspace.

Capitalist Counterattacks against the Appropriation of Cyberspace The capitalist response to the autonomous appropriation of cyberspace has had many sides. To begin with, there has been increased monitoring, reporting and analysis of our use of cyberspace in ways designed to delegitimize and inform counter-strategies. In February 1995, for example, there were several mass media stories on the use of The Net to spread the word of the Mexican government's attack on the Zapatistas and to mobilize opposition. For example, the *Washington Post*, *Newsweek* and TV GLOBO all ran original stories about the new "high-tech" guerrilla war.(36) Such reporting, often biased, has had contradictory effects. It has made both enemies and friends of the Zapatista solidarity movement more aware of what has been going on, stimulating both more opposition and more support.

In less public view, researchers in universities and think tanks have been paying much closer attention and have seen serious threats to the current political order. Even before the role of the Internet in the Zapatista struggle was recognized, analysts were beginning to call the attention of policy makers to grassroots uses of electronic communications. One widely quoted report was Sheldon Annis' 1991 "Giving Voice to the Poor" published in *Foreign Policy*, an influential American journal in that field. Annis provided details of how grassroots utilization of The Net was "empowering" and "emboldening" the poor by undermining elite control of information. Generously, if somewhat naively perhaps, he recommended that state institutions such as local governments and the World Bank shift expenditures toward increasing flows of information which can assist the "political empowerment" of the poor and "processes of democratization".(37)

In the summer of that same year, Cathryn Thorup, then Director of Studies and Programs at the Center for U.S. Mexican Studies at the University of California, San Diego, published an assessment of "cross-border coalitions" in the *Columbia Journal of World Business*.(38) Her primary focus was on the actions and impact of the anti-NAFTA network. She traced the development of opposition to and lobbying against the governments' "fast-track" approach to railroading NAFTA through Congress as well as elite efforts to divide and conquer that opposition. While calling the debate "healthy for both societies" (the U.S. and Mexico), she also highlighted the "tremendous vulnerability" of the state to such organizing and discussed how state policy makers might seek to convert such opposition into "valuable political allies" by consulting with them and cutting deals. Her vision of how the political system might cope with the emergence of these new rogue networks would seem to lie squarely in the tradition of pluralism, i.e., integrate and co-opt the new forces into a slightly modified fabric of governance.

In a more recent paper written for RAND, Thorup analyzed the development of US and Mexican NGO organizing around immigration in the San Diego - Tijuana border area and its interaction with the U.S. and Mexican governments.(39) Here again she explores both the threat of such grassroots "wild cards" to elite policy making as well as the possibilities of harnessing NGO activity. "Both governments [US & Mexican] will find it necessary to complement efforts to cultivate and nurture their official relations with a more vigorous pursuit of direct communications with a variety of non-governmental actors in both countries."(40) One example she cites is the Mexican government's success in harnessing NGOs' "moral authority" to use them as mediators between itself and immigrants who are "fearful of government entities".(41) She notes how such efforts have "enabled the Mexican government to demonstrate its concern for the plight of its nationals in the United States and, in passing, to make political gains with first, second and third generation latinos residing in the United States." Strengthening its support among Mexicano communities across the border is certainly important to a

Mexican state-in-crisis all too aware that such communities have been prime sites of mobilization in support of the Zapatistas.

One of the more provocative of these analyses to come to light, so far, has been that by national security analysts John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt working at RAND Corp. (42) In a 1993 report entitled "CyberWar is Coming!", they formulate two related concepts: cyberwar and netwar --in both of which the role of information is central and critical. The former refers to military war making while the latter refers to "societal-level ideational conflicts waged in part through internetworked modes of communication", "most often associated with low intensity conflict". Their examples of cyberwar range from the Mongols to the Gulf War. One of their primary examples of netwar is how "advocacy movements" are "increasingly organizing into cross-border networks and coalitions, identifying more with the development of civil society (even global civil society) than with nation-states and using advanced information and communications technologies to strengthen their activities". While Arquilla and Ronfeldt cite movements concerned with environmental, human-rights and religious issues, the pro-Zapatista movement is clearly another example of the kind of activity they are concerned with. In their discussion the "other side" of such "netwar" is the state and its traditional hierarchical institutions of governance. With their writing directed primarily at the U.S. government --with which they clearly identify-- they warn that new forms of warfare must be developed appropriate to this new arena of power. (43)

Arquilla and Ronfeldt defend their use of terms like "cyber"war and "cyber"space by pointing out that the Greek root "kybernan" means to steer or govern. They like this prefix because it "bridges the fields of information and governance better than any other available prefix or term". Their discourse on threats to institutional power, especially that of states, therefore, fits within an older discourse on the contemporary problems of "governability". (44)

The theme of "governability" was widely discussed in the wake of the Trilateral Commission Report on *The Crisis of Democracy: Report on the Governability of Democracies* that was published in 1975. (45) That controversial report located the roots of the economic and political crises of the 1970s in the ways grassroots movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s had generated too much "democracy" and its authors called for a restoration of the balance in favor of elite "governance". The theme resurfaced in Mexico in the wake of the Zapatista uprising and prior to the August 1974 presidential elections as a variety of political analysts and pundits worried about the possible collapse of the PRI party-state.

While the specter of "ungovernability" haunts capitalist policy makers, many of us are fighting for just that: to make it impossible for those who would "govern" to do so, and open space for a recasting of democracy in which there are not governors and governed but rather self-determination. When Joel Simon of Pacific News Service reported on Arquilla and Ronfeldt's views, their paper was circulated and provoked considerable discussion. How influential the report has been among national security strategists is hard to say, but it did provide the occasion for self-reflection and evaluation among those he was warning against. (46)

Such thinking about the emergence of cyberspace challenges to governability have also drawn on the currently popular concept of "civil society" to contemplate how such threats might be tamed and integrated. In these formulations, "civil society" is conceived as that part of society dominated by neither state nor market and often best represented by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), e.g., human rights, environmental, consumer, women's groups. In a recent RAND paper (which I do not yet have permission from the authors to quote or cite and therefore will not name) available through the RAND web site, Cathryn Thorup and David Ronfeldt have collaborated to provide a sketch of the problems of integrating the increasingly powerful networks of "civil society" into a workable balance with the state (hierarchy) and business (market). For those whose understanding of democracy sees the state and business as fundamental obstacles to its realization, such a conceptualization can only lead to

formulae for co-optation, neutralization and defeat.(47)

In another sector of RAND, even more closely integrated with the U.S. military, analysts have incorporated Arquilla and Ronfeldt's "netwar" preoccupations into war game modeling. A war game called "The Day After . . . in Cyberspace" includes the activities of a fictional NGO called the Committee for Planetary Peace --"an Internet-intensive, anti-U.S.-military group with suspected Iranian fundamentalists ties." In the game scenario this NGO is portrayed as "mobilizing all its chapters to thwart the U.S.'s 'mad dash' to war." (48) The parallels with pro-Zapatista, anti-war efforts to block the Mexican government's military actions in Chiapas are striking.

