SUBCOMMANDER MARCOS

THE MAN AND THE MASK

NICK HENCK

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For my parents

Marcos without the ski mask is inadmissible, is not photogenic, is not a living legend.

—CARLOS MONSIVÁIS

Q. If everyone knows who you are, why the mask?
A touch of coquetry. They don't know who I am, but it doesn't matter to them anyway. At stake is what Subcomandante Marcos is, not who he was.

—SUBCOMANDANTE MARCOS interview with Gabriel García Márquez and Roberto Pombo

He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it.

—GEORGE ORWELL, "Shooting an Elephant"

Put off that mask of burning gold,
With emerald eyes.
O no, my dear, you make so bold
To find if hearts be wild and wise,
And not yet cold.

*

I would but find what's there to find,
Love or deceit.
It was the mask that engaged your mind,
And after set your heart to beat,
Not what's behind.

*

—W. B. YEATS, *The Mask*

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It has long since become the convention to preface a work with a page or two of acknowledgments. Indeed, so standard is this practice that one could be forgiven for thinking that it has become somewhat of an empty ritual. Nothing, however, could be further from the truth. We now live in an age where academics labor under a system which places on them tremendous pressure to publish, and yet one which at the same time denies them much of the time needed to do so. Thus, those academics who take the time to proofread the work of their colleagues stand to risk delaying their own research and publications, thereby harming their own careers through this sacrifice of time. It is therefore all the more commendable and heartening to find academics who are prepared to read over one's work. It is with this in mind that I extend my fullest appreciation to Professor John F. Drinkwater for his constant help, advice, and friendship over the past decade, and in particular concerning this book. I would also like to thank Professor Neil McLynn, a colleague and a friend, for all that he has done for me in terms of my career in general and this book. In addition, professors Gregory Hadley, William Snell, and Charles De Wolf, all busy academics with careers of their own, are deserving of my sincerest gratitude for devoting what precious little time they have to spare to proofreading my manuscript. (Needless to say, any remaining errors are entirely my own responsibility.)

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their many successes. Finally, both institutions owe these successes to the dedication of those who staff them. With this in mind I would like to thank specifically Robert McNeil (Bodleian's Hispanic/Latin American Section), Laura Salinas (Oxford University's Latin American Centre), and Amanda Peters (Taylorian Institute) as well as others too numerous to mention for their professional advice and kindness.

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In a more general way, mention should also be made both of the Irish group "irlandesa," who have done so much to make the communiqués of the EZLN and Subcommander Marcos widely accessible by translating them into English, and of the journalist Hermann Bellinghausen, whose dedication and sincere reporting continues to keep the world informed of the Zapatista project.

Finally, but by no means least, I would like to thank those around me for their time, patience, support, and encouragement. First and foremost among these are my parents of course, but also my fiancée, Yasuko, and my friends—all of them long-suffering, having been forced to share my interest in the Subcommander.

Keio University, Japan
January 2006

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANCIEZ	Alianza Nacional Campesina Independiente Emiliano Zapata/ Emiliano Zapata Independent National Peasant Alliance
ARIC	Asociación Rural de Interés Colectivo/Rural Association of Collective Interests (an umbrella organization under whose name various Uniones de Ejidos have grouped together)
Banamex	Banco Nacional de México/National Bank of Mexico
Banrural	Banco Nacional de Credito Rural/National Rural Credit Bank
CCRI	Comité Clandestino de Revolución Indígena/Clandestine Indigenous Revolutionary Committee (the executive body of the EZLN)
CEOIC	Consejo Estatal de Organizaciones Indígenas y Campesinas/ State Council of Indigenous and Peasant Organizations (established in 1994 in the aftermath of the January rebellion)
CIOAC	Central Independiente de Obreros Agrícolas y Campesinos/ Independent Confederation of Rural Workers and Peasants
CNC	Confederacíon Nacional Campesina/National Peasant Confederation (government sponsored)
CND	Convencíon Nacional Democrática/National Democratic Convention
CNDH	Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos/National Commission for Human Rights (established by the Mexican government in 1990 to monitor Human Rights abuses)
COCOPA	Comisión de Concordia y Pacificación/Conciliation and Pacification Committee (a cross-party body established in response to the renewed government offensive of February 1995, which aims at negotiating a workable and dignified peace)

CONAI	Comisión Nacional de Intermediación/National Intermediation Commission
CONPAZ	Coordinadora de Organismos No Gubernamentales por la Paz/Coordinating Committee of Nongovernmental Peace Groups
DESMI	Desarrollo Económico Social de los Mexicanos Indígenas/Social-Economic Development of the Indigenous Mexicans
EPR	Ejército Popular Revolucionario/Popular Revolutionary Army
ERPI	Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo Insurgente/Revolutionary Army of the Insurgent People
EZLN	Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional/Zapatista Army of National Liberation
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia/Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Colombia's largest guerrilla group)
FLN	Fuerzas de Liberación Nacional/Forces of National Liberation
FMLN	Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional/Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (El Salvadoran coalition of guerrilla movements)
FOBAPROA	A Mexican Savings Protection Banking Fund that got heavily into debt due to mismanagement and/or corruption. The Mexican government proposed a bank bailout using public funds in 1998. The PRD called a referendum to ask if ordinary Mexicans—whose taxes would pay for this—agreed to the government's proposal.
FSLN	Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional/Sandinista National Liberation Front (Nicaraguan guerrilla group that succeeded in taking power in 1979)
FZLN	Frente Zapatista de Liberación Nacional/Zapatista National Liberation Front
IFE	Instituto Federal Electoral/Federal Electoral Institute
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund

INI	Instituto Nacional Indigenista/National Indigenous Institute (a government agency established to address the problems facing indigenous peoples in Mexico)
Inmecafe	Instituto Mexicano del Café/Mexican Coffee Institute
ISA	Ideological State Apparatus
MLN	Movimiento de Liberación Nacional/National Liberation Movement
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement (tripartite agreement between the United States, Canada, and Mexico to lower or abolish trade tariffs that came into effect on 1 January 1994)
NEA	National Endowment for the Arts
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
OCEZ	Organización Campesina Emiliano Zapata/Emiliano Zapata Peasant Organization
PAN	Partido Acción Nacional/National Action Party (traditionally conservative, anti-Communist, pro-Catholic, pro-business political party founded in 1939 and at the time of writing headed by Vicente Fox, president of Mexico)
Pemex	Pétroleos Mexicanos (the Mexican national oil company)
PGR	Procuraduría General de la Repúblic/Procurator General of the Republic (an office akin to the U.S. Justice Department)
PRD	Partido de la Revolución Democrática/Party of Democratic Revolution (center-left party that came into being in 1989 as a reaction to the electoral fraud of 1988)
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional/Party of Institutionalized Revolution (the political party that arose after the Mexican Revolution and dominated Mexican politics until 2000)
ProCampo	Programa de Apoyo Directo al Campo/National Program for Direct Aid to the Countryside
PROCUP	Partido Revolucionario Obrero Clandestino–Unión del Pueblo/Clandestine Revolutionary Workers Party–Union of the People

Pronasol	Programa Nacional de Solidaridad/National Solidarity Program (a governmental financial aid program)
PSUM	Partido Socialista Unificado de México/Unified Socialist Party of Mexico
Quiptic	A predominantly indigenous peasant organization that had been established in 1975 in the wake of the National Indigenous Council of the previous year
RAP	Regiones Autónomas Pluri-étnicas/Pluri-ethnic Autonomous Regions
RAZ	Regiones Autónomas Zapatistas/Zapatista Autonomous Regions
RSA	Repressive State Apparatus
Sedesol	Secretaría de Desarrollo Social/Ministry of Social Development
Slop	"Root" in Tzeltal. A peasant organization that Bishop Ruiz had helped to create in 1980 in order to offset the Maoists' influence in the region, which at that time was strong.
UAM	Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana/Autonomous Metropolitan University (a radical university founded in Mexico City in 1974)
UE	Unión de Ejidos/Union of Ejidos
UNAM	Universidad Nacional Autónoma México/National Autonomous University of Mexico (Mexico City's oldest and traditionally most prestigious university)
URNG	Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca/Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union (a coalition of revolutionary movements)
UU	Unión de Uniones Ejidales y Grupos Campesinos de Chiapas/Union of Ejido Unions and Peasant Solidarity Groups of Chiapas

CAST OF MAIN CHARACTERS

This is a list of members (past and present) of the FLN and EZLN, ranked in approximate order of seniority, when they joined the FLN and/or the EZLN, and their importance within it.

