

The Media and The Fourth World War

Message from Marcos

Subcomandante Marcos

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The following is from a translated text of a videotaped message from Subcomandante Marcos, spokesperson for Mexico's Zapatista National Liberation Front, to a January 1997 Freeing the Media teach-in in New York City.

We're in the mountains of southeast Mexico, in the Lacandon Jungle of Chiapas, and we want to send a greeting to our brothers and sisters in independent communication media from the U.S. and Canada.

A global decomposition is taking place that we call the Fourth World War: neoliberalism, a global process to eliminate that multitude of people who are not useful to the powerful—the groups called “minorities” in the mathematics of power, but who happen to be the majority population in the world.

We find ourselves in a world system of globalization willing to sacrifice millions of human beings. The giant communications media, the great monsters of the television industry, the communication satellites, magazines and newspapers, seem determined to present a virtual world, created in the image of what the globalization process requires.

In this sense, the world of contemporary news is a world that exists for the VIPs. These major movie stars and politicians, their everyday lives are what is important: if they get married, if they divorce, if they eat, what clothes they wear, or what clothes they take off. But common people only count for a moment—when they kill someone, or when they die. This can't go on; sooner or later this virtual world clashes with the real world. And that is actually happening: This clash results in rebellion and war through out the entire world.

We have a choice: We can have a cynical attitude in the face of the media, to say that nothing can be done about the dollar power that creates itself in images, words, digital communication and computer systems, that invades not just with an invasion of power, but with a way of seeing the world, of how it thinks the world should look. We could say, well, that's the way it is, and do nothing. Or we can simply assume incredulity: We can say that any communication by the media monopolies is a total lie. We can ignore it and go about our lives.

But there is a third option that is neither conformity nor disbelief: That is to construct a different way—to show the world what is really happening—to have a critical world view, and to become interested in the truth of what happens to the people who inhabit every corner of this world.

The work of independent media is to tell the history of social struggle in the world, and here in North America—the U.S., Canada and Mexico. Independent people have, on occasion, been able to open spaces even within the mass media monopolies: to force them to acknowledge news of other social movements. The problem is not only to know what is occurring in the world, but to understand it and to derive lessons from it—just as if we were studying history—a history not of the past, but a history of what is happening at any given moment in whatever part of the world. This is the way to learn who we are, what it is we want, who we can be and what we can or cannot do.

By not having to answer to the monster media monopolies, the independent media have a life work, a political project and purpose—let the truth be known. This is more and more important in the globalization process. This

truth becomes a knot of resistance against the lie. it is our only possibility to save the truth, to maintain it and distribute it, little by little, just as the books were saved in Fahrenheit 451 in which a group of people dedicated themselves to memorize books, to save them from being destroyed, so that the ideas would not be lost.

In this same way, independent media try to save history: the present history—saving it and trying to share it, so it will not disappear—moreover, distribute it to other places, so that this history is not limited to one country, to one region, to one city or social group. It is necessary not only for independent voices to exchange information and to broaden the channels, but to resist the spreading lies of monopolies.

In August 1996, we called for the creation of a network of independent media, a network of information. We mean a network to resist the power of the lie that sells us the Fourth World War. We need this network not only as a tool for our social movements, but for our lives.

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