On the side of the computer industry, rogue activity in cyberspace has provoked renewed efforts to enclose as much of that space as possible via commercialization and the enforcement through the State of "intellectual property rights", e.g., attacks on software piracy or copyright violations. With the growth of the commercial and governmental use of The Net a burgeoning "operational security" industry has also emerged to create and defend new kinds of electronic "barbed wire" around enclosed cyberspaces.(49) The infrastructure of The Net has been taken over by private capital (e.g., Sprintlink, MCI) and is no longer managed by public institutions such as ARPA or the National Science Foundation.(50) Today all access to The Net is via some commercial gateway. Institutions such as universities pay large fees, individuals pay smaller ones. Computer magazines are filled with advertisements of companies such as America On-line, Prodigy, Delphi and now Microsoft offering competing gateways to The Net and charging varying rates depending on the enclosed services to which access is desired.

With respect specifically to Chiapas, at least two of us who are active in circulating counter-information have separately received lucrative proposals to sell-out by funneling our information to corporate investors. The proposals came in the wake of the peso crisis in December 1994 when many investors lost money in a devaluation they had not foreseen and the government was blaming its moves on the Zapatistas. The proposals, made by an editor of a major business magazine, were for us to provide "relevant information" from "alternative sources" that could be sold to capitalists anxious to be on top of things so as to avoid such unexpected crises and loses. We would "get rich", he said, and of course we could do what we wanted with our money, e.g., support the Zapatistas. This entrepreneurial editor foresaw eventually generalizing this service from information about Mexico to other countries in Latin America and beyond.(51)

On the side of the state, besides backing up the "legal rights" of corporate private property, governments struck first against hackers who dared to penetrate the state's own enclosures, e.g., military computer systems. The best known cases in the U.S. have been well publicized FBI arrests of hackers and seizures of equipment. The strategy has been terror: prosecute a few to intimidate others. (52)

The state has since extended its repression to those using The Net to challenge its political hegemony, sometimes charging others with its own crimes, e.g., terrorism. One good example was the March 1995 Carabinieri Anti-Crime Special Operations Group raid on the Italian "BITS Against Empire" BBS whose members were accused of "subversive association with intent to subvert the democratic order". (53) The "Omnibus Counterterrorism Act of 1995" submitted to Congress after the Oklahoma bombing threatens to facilitate such repressive tactics in the U.S. The Spring 1995 passage in the House of Representatives of "The Communication Decency Act" to mandate FCC censoring of the production and circulation of pornography threatens to provide the state with an opening wedge for legal repression. Alternative, anti-FCC legislation (the Cox/Wyden Internet Freedom and Family Empowerment Act) passed the Senate in August. The two bills are in conference in the Fall of 1995. How and whether such censorship can be enforced is still very much an open question. The battle against the Senate legislation passage has involved widespread mobilization throughout The Net by

those who saw their freedom of speech menaced, even indirectly.(54)

Unhampered by legal restrictions in its overseas operations, the CIA is reported to have supported the U.S. invasion of Haiti through psy-ops (Psychological Operations) warfare via the Internet. As part of a broader set of actions, it sought to undermine resistance to U.S. policy by sending "ominous e-mail messages to some members of Haiti's oligarchy who had personal computers." (55)

In the case of the Zapatistas and Mexico, it is clear that the Mexican state is well aware of the way The Net is being used to undermine its credibility and challenge its policies. This became publicly evident when Jose Angel Guru, Mexican Secretary of State, told an April 1995 gathering of businessmen at the World Trade Center that the conflict in Chiapas was a "war of ink, of the written word and a war of the Internet".(56) How the Mexican government has chosen to fight this "war of the Internet" has become a hotly debated subject on The Net itself.

There have been assertions of Mexican government tampering with computer communications and more concrete evidence of government efforts to create a counter-presence on the Internet. One charge has concerned the Profmexis network going down at critical moments such as the Elections in August 1994 when upheaval was feared. Another was the disruption of opposition communications in the Mexican congress.(57) In neither case, however, has any hard evidence been forthcoming. The frequent interjections of a few rabid anti-EZLN commentators on some of the Internet lists have raised suspicions that they are PRI operatives, but so far, the simpler conjecture --that they are just fellow travelers-- seems more likely.

A more documented case has involved the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service interviewing members of the Mexico Solidarity Network (MSN) supposedly as part of an investigation of interference of Mexican Diplomats in Canadian affairs. MSN organizations, however, think that the interviews were the product of collaboration between Canadian and Mexican intelligence agencies and their real purpose was to intimidate Canadian activists and visiting Mexicans reporting on events in their country. The result of such doubts about the covert intentions of the Mexican and Canadian governments have been protests and a call for a commission of inquiry.(58)

On the other hand, there can be no doubt that the Mexican state has been expanding its overt presence in cyberspace both in Mexico and in the rest of the world. The number of government agencies accessible on-line has been growing. The Consulate General of Mexico in New York and the Mexican Embassy in London have created colorful Web pages offering information about government services and information on Mexico undoubtedly, at least in part, to offset and counter the massive flow of negative information about the Mexican government's actions and policies.

These pages are dominated, naturally, by the usual government propaganda (statements by Zedillo and press releases by various agencies) and public relations material designed to draw tourists and lure investors (pretty pictures, travel information, recipes for Mexican dishes, pointers to business web sites). The information offered about the situation in Chiapas is minimal. As of November 1st, the UK page has four issues of a newsletter, one of which contains an 11 line "report" on the 3rd round of negotiations (June 1995), one which has an 8 line "report" on the 4th round (July 1995) --half of which is devoted to listing all the supposed efforts of the state to meet the needs of the poor in Chiapas and a third, with 21 lines on the negotiations in San Andres Larrainzar (October 1995) --with a reference to the EZLN Plebiscite that gives the impression that it originated with the Alianza Civica. In September the New York page had only two references to Chiapas, one being the "Dialog Law" and the other a press statement from the Secretariat de Gobernacion. When I returned to check it in early November, the "Dialog Law" had been removed.

