

What are they going to forgive us for?

January 18, 1994

Gentlemen:

I must begin with some apologies ("a bad beginning," my grandmother used to say). Our Press and Communications Department omitted the weekly national magazine Proceso when they sent out the January 13 letter. I hope that the people at Proceso forgive us for this mistake and receive the present letter without any ill feelings or resentment.

I direct myself to you to ask for the distribution of the accompanying statements from the Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee-General Command of the EZLN. In them, we refer to repeated violations of the cease-fire by federal troops, the government's initiative to apply the Law of Amnesty to the present conflict, and to Camacho Solís's performance as the one commissioned to negotiate for peace and reconciliation in Chiapas.

I believe that the documents that we sent to you on January 13 should have arrived by now. I ignore the response they will provoke and what the government's response to our proposals will be, and therefore do not address them. Up to today, January 18, 1994, the only thing we have learned is that the "pardon" which the government offers to our forces has been made official. What do we have to ask forgiveness for? What are they going to "pardon" us for? For not dying of hunger? For not accepting our misery in silence? For not

humbly accepting the huge historic burden of disdain and abandonment? For having risen up in arms when we found all other paths closed? For not heeding Chiapas's penal code, the most absurd and repressive in history? For having shown the country and the whole world that human dignity still exists and is in the hearts of the most impoverished inhabitants? For having made careful preparations before beginning our fight? For having brought guns to battle instead of bows and arrows? For having learned to fight before having done it? For being Mexicans, every one of us? For being mostly Indigenous? For calling the Mexican people to fight, through whatever means, for what rightfully belongs to them? For fighting for freedom, democracy, and justice? For not following the leaders of previous wars? For refusing to surrender? For refusing to sell ourselves? For not betraying one another?

Who should ask for forgiveness and who can grant it? Those who, for years and years, sat before a full table and satiated themselves while we sat with death, as such a daily factor in our lives that we stopped even fearing it? Those that filled our pockets and souls with declarations and promises? The dead, our dead, who mortally died "natural" deaths, that is, of measles, whooping cough, dengue, cholera, typhoid, mononucleosis, tetanus, bronchitis, malaria, and other gastrointestinal and pulmonary diseases? Our dead, who die so undemocratically of grief because nobody did anything to help them, because all the dead, our dead, would simply disappear without anyone paying the bill, without anyone finally saying, "ENOUGH!" Those who give feeling back to these dead, our dead, who refuse to ask them to die over again, but now instead ask them to live? Those that denied us the right to govern ourselves? Those who treat us as foreigners in our own land and ask us for papers and to obey a law whose existence we ignore? Those that torture, seize, and assassinate us for the great crime of wanting a piece of land, not a big piece, not a small one, just one on which we could grow something with which to fill our stomachs?

Who should ask forgiveness and who can grant it?

The president of the republic? The secretaries of state? The senators? The deputies? The governors? The municipal presidents? The police? The Federal Army? Powerful businessmen, bankers, industrialists, and landowners? Political parties? Intellectuals? Galio and Nexos? The media? Students? Teachers? Our neighbors? Workers? Campesinos? Indigenous people? Those who died useless deaths?

Who should ask forgiveness and who can grant it?

Well, that is all for now.

Best wishes and a warm embrace; hopefully with this cold both things are appreciated (I think), even if they come from a "professional in violence."