FLN

Comandante Germán Fernando Yáñez Muñoz (a.k.a. Leo). Founding member of the FLN in the late 1960s in the aftermath of the Tlatelolco student massacre. After the death of his brother, César Germán Yáñez Muñoz (Pedro), at the hands of the security forces in Chiapas (1974), he took his brother's real name (Germán) for his own nom de guerre. He was one of the original six who established the EZLN *foco* in Chiapas (November 1983). He trained Marcos in guerrilla warfare. He is the husband of Lucía, whom he married during the same ceremony that Marcos married Yolanda/Ana María (1987). He was captured by security forces in October 1995, but was later released without charge. He is now an advisory editor of *Rebeldía*, the EZLN magazine.

Pedro César Germán Yáñez Muñoz, brother of Fernando Yáñez Muñoz. He was shot dead by security forces in February 1974 while undertaking guerrilla activities in Chiapas.

Roger Margil Yáñez Muñoz. The oldest brother of César and Fernando. He did the groundwork for guerrilla activity in Chiapas during the mid-1970s, distributing medical supplies there in an attempt to win over the local population. Like his father, whom he was named after, he became a doctor.

Comandante Rodrigo Javier Ramírez (a.k.a. Juan). Brother of Gabriel Ramírez (Dr. Carlos) and husband of Silvia Fernández (Gabriela, a.k.a.

Sofía). He was second-in-command of the FLN. He left the organization in January 1993 after an internal coup within the FLN.

Comandanta Elisa María Gloria Benavides Guevara (a.k.a. Ana). She studied at the University of Nuevo León where she had met the two Yáñez brothers, Fernando and César. She joined the FLN as a teenager in the early 1970s. She was one of the original six (and the only woman) who comprised the *foco* that went to Chiapas (November 1983) and called itself the EZLN. In 1983 she was dating (and recruiting) Jorge Santiago (alias Jacobo), the head of DESMI, a regional development agency. She traveled to Nicaragua. Elisa ran the main headquarters camp, La Cueva (the cave) in Chiapas for several years before returning to Mexico City permanently to conduct FLN operations there (around 1988). She had previously (around 1985) fallen in love with Javier Elorriaga (Vicente), with whom she had a son, named Vicente after his father's nom de guerre. After the internal coup (January 1993) she and her husband were put in charge of the FLN's ideological commission, editing and publishing internal documents. She was seized in the government's February 1995 offensive, but the case was thrown out amid allegations of torture and irregularities concerning due process.

Lucía Gloria Muñoz. The wife of Germán. She had been at Tlatelolco Plaza during the massacre of the students in 1968. She helped train and politically educate indigenous recruits in a safe house in the Tuxtla Gutiérrez. She received the post of secretary of the masses during the January 1993 Prado meeting, thus becoming (with Marcos and Germán) one of the three cornerstones of the FLN and EZLN. She is currently an advisory editor for the EZLN's *Rebeldía* magazine.

Gabriela Silvia Fernández (a.k.a. Sofía), wife of Comandante Rodrigo, in charge of editing and publishing the FLN's publications, and possibly Rafael Guillén's (and Daniel's) recruiter at UAM. She left the movement at the same time as her husband, after the January 1993 internal coup.

Rodolfo Real name unknown. A native of Chihuahua and one of the initial six founding members of the EZLN who arrived in Chiapas in November 1983. Around late 1984 or early 1985 he was relocated to his home state of Chihuahua where he took command of the newly implanted Villa Front—the FLN's northern counterpart to its southern wing, the EZLN.

Dr. Carlos Gabriel Ramírez. Rodrigo's brother and husband to Mercedes (Rocío Casariego), Marcos's former girlfriend. He frequently traveled to

Nicaragua and worked in EZLN camps in Chiapas. He left the organization after the January 1993 internal coup.

Mercedes Rocío Casariego. Formerly Rafael Guillén's girlfriend while they were at UNAM, she later went on to marry Dr. Carlos and to work in Nicaragua and Chiapas. She left the organization after the January 1993 internal coup. She named her daughter Mercedes, after her own nom de guerre.

"Marcos" Adelaido Villafranco. Rafael Guillén took Villafranco's nom de guerre for himself following Villafranco's death (26 May 1983) at an army checkpoint in Puebla. Rafael had accompanied "Marcos" on long journeys, during which he had been impressed by the latter's knowledge of Mexican history.

EZLN

Subcomandante Pedro Héctor Ochao. He was from Mexico City. Although not one of the six FLN members who established the *foco* in Chiapas (November 1983), he arrived very soon afterward (probably late 1983 or early 1984). It was he who scouted the La Pesadilla (the nightmare) camp. He was very close to Marcos. He remained in Chiapas all the time (from his arrival to his death a decade later), leaving only once, briefly, for hospital treatment. He too, like Marcos and Daniel, commanded a camp of his own. He was shot dead in January 1994 while leading an attack on Las Margaritas.

Subcomandante Marcos Rafael Sebastián Guillén Vicente (the subject of this biography).

Subcomandante Daniel Salvador Morales Garibay. A native of Michoacán, he was a teaching assistant in Rafael Guillén's department at UAM. He joined the FLN and EZLN and spent some time briefly in Chiapas in 1985 before working for three years (1985–88) under Germán in Mexico City. There he was promoted to Subcommander and later returned to Chiapas and put in charge of his own camp. He and Marcos frequently disagreed and this, plus general disillusionment with the cause, led Daniel to distance himself from the movement. He left it in 1993 and, allegedly fearing reprisals, fled to the United States. In 1994, from his self-imposed exile, he began making contact with the Mexican government's intelligence ser-

vices. He made a statement giving details about the movement to the intelligence services in February 1995.

Yolanda/Ana María Real name unknown. A Tzotzil from Sabanilla. She joined the EZLN early on, in December 1984, at age fourteen. Marcos led her on her first training mission that month. She was soon placed in charge of recruitment in the north of the region. She subsequently worked undercover as an auxiliary nurse at a hospital in San Andrés Larráinzar. She married Marcos in 1987. She rose to the rank of major and led the attacks on San Cristóbal and Rancho Nuevo in January 1994.

Jacobo Jorge Santiago. Head of DESMI, a regional development agency started by Bishop Ruiz and funded by international nongovernmental organizations. He had been romantically involved with Elisa during the early 1980s. He helped recruit Tzotzils in the region of Sabanilla and diverted DESMI funds to the EZLN.

Mario Real name unknown. A Tzotzil from Sabanilla, he joined the EZLN very young in December 1984 along with Yolanda/Ana María. He soon rose to the rank of major and was put in charge of the Baby Doc camp (around 1986). After Subcommander Daniel left the organization in 1993 Mario was put in charge of Daniel's former camp, La Calabazas (the pumpkins) at the Sierra Corralchén. He also led the attack on Ocosingo in January 1994.

Tacho Humberto Trejo. A Tojolabal and leader of the region's *campesino* unions, the Unión de Ejidos de la Selva. In the 1970s, he had been sent to the Marists in San Cristóbal to attend bible study workshops in which he was also taught arithmetic, first aid, Mexican history, agrarian rights, and how to establish cooperatives. He rose to the rank of comandante. He came to the front of the EZLN as Marcos attempted to step back out of the limelight. He was a central figure, for example, in the Encuentro (1996), and negotiated and signed (along with David) the San Andrés Accords.

David Real name unknown. A Tzotzil and former catechist. Like Tacho, he became a central figure in the EZLN after Marcos decided to take more of a back seat. He negotiated and signed (along with Tacho) the San Andrés Accords.