There are, of course, no direct pointers to the EZLN homepage, to Chiapas95 and its archives, or to other oppositional activities in cyberspace. Although, by creating a link to the University of

Guadalajara web site, the London Embassy has made it possible for the careful searcher to find a pointer there to the EZLN page. The UK page includes pointers to *La Jornada* and *Proceso* magazine, both critical of the government, but on a page with a mass of such press linkages and without pointing out their distinctive character.

Thus, at present, the Mexican government's public propaganda strategy on the Internet is no different from its more general strategy vis a vis the EZLN: by minimizing public attention it seeks to create the illusion of stability and at the same time maximize the possibilities of either neutralization or suppression. This strategy is a familiar one and so far the traditional rigid structures of the PRI-party-state are merely reproducing their old habits in this new sphere. As a result, visiting such state sponsored sites is largely a waste of time if not a total dead-end. If, as a result, official spaces in The Net are bypassed and ignored, their political usefulness will be reduced. Clearly the government has not yet been able to achieve anything like an active counterinsurgency presence in The Net.<sup>(59)</sup> The same can be said, as far as I can see, about all other governments, including that of the United States.

The State of the Struggle in Cyberspace and Beyond Despite scattered attacks by governments in various countries, the initiative in this area still lies almost entirely on the side of those using The Net for the circulation of struggle. So far, those attacks have been rather crude --police raids and censorship-- and caused little disruption to the myriad flows of information and mobilization that continue to criss-cross the globe. The most effective capitalist initiatives in cyberspace have been the commercialization of the Internet and the use of electronic communications for organizing transnational corporate operations. These efforts, however, have not directly impeded the kinds of struggles I have been describing. Indeed, if anything they have provoked greater international organizing to offset the power of multinational capital. Similarly, efforts to introduce legislation in the U.S. to regulate and control information flows have provoked widespread counter-organization and mobilization.

Similar observations hold vis a vis the Zapatistas and the pro-democracy movement in Mexico. While multinational corporations have used electronic networks in tandem with NAFTA to reorganize themselves against North American workers and consumers, the anti-NAFTA movement and then the Zapatista solidarity networks have elaborated extensive and effective networks of their own. Available evidence suggests that efforts by the state to counter these networks inside The Net have been limited and ineffective.<sup>(60)</sup> The initiative continues in the hands of the solidarity networks providing support to the Zapatistas.

Nevertheless, it would be dangerous to become complacent in this situation. Just because the state has not found effective ways of countering these struggles does not mean that it will not be able to come up with better tactics in the future. We have seen that our struggles are being observed and studied by the analysts and strategists of the state and of capital more generally. We must continue to monitor their monitoring to see where it leads them. We have seen that Arquilla and Ronfeldt have suggested that the U.S. government "may want to design new kinds of military units and capabilities for engaging in network warfare". ARE such new kinds of units and capabilities being created? Will the U.S. military go beyond wargame scenarios to develop the means to "penetrate, monitor, disrupt, deceive and dominate any computer or any communications system for any length of time, ideally without being detected", as one CIA veteran has suggested?<sup>(61)</sup> Obviously, it is in our interest to attempt to keep track of efforts to create such capacities.

At the same time, such analysts see that "netwar" is quite different from traditional forms of either guerrilla warfare or intelligence and counterintelligence warfare. Arquilla and Ronfeldt clearly understand that the broadbased, grassroots struggles being carried on in cyberspace (such as the pro-Zapatista efforts) primarily involve the open circulation and open discussion of political ideas, news about events and detailed reports about on-going situations. Clearly any kind of politically effective

state response would have to go beyond covert disruption to sophisticated overt intervention. While this has yet to happen --to all appearances-- it would hardly be without precedence.

Indeed the epoch of the Cold War provided ample experience of how a sophisticated propaganda apparatus could be formed and wielded against ideological enemies, both real and imagined. The covert operations of military or intelligence agents were complemented by very overt and much larger scale anti-communist, counter-revolutionary intellectual warfare. Fighting the wave of revolutionary energy that boiled up in anti-colonial movements and continued in anti-NEOcolonial, pro-national liberation struggles required the new Post-W.W.II American empire to create a whole new body of foreign policy elites and a research apparatus to support them with information and ideas.(62) It also required the creation of a sophisticated propaganda machine, both public (e.g., USIA) and private (e.g., think tanks and the mass media).(63) Similarly, in Mexico, the PRI has, over the last decades, built its own apparatuses of ideological warfare and information control.

While the collapse of the Cold War and the disintegration of the ruling coalitions in Mexico have left both of these sets of institutions in some disarray, they have continued their work, albeit perhaps with less unity and consistency than before. This was apparent in the battle over NAFTA where both US and Mexican capital were able to field substantial teams of apologists to attempt to control the debate. It has also been true with respect to the Zapatistas --but with less success.

The differences in the two situations are worth noting. In the case of the battle over NAFTA, capital had the initiative and two hundred years of free-trade arguments at its disposal. The anti-NAFTA networks were forced to create, virtually from whole cloth, a set of arguments and mass of information to counter that initiative. That they lost is not surprising; that the next round of battle will be on a more even terrain is certain. In the case of the Zapatistas, the campesinos of Chiapas and then their supporters had the initiative, first on the ground, then in the world of ideas. Unable to fit the Zapatistas, their organization and ideas into familiar boxes, the Mexican state has been flailing around defensively, and losing. Its campaign of low-intensity warfare (terrorism) may squeeze many into submission in Chiapas, but it continues to lose the broader battle over the future of Mexico. Its failure to cripple the ability of the Zapatistas to present their arguments against the status quo has forced it to cede more and more ground, if not to the Zapatistas directly then to the democratic reform movement that has taken up their banner.

At this point the reform movement itself is probably the key terrain of struggle between the Zapatistas and capital. Those forces within the movement pushing for the Zapatistas to convert themselves from a revolutionary force into one more traditional political party can be seen as the embodiment of the Mexican state's traditional strategy of co-optation (repression via assimilation).(64) As Ronfeldt and Thorup's joint work suggests, the conversion of the Zapatistas into a political party might not even be required for their neutralization. It might be enough to merely convert them into one more "independent" organization among others in a domesticated and neutralized civil society.

To some degree, the forces pushing for such non-revolutionary solutions are already present on the terrain of cyberspace. For the most part they have not yet become active participants but their voices are regularly heard through articles taken from the political battles in the written Mexican press. With the PRI and its official government increasingly discredited, it would seem that the main threat to the development of the Zapatista struggle and to the elaboration of its ideas of real change will come from the ranks of such reformers.

What all of this means is that as the struggles on The Net have moved from mobilization against military repression to the circulation of Zapatista ideas and the discussion of their political visions and programs, the conflicts in this electronic fabric of connections will increasingly take on all the complexity of the more general political, economic and social crises in Mexico.

The future elaboration of flexible, interlinked, uncontrollable networks must be worked out at these increasing levels of complexity. While the experience of the circulation of the Zapatista uprising can teach us much about the ways in which rhizomatically organized, autonomous but linked groups can replace "the organization" with its rigidities and hierarchies, we must still grapple with the problem of creating and recreating effective connections along a growing number of dimensions and directions of movement. (65)

The rhizomatic pattern of collaboration has emerged as a partial solution to the failure of old organizational forms; it has --by definition-- no single formula to guide the kinds of elaboration required. The power of The Net in the Zapatista struggle has lain in connection and circulation, in the way widely dispersed nodes of antagonism set themselves in motion in response to the uprising in Chiapas.

The limits to that power lie both in the limits of the reach of The Net (as we have seen it does not connect everyone) and in the kinds of connections established. There is already an enormous amount of information in The Net about all sorts of struggles which have not yet been connected, not to the Zapatistas, not to each other. The availability of information and a vehicle of connection does not guarantee either that a connection will be made or that it will be effective in generating complementary action. Even political activists fully capable of tapping all the sources of information about social struggles available on The Net are regularly overwhelmed by the sheer amount of information. As The Net grows, and as the number of groups involved in struggle that are capable and willing to use it grows too, this problem will grow apace. We have seen how The Net helps to overcome isolation and division. It can dramatically accelerate the circulation of struggle. Yet, because the number of divisions are so great and the points of isolation are so numerous, it is clear that no individual, nor any one group, can competently grasp the whole in its particulars.

Those who have sought to govern have long recognized this problem. Arquilla and Ronfeldt think of it in terms of the relationship between hierarchies and networks, "Our preliminary view is that the benefits of decentralization may be enhanced if, to balance the possible loss of centralization, the high command gains topsight . . . the view of the overall conflict." Those of us who are seeking to develop new forms of democratic social relationships should only try to "solve" this problem in a limited sense. We must abandon the perspective of command and control in favor of consultation and coordination. The problem then, is not to substitute a better "high command", but to create a world with no command at all. Such a world would have many different "views" of the whole and be involved in an endless dialogue about its nature, but without the object of control. If the cooperative networks of indigenous peoples have demonstrated the possibility of such a world, continuing invention of The Net has shown how the sinew, or communicative nerve-fiber, of such a world might function. Thus the problems in Chiapas and in the Internet are similar: how to continue the elaboration of new kinds of cooperation and self-determination while preventing the imposition of centralized monopolistic control.

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\* This paper elaborates a theme first laid out in a February 1994 article written for the Italian journal *Riff-Raff*. This elaboration is based on continuing research and participation in the electronic networks of cyberspace being used to circulate the struggles of the Zapatistas and the pro-democracy movement in Mexico to others around the world. The article appeared as: "L'insurrezione nel Chiapas e le



prospettive della lotta di classe nel nuovo ordine mondiale", *Riff-Raff: Attraverso la produzione sociale* (Padova), marzo 1994, pp. 133-145. It was subsequently published in Japanese in *Impaction* (Tokyo) No. 85, 1994, pp. 144-160 and in English in *Common Sense* (Edinburgh) No. 15, April 1994, pp. 5-17, *Canadian Dimension* (Winnipeg), Vol. 28, No. 3, May-June 1994, pp. 36-39 and *Studies in Political Economy* (Toronto), No. 44, Summer 1994, pp. 141-157 and in Spanish in *Africa America Latina. Cuadernos*. (Madrid) Numero 18, 2a/1995, pp.71-84. The English language version is [available on-line](#).

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1 Computer communications constitute only one aspect of a sophisticated use of various forms of electronic technology. The Zapatista solidarity movement has also proved adept at the speedy production and circulation of videos, the genesis and compilation of pro-Zapatista interviews and music on audio tapes and CD Rom and the use of radio (both legal and pirate) and community access TV to outflank scanty and biased coverage by the mainstream media.

2 The only collection of materials that I have seen that lets us hear the voices of these women whose work undergirds that of everyone else is Rosa Rojas (ed.), *Chiapas, y Las Mujeres Que?* Mexico: Ediciones La Correa Feminista, 1994. On the centrality and importance of these women's struggles see: Mariarosa Dalla Costa, "Development and Reproduction," *Common Sense* (Edinburgh) #17, June 1995, pp. 11-33.

3 See George Collier, *Basta! Land and the Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas*, Oakland: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1994. Collier has an excellent discussion of how peasant self-organization has evolved over the last years of rapid boom and bust.

4 Two extremely useful books which provide detail and insight into this broader struggle are: Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, *Mexico Profundo: Una Civilizacion Negada*, Mexico, D.F.: Editorial Grijalbo, 1987, 1989, 1994 and Gustavo Esteva, *Cronica del Fin de una Era: El Secreto del EZLN*, Mexico, D.F.: Editorial Posada, 1994.

5 Excellent examples of such apology can be found in the responses of Kevin Kelly and David Kline (Executive Director and journalist, respectively, of *Wired* magazine) to criticisms of their favorable coverage of high-tech corporate executives. See the excerpts from a discussion of these issues that took place on *The Well* computer system in May 1995 as well as the article which sparked the debate: Keith White, "The Killer App: WIRED magazine, voice of the corporate revolution", *The Baffler*, No. 6, 1995. Both are excerpted in *The UTNE Reader*, No. 71, September-October 1995, pp. 77-81.

6 One professor of business administration who has been trying to understand (and to help business grapple with) this new composition of labor power is Shoshana Zuboff at the Harvard Business School. While she wants business to see how "efficient operations in the informed workplace require a more equitable distribution of knowledge and authority", she fails to confront the danger of working class autonomy on the job. If some important sub-set of workers directly control their tools and products, how can corporate management make sure --in-house-- that their activities constitute profit-producing work? See, for example, Shoshana Zuboff, "The Emperor's New Workplace", *Scientific American*, September 1995, pp. 202-204. An important related problem for management is the interrelationship between this sub-set of workers and more traditionally organized and managed sectors, e.g., line workers or service workers. This problem surfaced recently when custodial workers in struggle in Silicon Valley used The Net to make contact with their white collar counterparts, recomposing what had been a divisive division of labor. The parallel of Zapatista campesinos linking up with computer equipped workers elsewhere to overcome skill, geographical, cultural and linguistic divisions should be obvious. See: the account of the organizing effort at Oracle in Lenny Siegel, "New Chips in Old Skins: Work, Labor and Silicon Valley," in *CPU: Working in the Computer Industry*, Issue #006, 11/13/93 (available at anonymous ftp cpsr.org in /cpsr/work) and also Carole Rafferty, "It's a Dirty Business..." in *West*, September 12, 1993, pp. 8-11.