Moisés Real name unknown. A Tzeltal who often acted as translator between Marcos and the indigenous during the early years. He rose to the rank of major and led the attack on Comitán in January 1994.

Hugo Francisco Gómez. A Tzeltal from Las Cañadas, who had been president of Quiptic in the late 1970s, secretary of the Unión de Uniones/ARIC in the late 1980s and then one of the leaders of the ANCIEZ during the early 1990s. He rose to the rank of capitán and headed the arm of the movement devoted to the organization of masses, before being killed in Ocosingo during the uprising. Marcos carried a photograph of Hugo around with him after his death and even dedicated several verses of Paul Eluard's poem "El Castillo de los pobres" ("The Castle of the Poor") to him in one of his communiqués.

Jesús Lázaro Hernández. He had worked as a catechist attending the Chiapas Indigenous Council (and so was known to Samuel Ruiz), and was simultaneously the secretary of Quiptic. He helped to introduce the EZLN into indigenous communities and peasant organizations. In January 1986 he organized the First Worker-Peasant Meeting of the FLN, designed to forge links between Chiapan peasants and workers from cities in the north of Mexico. He became the president of ARIC (1991), helping the EZLN to control the organization and steer its members into the guerrillas' ranks.

Vicente Jorge Javier Elorriaga Berdegué. He joined the FLN and EZLN at some point during the 1980s, later becoming a comandante. He fell in love with Comandanta Elisa (mid-1980s) and they had a son together (named Vicente after his father's nom de guerre). His duties were concerned with the FLN's ideological commission. During 1994 he distributed the EZLN's communiqués to the press and acted as a liaison between the EZLN and the government. He was arrested during the government's February 1995 offensive. He was tried and sentenced to thirteen years in prison for terrorism. He was released on 6 June 1996 and shortly after was made head of the FZLN, which he worked to publicize.

Old Antonio Initially thought by many to be a literary construct of Marcos, it appears he was a real person. He and Marcos met while the latter was leading a training mission in December 1984. It was Old Antonio who invited the EZLN into his village, thus giving the guerrillas their first foothold in the communities. Former Subcommander-turned-informer Daniel insists that Old Antonio was an assassin who had fled into the jungle to escape justice. He died in May or June 1994. Marcos often includes him in his communiqués, with Old Antonio acting as the dispenser of indigenous wisdom.

Castelán Francisco López. A Chol from Sabanilla who was the Unión de Uniones president. He recruited for the EZLN.

OTHERS

Avendaño, Amado Coeditor of San Cristóbal's *el Tiempo* newspaper and PRD gubernatorial candidate for the state in 1994.

Camacho Solís, Manuel Mayor of Mexico City in 1988, he was a potential PRI presidential candidate in the 1994 elections. However, he was passed over in favor of Luis Donaldo Colosio, and was instead made peace commissioner in charge of negotiating a peace with the EZLN after the uprising.

Cárdenas, Cuauhtémoc Son of President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–40). He broke from the PRI and ran for the 1988 presidential election. Despite being widely perceived as the victor, electoral fraud resulted in Salinas being declared the winner. He then co-founded the PRD.

Colosio, Luis Donaldo The 1994 PRI presidential candidate before his assassination on 23 March 1994.

Fox Quesada, Vicente PAN President of Mexico (2000–2006). He boasted prior to taking office that he could solve the Chiapas problem in fifteen minutes.

Madrazo Cuellar, José Manuel Camacho Solís's replacement as peace commissioner.

Robledo, Eduardo 1994 PRI gubernatorial candidate for Chiapas.

Ruiz, Samuel Bishop of the San Cristóbal Diocese from 1960–2000. He was influenced by liberation theology. The EZLN nominated him as an official mediator between it and the government. He founded the Fray Bartolomé de las Casas Human Rights Center and formed the CONAI mediation body.

Salinas di Gortari, Carlos President of Mexico (1988–1994). He earned a doctorate from Harvard. He was secretary of budget and finance (1982–87), during which time the government implemented a severe economic austerity program. He was declared president in the 1988 election despite blatant electoral fraud. He initiated a policy of mass privatizations.

Zapata, Emiliano Mexico's most famous and much-loved peasant leader in the Mexican Revolution. He fought tirelessly and uncompromisingly for agrarian reform. In 1919 he was tricked into meeting with the government to discuss peace and was treacherously assassinated at a place called Chinameca.

Zedillo, Ernesto President of Mexico (1994–2000). He earned his doctorate in economics from Yale. He had been the education minister and was only nominated as the PRI presidential candidate because its first choice, Luis Colosio, was assassinated.


USA
SONORA
CHIHUAHUA
COAHUILA
BAJA CALIFORNIA NORTE
BAJA CALIFORNIA SUR
Monterrey
NUEVO LEÓN
TAMAULIPAS
DURANGO
SINALOA
ZACATECAS
SAN LUIS POTOSÍ
Gulf of Mexico
Tampico
NAYARIT
GUANAJUATO
HIDALGO
YUCATÁN
JALISCO
Mexico City
QUINTANA ROO
CAMPECHE
MICHOACÁN
PUEBLA
VERACRUZ
TABASCO
Pacific Ocean
GUERRERO
OAXACA
CHIAPAS
Belize
Guatemala
Honduras
Key to states
1 DISTRITO FEDERAL
2 MORELOS
3 TLAXCALA
4 ESTADO DE MÉXICO
5 QUERÉTARO
6 AGUASCALIENTES
7 COLIMA

MAP 1: MEXICO.

SUBCOMMANDER MARCOS

INTRODUCTION

At dawn on 1 January 1994 Subcommander Marcos made his debut on the world stage. From the balcony of San Cristóbal's town hall he addressed the crowd that had gathered below, informing them that the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN in Spanish) had seized four towns in the southeastern state of Chiapas and was holding them in revolt from the Mexican government. By the time that dusk fell on that same town square about twelve hours later Marcos was on his way to becoming the most famous guerrilla leader since Che Guevara. In the weeks and months that followed, through a succession of interviews, communiqués, and public spectacles, the Subcommander acted as a conduit through which the rebelling indigenous peasants under his command articulated their grievances and demands to Mexican society and the government. Also during this period, through a combination of his charisma, media savvy, and the mystique attending him, a cult of celebrity swiftly attached itself to Marcos to the extent that he has become today a world-recognized revolutionary icon and the champion of the anti-neoliberal-globalization movement.

More than a decade has now elapsed since those early days of Zapatismo, and much ink has been spilled by myriad authors (historians, novelists, journalists, essayists, anthropologists, and others) concerning almost every aspect of the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas: its origins, course, and results, and their implications. However, despite this considerable interest in the Zapatista movement in general, and in Marcos in particular—to the extent that he has enjoyed a high media profile and has seen the publication and translation of numerous collections of his communiqués (six in English alone)[1]—incredible as it may seem, after more than ten years there still remains no biography in English of the rebellion's main protagonist. Of course, of the plethora of books treating Chiapas to have appeared over the last decade many devote a chapter (or two) to discussion of the man the world has come to know as "El Sup."[2] However, there exist only two works, both in Spanish, of a biographical nature focusing on the man himself.

Of these, the first to appear was César Jacobo Romero's *Marcos: ¿Un profesional de la esperanza?*, described on its front cover as a "*biografia unofficial*."[3] It is at times an astute work that attempts to piece together a profile of the Subcommander and his background from snippets of Marcos's own writings and interviews with him. Ultimately, however, Romero was laboring under the disadvantage of not knowing Marcos's real identity—this had yet to be revealed by the Mexican authorities as Rafael Sebastián Guillén Vicente—and so all he had to work on were the frequently self-contradictory hints Marcos threw out, often with the aim of misleading the security forces and the media, both of which were determined to ascertain his true identity.[4] Indeed, Romero quotes Marcos as saying "the only sure thing about what I have said about my identity is that it's false—mere repartee with the press."[5]

The second work, *Marcos: la genial impostura* by Bertrand de la Grange and Maite Rico, took full advantage of the information provided by Marcos's unmasking by Mexico's Procuraduría General de la Republic—an office akin to that of the U.S. Justice Department—in February 1995.[6] Unfortunately, the book, although well researched, is a prejudiced and polemical work[7]—it is so hostile, in fact, that the Zedillo government bought up thousands of copies of it to distribute as anti-Zapatista propaganda—while de la Grange's continued denigration of Marcos and the Zapatistas, especially in the aftermath of the Acteal massacre, led to his replacement as *Le Monde*'s Chiapas correspondent in 1998.[8]

Little justification is therefore necessary for attempting to produce an objective biography in English of the Subcomandante. Prior to writing such a biography, however, and given that *Marcos: la genial impostura* is the only major biographical work treating both Marcos and Rafael Guillén, it is perhaps as well to devote some space to discussing the criticisms it raises. The authors' jaundiced views on Marcos are obvious throughout the work. The Subcommander's motives are consistently brought into question, and he is never given the benefit of the doubt where this may reflect positively on him. Although the authors are honest in that they do not attempt to conceal their animosity toward Marcos, they are not wholly candid concerning the origins of their animosity. A less well-informed reader may think that de la Grange and Rico dislike Marcos purely because they believe him to be a self-promoting, middle-class, doctrinaire Marxist disguising himself as a liberal champion of Mexico's indigenous people. However, at least part of the reason for their prejudice perhaps derives from a personality clash between de la Grange and Marcos that resulted in the former being de-

nied access to Zapatista information and excluded from participation in the Intercontinental Encuentro (summer 1996).[9] Indeed, already by the spring of 1996 de la Grange had been accused by fellow journalists of treating the Zapatistas with contempt and mocking Marcos.[10]

Once the source of this hostility is understood, de la Grange's and Rico's criticisms of Marcos's racial profile (i.e., mestizo), his bourgeois origins, his Marxist past, and his self-aggrandizement can be easily dismissed. That Marcos is not himself indigenous seems to me irrelevant. Quite why de la Grange and Rico should think that Marcos's credentials as the military leader of a movement that aims at the improvement of the rights and conditions of indigenous people should be questioned on the grounds that he himself is mestizo escapes my comprehension.[11] This is an especially lame criticism when applied to a man who has spent nearly twenty years living with indigenous people and learning their languages and culture. (It should be remembered that many anthropologists who are considered academic authorities on various peoples have spent considerably less time in the field with their subjects.) Moreover, if one objects to a mestizo being a prominent member of an indigenous uprising, what can one say about whites having held prominent positions in the black civil rights movements in the United States during the 1960s or in South Africa during the 1980s? The argument that a revolutionary who aims at the empowerment of the impoverished must belong to this social class is puerile. It is possible to be a man *for* the people, without being a man *of* the people; and therefore it is also possible to be a man *for* the indigenous, without being *of* the indigenous. Moreover, at least one professor of anthropology and Latin American studies has argued, conversely, that Marcos's white, middle-class background is indeed relevant, but that this was a contributing factor to his being accepted by the indigenous as their spokesperson. Gary H. Gossen rejects the image of Marcos as the unscrupulous Subcommander who has duped a weak and docile indigenous people and is manipulating them for reasons of self-aggrandizement and the furthering of Marxism.[12] Rather, after noting that "Mayan ethnicity, cosmology, historical reckoning, and political legitimacy have always drawn freely from symbolic and ideological forms of other ethnic and political entities—particularly those perceived to be stronger than themselves—in order to situate and centre themselves in the present,"[13] he concludes that "*Subcomandante Marcos* is utterly plausible as a spokesperson for an Indian cause precisely because he is outside of, extrasomatic to, the Indian community."[14]

Concerning Marcos's Marxist past, I am not sure precisely what Rico

and de la Grange are objecting to. If they are objecting simply to Marcos having had a Marxist past, this would lead to the dismissal of countless politicians (both in Mexico,[15] and also in Latin America and Europe). If, however, they object to Marcos having changed his political stance from one of orthodox Marxist (when he joined the FLN in 1979 at about age twenty-two) to less orthodox Leftwinger (as he was by 1994 at age thirty-seven), on the grounds that this makes him shallow or fickle, one ought perhaps to recall the words of Muhammad Ali, to the effect that a man who thinks the same thing at forty as he had at twenty has wasted twenty years of his life. Carlos Monsiváis contrasts what he sees as Marcos's flexibility with the rigidity of those who oppose him, noting: "The fact is that the proposals of Marcos and the EZLN have changed radically. Frankly, those of their adversaries have not."[16] If de la Grange and Rico believe that Marcos has deliberately attempted to conceal his Marxist past, a cursory glimpse at the Subcommander's interviews with Castillo and Brisac or Yvon Le Bot show him to be quite candid about the Marxist leanings of the initial project: he admits to attempting to establish an armed group (*foco*) whose ideology and tactics were those espoused by Che Guevara.[17] (Elsewhere, he is equally as candid about the failure of this venture, in particular the imposition of Marxist and Maoist doctrine on the indigenous population.)[18] Rather, I agree with Lorenzano, who observes:

> Any attempt to understand—or sanitize—the EZLN as a mere extension of the [Marxist] guerrilla movements of the 1960s and 1970s would be not only useless but sterile and ill-intentioned or even reactionary. . . . It is also the attitude assumed by intellectuals close to neo-liberalism (such as Octavio Paz and Héctor Aguilar Camín) and by certain would-be ex-radicals who regret their past.[19]

The only other possibility is that de la Grange and Rico remain unconvinced that Marcos has transformed himself from a doctrinaire Marxist into a pro-democracy Zapatista. If so, they are not alone. Tello Díaz also remains doubtful, while Oppenheimer argues that the Subcommander's "political history should at least raise questions about the sincerity of his moderate, post-insurrection rhetoric."[20] Indeed, Luis Lorenzano is compelled to devote time and space to the condemnation of those "political analysts . . . of the right," who "maintain that the EZLN's expressions in favor of democracy represent a sudden, opportunistic maneuver to conceal their terrible miasmas of archaism, dogmatism and totalitarianism."[21] Likewise, Mexico's leading novelist, essayist, and former ambassador to

France, Carlos Fuentes, also addresses the interpretations of such right-wing political analysts. In his letter to the Subcommander himself, he writes of the EZLN:

> A few years ago all these demands would have been stamped with the red-hot branding iron of anti-Communism. You are the first post-Communist actors on the stage of the Third World. Your aspirations can no longer be concealed or perverted as part of a Soviet world conspiracy. Only the shipwrecked of the cold war, bereft of Manichean enemies, can still believe that.[22]

It is, of course, certainly possible that Marcos is merely pretending to have undergone this transformation in an attempt to court the popularity of a world that has largely rejected orthodox Marxism. However, such an assessment assumes that Marcos has also managed to deceive his indigenous supporters, with whom he lived side by side for ten years preceding the uprising,[23] not to mention a host of academics from around the world who have interviewed him. Rather, I would point to the many eminent former doctrinaire Marxists who have modified their stances with age, especially since the fall of the Berlin Wall, and am prepared to accept (with the at least 5,000 indigenous who follow him) Marcos's claim that the cross-pollination of Marxism with indigenous ideology and social structures produced a new thought system.[24]