7 This is now a well-known sphere of struggle that continues to expand. See the discussion of Richard Stallman and his Free Software Foundation's GNU project in Steven Levy's *Hackers: Heroes of the Computer Revolution*, New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1984 as well as Stallman's *GNU Manifesto* which is [available on-line](#) ([http://www.cs.utah.edu/csinfo/texinfo/emacs19/emacs\\_39.html](http://www.cs.utah.edu/csinfo/texinfo/emacs19/emacs_39.html)). Protests against Apple led to the creation of the League for Programming Freedom (<http://lpf.ai.mit.edu/>) which opposes software patents and interface copyrights.

8 While this is true of all Net oriented business, big corporate capital has also been striving as it always does to monopolize as much of this enclosed cyberspace as possible. A detailed account of corporate efforts to buy

legislation that will give them such monopolistic power can be found in Joe Abernathy, "Highway Robbery: Selling the Net," *PC World*, Vol. 12, No. 5, May 1994, pp. 56-66.

**9** Despite the similarities in these two forms of "enclosure", there are obviously important differences. The most important is that in the case of the geographic enclosures there have been indigenous peoples wiped out or subordinated by invading pioneers, while in cyberspace the pioneers are generally creating the space as they go along. Nevertheless, frequent complaints about the displacement of early Net culture --non commercial, open, cooperative, friendly-- by commercial, segmented, hostile and competitive practices that have come with its growth, sound a lot like accounts of imperialist destruction of indigenous cultures. Fortunately, in The Net as in those other forms of conquest, the destruction is often incomplete and the insubordination of autonomous practices and values repeatedly break out of the mechanisms of control. For a more extended discussion of the usefulness and difficulties of the "frontier" metaphor see: H. Cleaver, "The "Space" of Cyberspace: Body Politics, Frontiers and Enclosures", posted to Chiapas95 on November 28, 1995. It can be found in the [Chiapas95 archives](http://www.eco.utexas.edu:80/Homepages/Faculty/Cleaver/chiapas95.html): <http://www.eco.utexas.edu:80/Homepages/Faculty/Cleaver/chiapas95.html>

**10** Paul Baran [NOT the Marxist economist] published his introduction to a series of RAND reports as an article: "On Distributed Communication Networks", *IEEE Transactions on Communications Systems*, Vol. CS-12, No. 1, March 1964, pp. 1-9. That article includes the results of simulations run on various network configurations that show how "distributed networks" have the highest survivability in the case of enemy attack.

**11** Jerry Pournelle, "Computing at Chaos Manor", *Byte*, November 1985, p. 374. The story of the creation of ARPANET, especially the technical side, has been told in some detail by Peter H. Salus in his *Casting the Net*, New York: Addison -Wesley Publishing Company, 1995 which also provides very useful bibliographical references. The predilection of ARPANET participants toward science fiction was noted by Bruce Sterling in "Internet", *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, Vol. 84, No. 2, February 1993, pp. 99-107. The "political history" of ARPANET, however, has yet to be written.

**12** Personal computers were invented autonomously from the worlds of business and the state, yet they have been commercialized and used by them for purposes of control and profit. Virtual reality software was developed for military training and is used today by commercial airlines for job training. Yet it is being appropriated and developed for play by countless slackers totally uninterested in profitable increases in productivity.

**13** "Interview with Subcomandante Marcos", *Brecha* (Uruguay) October 28, 1995. The original Spanish can be found on the *Brecha* Homepage, <http://chasque.apc.org/brecha> and an English translation was posted to Chiapas-L and Chiapas95 in four parts on October 30 & 31, 1995 and can be found in their archives. Marcos, in discussing changes in leadership said, "That is what they call "to rule while obeying" (*mandar obedciendo*). And it is very difficult to go against that because that is how they solve their problems. And the one who doesn't work out, they dismiss him, and there is no big scandal. When the 'ejido's head authority makes a mistake, they remove him and he goes on to become a member of the assembly." Similar processes were described to me in the internal self-organization of Tepito, a barrio in Mexico City. "In Tepito people speak of "leaders" rather than of heads of organizations. "Leaders", they say, are those who can get the things done that people want done. Leaders change, but the mechanisms of change are informal, the focus of discussion just shifts from some individuals to others." H. Cleaver, "The Uses of an Earthquake", *Midnight Notes*, #9, May 1988, pp. 10-14. Available on line at [gopher://mundo.eco.utexas.edu:70/00/fac/hmcleave/Cleaver%20Papers/The%20Uses%20of%20an%20Earthquake%20Oct85](http://gopher://mundo.eco.utexas.edu:70/00/fac/hmcleave/Cleaver%20Papers/The%20Uses%20of%20an%20Earthquake%20Oct85)

**14** Even among those with access, the practical degree of access varies considerably. There are those with virtually free access through institutions at which they work or study. But there are also many who must pay a commercial server according to connect time which may seriously limit their ability to seek out information or participate in discussion. The problem of those with free access (or who can afford large amounts of paid connect time) dominating even political lists and conferences has been raised by Susan O'Donnell in her M.A. Thesis *Solidarity on the Internet: A Study of Electronic Mailing Lists*, Center for Journalism Studies, University of Wales, Cardiff, August 1995.

**15** An overview of the state of access by Native Americans in the United States has recently been published: U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, *Telecommunications Technology and Native Americans: Opportunities and Challenges*, OTA-ITC-621, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, August 1995. Although Native Americans are moving with increasing speed to improve their access in the US, the indigenous in the South are proceeding with much less alacrity. This situation, and the unlikelihood of its changing any time soon, has made the continued use and development of other means of communication important in such rural areas. One such means in Mexico has been broadcasts from community radio stations responsive to the needs of its audience. In Chiapas Radio Rebelde was developed for this purpose. In the State of Veracruz the interactive

relationship that developed between Radio Huaya and its campesino listeners led the Mexican state to close it down. Its operators, in turn, had recourse to The Net to mobilize pressure on the government to allow it to reopen. A collection of their postings to The Net telling about the shutdown and appealing for help can be found in the archives of Chiapas95.