With regard to Marcos's alleged self-aggrandizement, there is no doubt that he has a strong sense of self-worth that borders on the supremely egotistical. However, it is also worth pointing out that inspection of the lives of people who have become significant leaders seems to reveal this as being a necessary character trait.[25] Régis Debray, who interviewed both Che Guevara and Subcommander Marcos clandestinely in the jungle, talks of the latter's "indispensable megalomania—necessary, I imagine, to endure 'the long voyage from suffering to hope,' of 11 years of mosquitoes, black beans and clandestine work, of a decade with damp feet, without chocolates [the thing Marcos confesses to missing most from his former urban life] or press conferences."[26] True, the Zapatista movement has from the start been inextricably caught up with the personality cult of Marcos, but it is perhaps an unpalatable truth that the vast majority of humanity finds it easier to identify with a single individual (even if he is masked) than a committee. De la Grange and Rico simply go too far in this charge—though not as far as Juan Miguel de Mora, who writes of Marcos's "megalomania" and sometimes implies that Marcos undertook the Zapatista uprising entirely out of

the desire to be famous.[27] Marcos could not have known during those ten long years in the jungle that he would become famous; he did however run the risk of dying in obscurity, as did many other Chiapans and not a few Latin American guerrillas. Even Enrique Krauze, himself no great friend of Marcos, is prepared to concede that "his commitment to altering the social reality of Chiapas and Mexico is authentic (his democratic convictions less certain). He has been in the jungle with the Indians since 1983. It is a real and some would say admirable life choice."[28] The essayist, journalist, and novelist Elena Poniatowska echoes this, writing "he has lived according to his ideas, which seems a lot to ask in our country . . . he stayed in the jungle for eleven years, he has shared and continues to share the Indian's living conditions."[29] Even Octavio Paz, who is positively hostile toward Marcos, declares that the Subcommander's "capacity to establish quite profound links with the Indian groups is admirable."[30]

In short, *Subcomandante Marcos: la genial impostura* is deeply flawed, not in its research but in its interpretation. The eminent social anthropologist George A. Collier criticized the book because "in emphasizing the non-indigenous leadership of the EZLN [it fails to] succeed in explaining how the movement built up such a powerful indigenous base."[31] The award-winning Spanish poet, essayist, and novelist Manuel Vázquez Montalbán makes a sustained and prolonged attack on *Subcomandante Marcos: la genial impostura* in a collection of interviews with Marcos that Montalbán published as *Marcos: El señor de los espejos*. In it, he denounces *Subcomandante Marcos: la genial impostura* as "the most ferociously anti-Marcos book to have been published to date," and he goes on to attack it at length for its bias[32]; for the abuse it heaps upon Marcos, Samuel Ruiz, and anyone (such as Danielle Mitterrand, Carlos Monsiváis, and Oliver Stone) who has anything to do with them; for its failure to allow for even the possibility that Marcos has based some of his life choices on conscience; for the services it renders the Mexican government's anti-Zapatista propaganda machinery; and for its lack of humor and appreciation of Marcos's own humor. De la Grange's and Rico's censure of Marcos for having a secret past life Montalbán dismisses as "a puerile indignation."[33]

In this book I present an alternative view of Marcos, assembled from more than twenty interviews (most published, some filmed, tape-recorded, or posted on the Internet) that the Subcommander has granted since 1 January 1994; from more than two hundred communiqués explicitly signed by him and nearly two hundred others signed by the EZLN's Clandestine Indigenous Revolutionary Committee (a significant proportion of which

were probably his work); from numerous speeches he has made during conventions, "*encuentros*," marches, and rallies; from an extensive number of press releases; and from a wealth of secondary material, including the published testimonies of family members, friends, acquaintances, and colleagues, and books and articles written by journalists and scholars.

I have also, of course, visited Chiapas, and more recently I attended a large rally and two smaller, more intimate, gatherings addressed by Marcos. However, I have not interviewed the Subcommander. By 1998, when I began writing this book—stimulated by the publication that year of the work of de la Grange and Rico—Marcos was already granting fewer interviews on the grounds that the media were tending to focus on him personally rather than the Zapatista movement. I therefore decided to concentrate on the considerable body of material already collected by others—the methodology employed by biographers of historical figures.

Indeed, it may be argued that, though a contemporary figure, Marcos is best considered at a distance. He has pursued a policy of deliberate obfuscation when dealing with interviewers, and it would have been naïve of me to expect any more candid treatment from him. Marcos has consistently demonstrated great skill in dissembling during interviews, a predilection to some extent forced upon him by the fact that he is leading an armed movement in an area in which paramilitary groups proliferate—unconsidered honesty could cost the EZLN popular support and even lives—but one which also, and perhaps in equal measure, is studiously contrived by him for his own purposes. Pulling the wool over the eyes of eager questioners is very much part of his technique in projecting a mysterious image of himself; one suspects that it has even become part of his character. As journalist John Ross observes, "Marcos tells many reporters many different stories":

> At various moments, Marcos informs us that the Zapatistas put their ski masks on (a) because they could be identified by the authorities if they didn't, (b) because it was cold, (c) because the Zapatistas are too handsome to walk around unprotected, and (d) because being masked promotes egalitarianism among the EZLN leaders, and thwarts the germination of a "caudillo."[34]

Nor is Ross alone in this observation. Joel Simon states that Marcos "tells different stories about his past during each interview."[35] Indeed, the Subcommander gave the *Miami Herald* journalist Andres Oppenheimer a candid insight into his method of deception:

> Look, what happens is that when a Chilean comes to see me, I tell him I visited Chile. When somebody comes from Los Angeles, I tell him I was in Los Angeles. When a Frenchman comes, I tell him I was in France . . . When people start asking me personal questions, I ask them, Where are you from? Oh, from Veracruz? I was in Veracruz. You are from Monterrey? Ah, I've been in Monterrey. You are from San Francisco? I've been there; I've even worked at a gay bar there. Whatever they ask me, I've been there.[36]

In this respect it is remarkable how Marcos steadfastly refuses to cooperate even with those interviewers whom he greatly admires. For example, the following exchange took place between the Subcommander and Carlos Monsiváis, of whom Marcos is a self-confessed "avid reader":[37]

> CM: As I assume you have an academic past, I would like to ask you to do an exercise . . .
>
> M: My academic past is one of the myths . . .[38]

Gabriel García Márquez, whom Marcos describes as "special" among those writers who influenced him,[39] enjoyed no more candor from the Subcommander:

> GGM: In passing you mentioned that there were swivel chairs when you were young. How old are you?
>
> M: I am 518 years old [laughter] . . .
>
> CGM: If everyone knows who you are, why the mask?
>
> M: A touch of coquetry. They don't know who I am, but it doesn't matter to them anyway. At stake is what *Subcomandante Marcos* is, not who he was.[40]

Thus I fully concur with Oppenheimer's appraisal (1998 [1996]:75): having interviewed the Subcommander as early as 23 July 1994, he concluded that

> I had intended to ask him whether his name was one of about half a dozen that Interior Ministry intelligence officials were periodically leaking to the press, but I decided it would be of no use: he would have lied anyway. His standard response was that he had been born when he arrived in Chiapas ten years earlier, that his parents were the Indians who accepted him as one of them, and that his real name was *Marcos*.[41]

My purpose throughout is not to judge Marcos, to condemn or condone his actions, but rather to try to comprehend and contextualize him—hence the structure of the work, with the first two parts treating "Marcos the man" and the third part dealing with the almost legendary figure he has become since donning his mask. This partitioning is not arbitrary, since the Subcommander himself told interviewer Saul Landau: "There are three *Marcoses*: *Marcos* of the past who has a past, the *Marcos* of the mountains before the first of January, and post January 1 *Marcos*."[42] Any judgment of Marcos, if one must be made, ought to focus on the virtue or merit of his aims and the efficacy and integrity with which he has pursued them. As for Marcos's character, it is as well to turn to Jorge Castañeda's nuanced and astute appraisal of Che Guevara, which I believe has a significant bearing upon the way we should view Marcos. His analysis of Guevara helps us to understand Marcos far better than do such labels as "first post-modern guerrilla hero,"[43] "professional of violence,"[44] a jungle "Fitzcarraldo,"[45] and "classic *caudillo* refreshed by postmodern humor and the reading of Cortázar,"[46] and certainly more than such descriptions as anachronistic utopian idealist, orthodox Marxist, or manipulator of gullible Indians. Of Che Guevara, Castañeda writes:

> He symbolizes an intellectual middle class outraged by an intolerable estrangement from the society it lives in and the abyss separating that class from the vast, undifferentiated universe of the poor . . . But Guevara also represents the heroism and nobility of myriad middle-class Latin Americans who rose up in the best way they could find, against a status quo they eventually discovered to be unlivable. If ever there was an illustration of the anguish evoked in sensitive and reasonable, but far from exceptional, individuals at being affluent and comfortable islands in a sea of destitution, it was Guevara. He will endure as a symbol, not of revolution or guerrilla warfare, but of the extreme difficulty, if not the actual impossibility, of indifference.[47]

The key point concerning Marcos, as of Che, is not who he is or what he has done previously, but rather what he symbolizes. When one hears the name Guevara, one does not think of "Ernesto," the Argentine doctor, for he transcended his personal identity and became "Che," the revolutionary icon. The same is true, although at present to a lesser extent, with Marcos. (In Tom Hayden's eyes, for example, Marcos "stands for the principle that we each must know what we would risk dying for in order to know what we live for.")[48] For men such as Marcos and Guevara, and many others, Marx-

ism was the intellectual solution to a moral or sentimental problem with which they could not reconcile themselves: namely, how can you live with yourself comfortably when the overwhelming majority of those around you are intolerably destitute? Indeed, this is what Marcos himself tells us, only more succinctly, in one of his communiqués: "The owner of the voice [i.e., Marcos] confesses that, facing the choice between comfort and responsibility, he always chose responsibility."[49] Similarly, in an interview he gave in March 1994, in which he explained the roots of his own personal road to rebellion, Marcos commented that "understanding that there is injustice, then trying to understand the roots of this injustice . . . invariably leads you to ask yourself: and you, what are you going to do about it?"[50] Elsewhere he elaborates on this a little, telling another interviewer: "I imagine everyone has to choose at some point. We either kept living a comfortable life, materially comfortable, or we had to be consistent with a certain type of ideals. We had to choose and be consistent and so . . . here we are."[51] In these lines are the keys to understanding not only Marcos's motivation but also his popularity, since many other people share these sentiments concerning the impossibility of indifference to social injustice and the answer to the current debate concerning the future of revolutions.[52] Glaring social inequalities will continue to fuel revolution, since it would appear that even among people not suffering directly from these ills, there are some for whom the pain of witnessing them renders indifference impossible. There will thus, in my view, undoubtedly be other revolutions, but they will be different in form, both from those coming before and from each other (depending on the social context). What we see in the pages which follow is the life of a leader of one of these future revolutions, a leader born during the Cold War and who thus owes something to his Marxist-Leninist and Maoist predecessors, but who is also maturing in a postmodern age of globalization and is therefore experimenting with fresh, new concepts and methods.

PART I

Rafael

1. Birth and Family

Rafael Sebastián Guillén Vicente was born in Tampico on 19 June 1957 into a family that neighbors have described as "part of [Tampico] society though not high society."[1] Tampico is in the state of Tamaulipas—famous for its seafood and its cyclones—on the Gulf of Mexico.[2] In the 1950s it was a bustling tropical port; in the early part of the twentieth century it had been the busiest oil port in the world. In hindsight it seems ironic that in the 1930s government money had been diverted away from public building projects (such as reservoirs) in Chiapas and toward Tampico: the consequential stunting of Chiapas's development would provide Rafael, a middle-class scion of the beneficiary city, with a setting and support base for his career as a revolutionary.[3]

Rafael's date of birth is highly significant, coinciding with the emergence of left-wing guerrilla insurgency based on the *foco*.[4] The year 1957 saw Che Guevara and Fidel and Raul Castro fighting their way through the Sierra Maestra toward Havana in neighboring Cuba. (They had arrived on Cuban soil on 2 December 1956, having sailed from Tuxpán, only 94 miles [151 km] down the coast from Tampico.) One month after Rafael's birth, on 21 July, Guevara became the first combatant to be promoted to comandante and was given command of the second column (called Column 4 in order to confuse the enemy). Rafael's most impressionable years (ten to eighteen) witnessed the death of Guevara (October 1967); the year of revolution (1968), including the Paris student uprising and the massacre of students in Mexico City at Tlatelolco (2 October 1968); and the severe repression unleashed by the Echeverría government against left-wing militant groups (the early and mid-1970s).[5] It is not hard to imagine the impact of such events on the media and thus, consequently, on a politically minded family. Marcos states that as a family, "We learnt to read, not so much in school, as in the columns of newspapers."[6] These happenings probably resulted in Rafael's first exposure to and participation in intense political discussion. Such family debate must have formed a lasting impression on him.

Significantly, in the immediate aftermath of Tlatelolco, the student leader Eduardo Valle prophesied:

> I think the Movement will have its effect on the children. . . . In generations that lived it . . . seeing their older brothers move . . . into action, hearing stories of the days of terror, feeling them in their blood . . . *the government of this country will have to be very wary of those who were ten or fifteen in 1968 . . . they will always remember the assaults upon, the murders of their brothers.*[7]

Rafael, at that time aged eleven, proved to be just such a child, going on later to fulfill this prophecy by becoming the greatest thorn in the sides of the Salinas and Zedillo governments.

The impact of Tlatelolco on Rafael is made explicit in Marcos's communiqué *Tlatelolco: Thirty Years Later the Struggle Continues*, dated 2 October 1998 and addressed "to the Generation of Dignity of 1968." It was written to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the massacre, and, in addition to saluting those who died or felt the pain of 1968 and demanding "that the whole truth be told, that yesterday's and today's crimes no longer go unpunished," Marcos lays claim to being part of the same tradition as those who rebelled in 1968, the tradition of resistance. While admitting that the Zapatistas are "different and distinct" from those who resisted thirty years previously, the enemy is portrayed as the same, with the free-standing line "1968.1998," designed to highlight the fact that nothing had changed, comprising four of the final fifteen lines of the communiqué.[8] Further evidence of the impact of Tlatelolco on Rafael can be seen in a February 1994 interview with *La Jornada* correspondents. The journalists asked him, "Generationally speaking, are you a product of '68?" Marcos replied: "I'm definitely post-'68, but not the core of '68 . . . I was a little kid. But I do come from everything that followed, especially the electoral frauds, the most scandalous one in 1988, but others as well."[9]

Ten days after the student massacre, Mexico hosted the Olympic Games (12–27 October 1968). Marcos subtly plays on the near coincidence of these two occurrences in his *Tlatelolco* communiqué, where he talks of the "olympic astonishment and shame that beheld the [Tlatelolco] massacre." The Games, no doubt, also impacted on Rafael, who later enjoyed sports, especially basketball. The 1968 Olympics also proved memorable politically for the discussion provoked by the controversial Black Power salute made by the U.S. athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos.

Just as people are partly a product of the era into which they were born, so they are also partly a product of the families in which they were raised. Rafael, like Lenin, was the fourth of eight children.[10] He had six brothers and one sister, all of whom went on to attend university. His sister, Mercedes del Carmen Guillén Vicente, also known as "Paloma," obtained a degree in law and economics. Alfonso earned a degree in business management and subsequently became a professor of Mexican history at Universidad Autónoma de Baja California Sur. Héctor also earned a degree in business management. Carlos obtained a degree in sociology at Mexico City's National Autonomous University (UNAM), and he later went on to become a federal government accounting officer. He died of asphyxia in July 1994 at age thirty-eight; he had had epilepsy from childhood. Rafael also obtained his degree, in philosophy and arts, at UNAM. David's degree was in agricultural engineering, Sergio's was in mathematics, and Fernando's was in public finance and accountancy.