**16** The National Public Telecomputing Network (NPTN) is a U.S. non-profit coordinating this approach to generalizing access to The Net and uses the 20th Century spread of public libraries as a model. It makes grants to both rural and urban projects. The NPTN's concept of "free-nets" is described at <http://www.nptn.org:80/about.fn/whatis.fn> It lists 147 free-net sites in the US, 25 in Canada, 8 in Europe, 2 in Australia-New Zealand and only 1 in the Third World (Philippines). The public library as a model for access to information on the Net is dramatically different from the kinds of models preferred by the corporate sector, e.g., the video store where "information" is only rented out for short periods. See for example, Hal Varian, "The Information Economy", *Scientific American*, September 1995, p. 202.

**17** Such mediating groups may originate from the outside or they may be generated by local activists from within these communities. The point is that in such communities most individuals and families do not have the kind of direct home or office based access that is so frequently available to better paid workers.

**18** Directly relevant in the sense of creating a network among those likely to be responsive to an uprising of indigenous people in Mexico. There were several other experiences with the use of The Net in struggle that were relevant in other ways, especially those of Chinese students at the time of Tiennamen, of Russians who got the story of the attempted coup out despite the suppression of media reporting, of NGO networking at the time of the global environmental meeting in Rio, and so on. See Howard Frederick, "Computer Networks and the "Emergence of Global Civil Society," in Linda M. Harasim (ed.) *Global Networks: Computers and International Communication*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993 and John E. Young, *Global Network: Computers in a Sustainable Society*, World Watch Paper 115, September 1993 and his references.

**19** Among the most interesting and sympathetic discussions of the role of computer networks in the anti-NAFTA struggles are those of Howard Frederick who was Director of PeaceNet within the Association for Progressive Communications (APC). In a 1992 article, Frederick sketched the rise of the APC and then focused on the anti-NAFTA network as a prime example of its functioning. Frederick's perspective from within the grassroots movement views this experience among others as a step in the development of the power of civil society to challenge the domination of communications by commercial media and the state. Howard H. Frederick, "Computer Communications in Cross-Border Coalition-Building: North American NGO Networking Against NAFTA," *Gazette: The International Journal for Mass Communication Studies*, Vol. 50, Nos. 2-3, 1992, pp. 217-241.

**20** On the concept of "class composition" and the ways self-activity may lead beyond class relationships see: H. Cleaver, "The Inversion of Class Perspective in Marxian Theory: from Valorization to Self-Valorization," in W. Bonefeld, R. Gunn and K. Psychopedis (eds.) *Essays on Open Marxism*, Vol. II, London: Pluto Press, 1992, pp. 106-144.

**21** Sometimes these e-texts were created directly from documents obtained from the Zapatistas. More often they were obtained from *La Jornada*. In the midst of the crisis in Mexico, the posting of Zapatista material from *La Jornada* was increasingly accompanied by the reposting of other, related stories. This spontaneous introduction of what became daily reproductions of *La Jornada* material induced the management of that newspaper to eventually create their own Web page and upload their own material (<http://serpiente.dgsca.unam.mx/jornada/index.html>). That Web site remains a vital, daily source of information about the war in Chiapas and the crisis in Mexico more generally. Material from it is reposted to Chiapas-l, Mexico94, and Chiapas95 every day.

**22** Examples include soc.culture.mexican on UseNet, reg.mexico on PeaceNet, chiapas-l and Mexico94 on the Internet.

**23** There are dozens of such groups on PeaceNet alone.

**24** Examples include: the various lists of Native Net and the Applied Anthropology Computer Network. The clearest statement I have seen on indigenous use of The Net in struggle is Scott & Kekula Crawford, "Self Determination in the Information Age" which is available through the Nation of Hawai'i homepage <http://www.aloha.net/nation/hawaii-nation.html> under "What's New". See also: Susan O'Donnell and Guillermo Delgado, "Using the Internet to Strengthen the Indigenous Nations of the Americas," *The Journal of Media Development*, 3/1995. This text is available in the Chiapas95 archives ([gopher://mundo.eco.utexas.edu:70/11/mailling/chiapas95.archive](http://gopher://mundo.eco.utexas.edu:70/11/mailling/chiapas95.archive)) in the 1995.12.15-21 {December} folder).

**25** Examples include: activ-l, the progressive economists network on the Internet and a very large number of

conferences on PeaceNet.

26 For example, on PeaceNet: amlat.mujeres, hr.women and dh.mujer.

27 This is the situation with the group whose members constitute MexNews and who gather material for posting on Chiapas-l, Mexico94 and now Mexico2000 on the Internet. Information on MexNews can be obtained from its coordinator Jose A. Briones at brioneja@ttown.apci.com

28 Such is Chiapas95 which is managed by Accion Zapatista de Austin (Texas). Information on Chiapas95 and access to its archives can found at gopher eco.utexas.edu mailinglists/Chiapas95 or <http://www.eco.utexas.edu:80/Homepages/Faculty/Cleaver/chiapas95.html>

29 The electronic version can be found at <gopher://lanic.utexas.edu:70/11/la/Mexico/Zapatistas/> The subsequent hard copy version was published with the same title by Autonomedia in Brooklyn, New York later in 1994. (ISBN: 1-57027-014-7)

30 Rosa Rojas (ed.), *Chiapas, Y Las Mujeres Que?* Mexico: Ediciones La Correa Feminista, 1994.

31 For information on this project, whose CD should become commercially available in 1996, contact: Tamara Ford at tamara@home.actlab.utexas.edu

32 The closest parallel to this facility is the only recently available commercial service of Nexis/Lexis which allows a few individuals sitting at a few terminals in a few libraries to search a database of dozens of commercial and governmental publications. Because the publications covered are limited, because it is expensive, and because its high cost has led to technical set-ups which sharply limit the rate of downloading (e.g., a screen of text at a time), Nexis/Lexis is no substitute for the resources available in the relevant archives on The Net.

33 In cyberspace there has been something of a hierarchy in storage and retrieval. The most generally available software for downloading stored files is "file transfer program" (FTP) in which you can read the material only after downloading it. The next most readily available software is "gopher" which does allow on-line perusal *before* downloading. And the most recent, the most sophisticated but still least available approach is the World Wide Web which has all the advantages of gopher plus color, graphics and sound.