The fact that Rafael was the fourth of eight children is perhaps of some consequence. Much research has been undertaken recently on the effect birth order has on personality. The eminent sociologist Frank J. Sulloway has studied birth order for twenty years and recently finished a study in which he used more than half a million data points mined from tens of thousands of biographies relating to the lives of 6,000 individuals.[11] He concluded that "some people, it seems, are born to rebel."[12] Sulloway argues that birth order (whether you are the firstborn child or a later-born child) greatly shapes your propensity to rebel. He argues that "siblings become different for the same reason that species do over time: divergence minimizes competition for scarce resources."[13] Elaborating on this, he adds:

> Siblings compete with one another in an effort to secure physical, emotional, and intellectual resources from parents. Depending on differences of birth order, gender, physical traits, and aspects of temperament, siblings create differing roles for themselves within the family system. These differing roles in turn lead to disparate ways of currying parental favor. . . . As children become older and their unique interests and talents begin to emerge, siblings become increasingly diversified in their niches. One sibling may become recognized for athletic prowess, whereas another may manifest artistic talents. Yet another sibling may be good at mediating arguments and become the family diplomat.[14]

According to Sulloway, "Revolutionaries owe their radicalism to competition for limited family resources—and to the niches that characterize such competition—not to class consciousness."[15]

Of direct relevance to Marcos, Sulloway argues that "laterborns are more likely to identify with the underdog and to challenge the established order" and that "their hearts and souls are most thoroughly identified with radical changes that defy the status quo."[16] They characteristically possess an "openness to experience, a dimension that is associated with being unconventional, adventurous, and rebellious." They tend "as family underdogs . . . to empathize with other downtrodden individuals and generally support egalitarian social changes . . . to be more adventurous than firstborns . . . [and] to question authority and to resist pressure to conform to a consensus."[17] In his conclusion, Sulloway states: "In Western history, laterborns have been eighteen times more likely than firstborns to champion radical political revolutions."[18] He points out that Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, and Castro were all laterborns, although interestingly Guevara, a firstborn, was not. Firstborns, on the contrary, "identify more strongly with power and authority [since] they arrive first within the family and employ their superior size and strength to defend their special status."[19] It is interesting to note that the Guilléns' second child, their only daughter, Paloma, conforms to this pattern, having become a deputy and delegate of the PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) XV district in 1984 and marrying José María Morfin (advisor to the governor for the state of Puebla) in 1993. She and her husband were subsequently awarded the certificate of good conduct by the governor of Puebla, Manuel Bartlett, for their services to the PRI.

Sulloway's findings concerning middle children—to which category both Marcos and Fidel Castro belong—are even more pertinent.[20] He argues that "when they rebel, they do so largely out of frustration, or compassion for others, rather than from hatred or ideological fanaticism," and that "middle children make the most 'romantic' revolutionaries."[21] This second assertion concerning romanticism had earlier been made by two other scholars, Rejai and Phillips, who reviewed the lives of 135 political leaders forged in 31 rebellions.[22] Rafael's romanticism clearly owes much to his father, Alfonso, who appears to have had the same Quixotic disposition as Che Guevara's father, although as a successful entrepreneur he was clearly blessed with greater business acumen and possibly better fortune, since at its height his furniture business had eight outlets and twenty employees. Alfonso had been a dreamer and a lover of poetry, but after marriage and having a large family he had to attend to the more practical matter of

making money to provide for them. He lived out his utopianism vicariously through his son, Rafael, in whom he inculcated "a love of poetry and noble causes" and through whom his idealism lived on.[23] Indeed, his father claims that Rafael, as Marcos, "has restored to me the joy of living, my second youth."[24]

The work by Rejai and Phillips is particularly interesting since it identifies features common to most revolutionaries. They argue, for example, that

> revolutionary elites are typically of legitimate birth . . . from relatively large families, with over 65 percent having three to nineteen siblings . . . are urban born . . . tend to enjoy "tranquil" family lives . . . [are] middle class [and] of mainstream variety in respect to ethnicity and religion . . . [are] well educated (nearly 70 percent have college or professional education) . . . have impressive publication records . . . [and] are cosmopolitan in many senses; they speak foreign languages, travel far and long . . . [and] do not follow either their fathers' profession or the profession for which they were originally trained.[25]

Rafael, as we will see, conforms to this revolutionary elite pattern on every count.

It is perhaps also worth noting that Rafael also conforms to the findings of a recent study on birth order that concluded: "Middleborns seldom name their parents as their closest interactants."[26] The same study also found that when asked "to whom would you turn for emotional support," "middleborns were more than five times as likely to name a sibling than were firstborn or lastborn respondents."[27] This perhaps helps to explain Rafael's especially close relationship with his brother Carlos, with whom he lived at university for three years. The tendency to turn to family members other than parents for emotional support perhaps also explains why, like Che, Rafael was particularly close to his maternal grandmother, Antonia González. She had moved from Veracruz to live with the Guillén family when her husband died. She would often look after the children while their mother worked alongside Rafael's father in the family furniture store. Apparently she was an affectionate woman and Rafael grew profoundly attached to her.

Like many high achievers Rafael was a precocious child, his parents having given him a head start by educating him themselves before he went to school. Marcos claims, "I learned to read in my house, not at school; so when I went to school I had a great advantage, because I was already well

read."[28] This, however, conflicts with what his father tells us, namely that "before the age of five, *without having even learned to read*, he already knew how to recite."[29] (He claims to have taught Rafael to recite from memory "El Sembrador," the 495-word poem by Marcos Rafael Blanco Belmonte.)[30] Whatever the truth about Rafael's reading capabilities, it is clear that he was exposed at a young age to learning. This ought not to surprise us, given that his father had worked as a rural teacher for seven years, prior to building his furniture empire. When asked by Gabriel García Márquez where his "considerable literary education of the traditional kind" came from, Marcos replied:

> From childhood. In our family words had a very special value. Our way of approaching the world was through language . . . Early on, my mother and father gave us books that disclosed other things. One way or another, we became conscious of language—not as a way of communicating, but of constructing something. As if it were a pleasure more than a duty.[31]

He then outlines his boyhood literary diet:

> The Latin American boom came first. . . . My parents introduced us to García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, Monsiváis, Vargas Llosa (regardless of his ideas), to mention only a few. They set us to reading them. *A Hundred Years of Solitude* to explain what the provinces were like at the time. *The Death of Artemio Cruz* to show what had happened to the Mexican Revolution. *Días de guardar* to describe what was happening in the middle classes. As for *La cuidad y los perros*, it was in a way a portrait of us, but in the nude. All these things were there. . . . Next came Shakespeare . . . then Cervantes, then García Lorca, and then came a phase of poetry. . . . We went straight from the alphabet to literature and from there to theoretical and political texts, until we got to high school.[32]

Marcos believes that as a result of this parental encouragement:

> We went out into the world in the same way that we went out into literature. I think this marked us. We didn't look out at the world through a news-wire but through a novel, an essay or a poem. That made us very different. That was the prism through which my parents wanted me to view the world, as others might choose the prism of the media, or a dark prism to stop you seeing what's happening.[33]

In addition to introducing their children to literature, Rafael's parents provided them with a firm grounding in Mexican history. Marcos informs us

in one interview that "my parents taught me a lot about Mexican history," adding, "my main influences were Villa, Zapata, Morelos, Hildago, Guerrero: I grew up with these heroes."[34]

As well as developing their children's intellects, Rafael's parents also imbued their offspring with a strong sense of morality. In an interview given in March (but published in June) 1994 Marcos tells us:

> My parents taught us that, whatever path we chose, we should always choose *el camino de la verdad*—the path of truth—no matter how hard it might be, whatever it might cost. That we shouldn't value life over the truth. That it was better to lose your life than to lose truth . . . we were taught that all human beings had rights, and it was our duty to fight against injustice.[35]

2. School Years

When he was six Rafael began his primary education. He attended the Colegio Félix de Jesús Rougier (as its name suggests, a Jesuit school run by monks) from 1963 to 1969. Two of his elder brothers, Alfonso and Carlos, and his elder sister Paloma also attended the school. Their mother, being a teacher and a cultured woman, carefully supervised all her children's homework.

Rafael's school, even now, is characterized by its strictness, but it was even stricter during the period he attended it. In addition to fostering academic achievement the school also closely monitored other aspects of the students' conduct and behavior, notably cleanliness, responsibility, and discipline. (For example, pupils were checked daily for whether they had clean nails, had washed behind their ears, had brought a clean white handkerchief with them, had cleaned their shoes, and had a uniform on that was complete and in order.) Rafael distinguished himself by his hard work and good conduct. Indeed, according to one teacher, the Guillén children "were excellent and noble . . . oratorical types."[1]

However, it is evident that Rafael was to some extent overshadowed academically by his eldest brother Alfonso. While Rafael regularly obtained grades of nine or ten out of ten, Alfonso was a straight ten student. Thus, although Rafael was undoubtedly a bright pupil, as one of his teachers stresses, "he was no child prodigy, his intellectual capacity developed later."[2] Although Rafael strove to emulate his brother's achievements he could not; he failed, for example, to obtain the Ribbon of Honor that his brother had succeeded in earning. Alfonso's academic superiority in primary school may well help to explain why Rafael chose to develop his creative side in secondary school, writing poetry, acting, and directing movies. In terms of Sulloway's theories, Rafael's creative efforts may represent a subconscious attempt to carve himself a new niche, thereby avoiding direct competition in the academic sphere with a brother whose intellectual capa-

bilities thus far seemed vastly superior. Rafael, for his part, "won awards for perseverance, conduct and application."[3]

Despite attending a Jesuit school, it is clear that Rafael lost his religion in these years. Indeed, when interviewed decades later as Marcos, he revealed that "the last religious service I attended was when I took my First Communion. I was eight years old."[4] One must infer that Rafael did not proceed to Confirmation, a traditional affirmation of one's faith in Catholic countries, commonly undergone at around twelve years of age. This perhaps ought not to surprise us since he reveals in one of his interviews that in his family, "We were very independent of religion. It was a very humanist tradition, and not attached to any particular line."[5]

In 1969, Rafael moved to secondary school, attending the Jesuit Instituto Cultural de Tampico. The establishment's motto was *Duc in Altum*, taken from Luke 5:4 where Jesus goes to the shores of Galilee and exhorts the fishermen "to *put out into the deep* and let down your nets for a catch." Here it is perhaps best rendered "*Delve Deep* [inside yourself spiritually]." According to his then friends and peers it was here that his personality became more complex. He was serious yet jocular, sociable yet reserved, and frequently showed solidarity with others while at the same time being a rather solitary individual who retained a strong independent streak. It was during his secondary school education (1970–73) that Rafael began to develop his creative side, becoming a good sketcher and acting in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.

It was also during this period that Rafael discovered Cervantes. As he tells us in one interview, "I was given a book when I turned twelve, a beautiful cloth edition. It was *Don Quixote*. I had read it before, but in those children's editions. It was an expensive book, a special present which must still be out there somewhere."[6] His passion for *Don Quixote* can be seen from the fact that it was one of the books he took with him to Chiapas when he began his guerrilla work there.[7] Moreover, this passion evidently remains with him even today, for he tells us that "*Don Quixote* is always by my side . . . [it] is the best book of political theory."[8] It is worth remembering that the stories in which Marcos's alter ego, the fictional beetle called Don Durito, appears, are very much in the style of *Don Quixote*. Interestingly, Rafael's childhood hero, Che Guevara, was also a lover of *Don Quixote*, identifying himself with this patron saint of lost causes in his farewell letter to his father (dated 2 January 1967): "Don Ernesto, amid the dust kicked up by the heels of Rocinante,[9] with my lance at the ready to do battle with enemy giants, I send you this brief note."[10]

Rafael also admired the poetry of Pablo Neruda (1904–73), again like Che.[11] Rafael included the Chilean poet's *Canto General* among the few books he took with him to Chiapas,[12] named him first in his list of poets who had impressed him most,[13] and quoted part of his "The Liberators" in one of his communiqués.[14] Rafael's fondness for both Cervantes and Pablo Neruda appear to have been inherited from his father and perhaps his paternal aunt, who had written poetry under the pen name Perla Mar.[15]

Marcos's comments concerning his schooling are scant. He merely tells us: "In High School I read about Hitler, Marx, Lenin, Mussolini—history and political science in general . . . [and] learned English."[16] When asked, "Did your classmates believe that you were or might be a Communist?," he replied, "No, I don't think so. Perhaps the most they called me was a little radish: red outside and white inside."[17]

3. High School College

In 1973 at age sixteen Rafael entered the school's college (the Instituto Cultural de Tampico), having decided to stay on at the same institution. It was a coeducational college; women comprised more than 50 percent of the students in many classes. It is no surprise that the Jesuits maintained close supervision of their students, restricting their conduct in numerous ways. One former female pupil recalls: "If we had boyfriends at the school we were never allowed to hold hands, it was like a sacrilege."[1]

Being a Jesuit institution, value was placed not just on academic studies but also on students' character development. It is therefore not surprising that Rafael's sixth-grade teacher, Refugio Marín, should recall that: "He always helped his compañeros, he always shared what he had, always, always, always. He saved his pocket money and any compañero who didn't have any money he would buy a cake or a drink. He was a good compañero. He always helped the needy."[2]

The school, as part of this ethos, promoted pupil participation in local community-welfare projects. Accompanied by a teacher, Rafael and others would visit the impoverished Pescador housing estate nearby and offer their labor. Decades later, as Marcos, Rafael would answer the question "What were the roots of your personal rebellion?" by stating: "It's a process . . . you begin to take steps—first becoming interested in a situation, then understanding that there is injustice, then trying to understand the roots of this injustice. . . . You begin by helping out in small ways, taking logical steps."[3] It is tempting to think that his realization of injustice in the world and those first small steps were derived from his social work in Pescador when he was sixteen or so. In any event, a former female friend of Rafael's, who also attended the college and participated in its welfare projects, recollects: "There I saw men bricklaying and doing the washing. We learned to live with people and share tacos. It was part of our formation, learning to live with all types of people, to do the best thing and to learn the things which they had to teach us."[4] Arguably, it was this hands-on experience

in the alleviation of poverty and the betterment of local society that imbued Rafael with an appreciation of the importance of practical solutions to problems. This was to continue even through his university education in philosophy, which tended then to be concerned with the predominantly theoretical (as opposed to the practical), and was to remain with him for the next thirty years.

It was also at this time that Rafael began demonstrating a liking for theatre and movies. As one of his contemporaries at the school puts it, "He was one of the principal people involved in every activity, but above all in cultural activities. . . . He was a promoter of theatrical events, [and] of poetry."[5] His passion for acting was encouraged in literature class, where pupils were required to act out important scenes from major works of literature. In addition, there were extracurricular opportunities which allowed Rafael to indulge his cinematic and theatrical whims. A fellow pupil at this time, Jorge Nieto, recalls a movie the students made entitled *Bubblegum*. The plot was about the theft of a secret formula for a chewing gum bomb, and it was shot in a style similar to that employed a decade later in *The Untouchables*. Rafael, using a Super 8 camera he had, was the cameraman. Apparently, Rafael and others had also wanted to perform Jodorowsky's *El juego que todos jugamos* [*The Game We All Play*], but the teachers forbade it because it contained obscene language, involved some actors showing their buttocks, and entailed a rat being thrown into the audience.

In the second year of college, he starred in Carlos Fuentes's play *El tuerto es rey* (*The One-Eyed Man Is King*). He apparently chose the play, thereby revealing his developing passion for Fuentes. The plot, according to its author, involves a Duke (el Duque) and a woman (Donata) who are both blind "but each believes that only they are blind; each one believes that the other is their guardian and guide."[6] Rafael, then eighteen, played the Duke, who in the final climactic scene is killed by five guerrillas who burst into his home. The whole scene is symbolic; the Duke represents God, and the question of The Creation (of both man and the universe) is played out in the dialogue between him and the guerrillas. The director of the play, Rubén Núñez de Cáceres, Rafael's literature teacher at the time and now principal of Monterrey's Technical College (Preparatoria del Tecnológico de Monterrey), describes Guillén's performance as "brilliant" (buenísima).[7] Jorge Nieto confirms this, stating that Rafael "was a very good actor and had an eye for scenery."[8] Rafael would frequently exercise his natural flair for theatricals years later as Subcommander Marcos, leading one author to dub him "the Subcomandante of performance."[9]