34 A good example of such a Web page is the EZLN home page which contains a wide variety of material from and about the EZLN, from photographs of Marcos through pointers to other archives to the materials needed to participate in the EZLN's grassroots plebiscite on its future orientation carried out in the early Fall of 1995. <http://www.peak.org/~justin/ezln/ezln.html>

35 "Public" view, of course, means the public in cyberspace. The demolition of reactionary arguments in cyberspace has always gone unobserved by the rest of the "public" because the mass media mostly ignores such debates. Victory in a cyberspatial argument always has to be carried into other political arenas in order to reach a wider audience. A rare exception to this phenomenon was the case of the now infamous Chase Manhattan Bank report written in the wake of the Peso crisis of December 1994. The report called for the "elimination" of the Zapatistas as a means to convince international speculators that the Mexican government was "in control". The story of this leaked document originally appeared in a limited circulation newsletter that was ignored. When the story was uploaded to The Net, however, it circulated so widely and so quickly that it was picked up by political commentators opposed to Clinton's proposed bailout of Mexico and then by the press more generally. The resultant negative publicity and widespread protests forced Chase to disassociate itself from the report and fire its author. A collection of the postings that initiated, documented and circulated this conflict can be found through the Chiapas95 homepage: <http://www.eco.utexas.edu:80/Homepages/Faculty/Cleaver/chiapas95.html>.

36 Tod Robberson, "Mexican Rebels Using a High-Tech Weapon: Internet Helps Rally Support," *The Washington Post*, February 20, 1995, pg. A1. Russell Watson et al, "When Words are the Best Weapon. Revolution: Information can undermine dictatorships, and the faster it flows, the more trouble they're in. How Rebels use the Internet and satellite TV," *Newsweek*, February 27, 1995, pp. 36-40. TV Globo Report, Sunday February 26, 1995; re-run by CNN on their weekend World Report the same day.

37 Sheldon Annis, "Giving Voice to the Poor", *Foreign Policy*, #84, Fall 1991, pp. 93-106.

38 Cathryn L. Thorup, "The Politics of Free Trade and the Dynamics of Cross-border Coalitions in U.S.-Mexican Relations," *Columbia Journal of World Business*, Vol. XXVI, No. 11, Summer 1991, pp. 12-26.

39 Cathryn Thorup, "Redefining Governance in North America: The Impact of Cross-Border Networks and Coalitions on Mexican Immigration into the United States," RAND, DRU-219-FF, March 1993, The paper can be ordered from the RAND through its website (<http://www.rand.org/>). In this paper Thorup recommends that

NGOs institutionalize their interconnections, despite dangers that doing so might make it "easier for governments, for example, to monitor, repress and/or coopt the leaders" of such institutions.(p. 62) Her rationale is that institutionalization is necessary to overcome "the inherent chaos associated with a multiplicity of diffuse, disconnected actors and activities" which increases the "vulnerability of these grassroots actors." (p. 62) Yet what the networks of Zapatista solidarity work have shown is that apparent chaos can hide a very logical and very effective set of interrelationships without any institutionalizaion, and thus without the dangers she mentions.

40 Ibid., p. 8.

41 Ibid., p. 53.

42 John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, "Cyberwar is Coming!"

(<http://gopher.well.sf.ca.us:70/0/Military/cyberwar>) Originally published in *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1993, pp. 141-165.

43 Arquilla and Ronfeldt's identification with the U.S. government is clear both directly and indirectly. It is obvious when, in the course of discussing "the revolutionary forces of the future" which "may consist increasingly of wide-spread multi-organizational networks that have no particular national identity, claim to arise from civil society...." they ponder "How will WE deal with that?" [my emphasis] and then go on to suggest that "the United States may want to design new kinds of military units and capabilities for engaging in network warfare." It is clear indirectly in their unproblematic interchange of the terms "the United States" and "the U.S. government". Despite the obvious fact that "non-state actors" may also be part of "the United States", Arquilla and Ronfeldt argue that "non-state actors should also be considered as opponents, including some millennialist, terrorist, and criminal (e.g., drug smuggling) organizations that cut across national boundaries". Although neither "environmentalists" nor "human rights" advocates are listed here, they are identified elsewhere as non-state actors in opposition movements and would therefore, presumably, also be treated as "opponents". Their whole essay is concerned with how the government can cope with all such threats, from the blatantly military to more subtle informational challenges. In a separate piece "Cyberocracy is Coming" Ronfeldt writes more in the style of the "objective" analyst surveying the literature and speculating on such issues as which aspects of the spread of information technologies will prosper --those which favor democracy or those of the "dark side" which can be used to consolidate totalitarianism. David Ronfeldt, "Cyberocracy is Coming" in *The Information Society*, Vol. 8, pp. 243-296, 1992.

([http://gopher.well.sf.ca.us:70/0/whole\\_systems/cyberocracy](http://gopher.well.sf.ca.us:70/0/whole_systems/cyberocracy))

44 There is a certain irony in their logic, in as much as the current popularity of the term cyberspace derives not from its Greek root, but from William Gibson's "cyber"punk novels which portray a future of governance through the control of information in the bleakest possible manner.

45 Michel J. Crozier, Samuel P. Huntington and Joji Watanuki, *The Crisis of Democracy: Report on the Governability of Democracies*, New York: New York University Press, 1975.

46 Some of this discussion can be found in the archives of Chiapas-I at

[gopher://profmexis.dgsca.unam.mx:70/11/foros/chiapas](http://gopher://profmexis.dgsca.unam.mx:70/11/foros/chiapas). My own contribution was posted on March 20, 1995 as "[Cyberspace and 'Ungovernability'](#)" to Chiapas95 and can be found in its archives.

47 The RAND Corporation web site can be found at: <http://www.rand.org/> The use, mis-use and abuse of the concept of "civil society" is widespread among commentators on computer communication networks and NGOs. I will explore the concept, its strengths and limitations in a separate essay. Among others for whom this concept is key are Howard Frederick and Cees Hamelink. See: Howard Frederick, "Computer Networks and the "Emergence of Global Civil Society," in Linda M. Harasim (ed.) *Global Networks: Computers and International Communication*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993.

48 Mark, "If War Comes Home: A Strategic Exercise Simulates an Info Attack on the U.S. and its Allies", *Time*, August 21, 1995, pp. 44-46.

49 See: Daniel Brandt, "Infowar and Disinformation: From the Pentagon to the Net," *NameBase NewsLine*, No. 11, October-December 1995. ([gopher://ursula.blythe.org/00/pub/NameBase/newsline.11](http://gopher://ursula.blythe.org/00/pub/NameBase/newsline.11))

50 Glenn Fleishman, "The Experiment is Over" uploaded to Mexico94 on May 4, 1995. Fleishman is president of Point of Presence Company, an Internet presence provider.

51 Along with such attempts to commercialize the information flows about Chiapas, those of us working in this area have also been contacted by military consultants and Defense Department connected researchers desirous of getting our help gathering information or even of tapping our own ideas and understanding of various events and developments.

52 Bruce Sterling, *The Hacker Crackdown: Law and Disorder on the Electronic Frontier*, New York: Bantam Books, 1992.

53 "State Charges Italian Computer Bulletin Board with 'Subversion'", European Counter Network, March 1995. The Italian state has become an old-hand at such ludicrous charges since it began using "anti-terrorism" in the late 1970s to repress its political enemies. Another example of police raids comes from the other side of the world. The same month, the Hong Kong police's Commercial Crime Bureau raided and shut down seven commercial providers of the Internet charging them with unlicensed operation and "hacking". The raid whose real purpose was not immediately clear, shut down links to the Internet (including e-mail) for some 10,000 companies and individuals. Voice of America, Hong Kong/ Internet Crackdown, March 6, 1995 (no. 2-175058) See also the posting "Shut-down of Seven Internet Suppliers in Hong Kong" on newsgroup misc.activism.progressive March 14, 1995.

54 For background and updates on the struggle against these censorship proposals see the homepage of the Center for Democracy and Technology at: <http://www.cdt.org/cda.html>

55 Douglas Waller, "CyberWar: The U.S. Rushes to Turn Computers into Tomorrow's Weapons of Destruction. But how Vulnerable is the Home Front?" *Time*, August 21, 1995, p. 40. As this article makes clear, net war is only a subsector of infowar for U.S. policy makers. At the same time that the CIA was going after the Haitian "oligarchy", the Army's 4th Psychological Operations Group used detailed market-research survey databases to divide "Haiti's population into 20 target groups and bombarded them with hundreds of thousands of pro-Aristide leaflets appealing to their particular affinities."

56 Rodolfo Montes, "Chiapas es Guerra de Tinta e Internet" *Reforma*, Abril 26, 1995 posted at <http://www.infosel.com.mx> on April 26, 1995.

57 See the report posted to Chiapas-I by the National Commission on Democracy in Mexico on Federal Deputy Carlota Botey's claims of interference with her e-mail (February 24, 1995 under the Subject: SABOTAGE IN INTERNET). It is clearly not easy for the casual observer to differentiate between intentional interference and technical glitches so that the latter can lead to erroneous accusations of the former. One such event occurred in June of 1995 when it was briefly believed that the University of Colorado had shut down the Marx/Engels Archive in response to critical remarks in *Fortune* magazine. However, it turned out to be the owner of the Archive who had shut it down to defend it against what he thought was local "militia" interference (3000+ visits aimed at overloading the system and making it unusable, a known military tactic, see Mark Thompson's account of a war-game scenario that includes the shutting down of the phone system at the Fort Lewis Army Base through "a 'mass dialing' attack launched over the internet"). The interference, however, turned out to be caused not by marauding Right-Wingers but by a new experimental search program being used by a friend! All of which shows that a sense of humor is as necessary as a "heightened sense of awareness" of the possibilities of sabotage. :-)

58 "CSIS onto Mexican Activists" newsgroup misc.activism.progressive May 4, 1995.

59 The outcome of current battles within the government over its redesign and "modernization" will undoubtedly effect its ability to intervene in The Net. To the degree that Zedillo and other reformers succeed in breaking down old patterns of power, they may create space for new and more imaginative interventions in this sphere as in others.

60 Unfortunately, the efforts outside The Net have been more effective. Fast-track and NAFTA were successfully pushed through by the governments of North America and despite the best efforts of humanitarians in The Net and elsewhere, the Mexican government has been all too successful at keeping reports about its campaign of terrorism in Chiapas out of the mass media.

61 Major Robert David Steele (USMCR) "The Transformation of War and the Future of the Corps", Cleared for publication April 28, 1992. ([http://gopher.well.sf.ca.us:70/0/Military/4\\_warriors](http://gopher.well.sf.ca.us:70/0/Military/4_warriors)) Steele, who served in the CIA in the 1980s, now runs Open Source Solutions, Inc. and pushes for "open source intelligence", i.e., a decentralized, Net probing approach to gathering the information necessary to inform state policy. See Daniel Brandt, "Cyberspace Cowboy with CIA Credentials: Robert Steele and his Open Source Solutions, Inc." (<http://ursula.blythe.org/NameBase/newsline.06>) The Open Source Solutions, Inc. webpage is: <http://www.oss.net/oss/> It provides links to a variety of intelligence and counterintelligence sources.

62 On the creation of Post-W.W.II elites and their research apparatus see: David Horowitz, "Billion Dollar Brains" and "Sinews of Empire," *Ramparts*, 8, 1969, pp. 33-41.

63 On the character and operation of the Post-W.W.II propaganda machine see Noam Chomsky, "Foreign Policy and the Intelligentsia," in Noam Chomsky, *Towards a New World Order*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1982.

64 Nevertheless, this "modern" embodiment should be seen as a sign of weakness of the PRI. In earlier years it

would have either annihilated or absorbed the opposition into its own organization.

**65** The term "rhizomatic" is taken from the essay by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari on "The Rhizome" which appears in their joint work *A Thousand Plateaus*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987. In that imaginative essay they think through the metaphor of the rhizome as a new way of conceptualizing horizontal, non-hierarchical networks of relationships.

The Zapatistas are using computers, the Internet, and radio communications to weave what some have called the "electronic fabric of struggle." The rebels are among the most connected political groups in the world, using technology to take political protest to an unprecedented level. On Friday, that struggle gained added bandwidth when a group of American and Costa Rican peace activists launched "Chiapas the World Speaks," a weekly shortwave radio program broadcasting news in Spanish about the struggle for human rights and political reform in the Mexican countryside. The Zapatistas ask for no help from the state, and are generally left to their own devices in return. At one point, I peeled away for a moment to chat to some young people playing basketball. That was enough to bring our visit to an abrupt end as our guide quickly led us back to the main gates.Â But these days, although they nominally remain at war with the Mexican state, the rebels' struggle is more ideological than armed in nature. Image caption Subcomandante Marcos now takes to the airwaves rather than call to arms. Whatever they may or may not have achieved in the two decades since their uprising, few would disagree that the Zapatista rebellion has irrevocably shifted the relationship between the authorities and the indigenous population in Chiapas. After creating the Internet list Chiapas95 in December of 1994, I worked intensively within the cyberspatial dimension of the Zapatista struggle and its circulation throughout the world. I managed Chiapas95, took part in solidarity work and when I could entered debates in the discussion lists.Â The result was an article that included some general meditation on the origins of cyberspace and the class struggle over its elaboration as well as a fairly detailed examination of the specific case of the role of the Net in the circulation of the struggles of the Zapatistas. I wrote the article primarily as a case study, partly because no detailed study of this experience had been done, and partly because there are virtually no case studies of the cyberspatial dimension of ANY struggles written by the participants.