



# Z A P

Zapatista Autonomy Project

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# Stop Making Capitalism<sup>1</sup>

John Holloway

1. We have different political perspectives, we have different ideas about political practice and organisation and perhaps also about the sort of society we would like to create. What do we have in common? NO. Our NO to existing society. That is not something small and insignificant. Our NO is an anger, a fury, a profound conviction that unites us. NO to neo-liberalism, NO to capitalism, NO to war, NO to the destruction of humanity. Our NO must be the starting point for thinking about alliances.

2. This is a very urgent NO. We are lemmings rushing towards a cliff. Humanity is on a highway that leads straight to its own self-destruction. The

<sup>1</sup> This paper was presented at the WSF in Porto Alegre, 2005. Found on line at: [http://spip.red.m2014.net/article.php3?id\\_article=134](http://spip.red.m2014.net/article.php3?id_article=134).

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self-annihilation of humanity becomes a more real possibility every day: through war, through the destruction of the environment, through the misery and poverty and disease and starvation and violence created by neo-liberalism. The only possibility is to say NO, to refuse: “No, we will not go down this highway to our self-destruction”. Not “we should go more carefully, or more slowly, or we should drive on the left rather than on the right”, but simply NO.

3. NO is also the secret of our power. Those who rule always depend on those who are ruled. The capitalists cannot make profit without their workers, the generals cannot make war without their soldiers, the presidents and prime ministers cannot rule without their subjects. If the servant says no to the master, then the servant is no longer a servant and the master is no longer a master: both start to become humans. If the soldiers say no to their generals, then the soldiers are no longer soldiers and the generals are no longer generals. If the workers say no to their

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of a different society exists for all of us, of course, but we have many different ways of seeing that star and of trying to reach it. To try to channel those searchings in one direction would be to do violence to them. We should discuss and criticise, of course, but it is important that the world we want to create is a world that contains many different worlds.

If we want to talk of alliances and of cooperation it is on the negative that we should focus, on our refusal, on the practical organisation of how we can stop: stop Bush, stop war, stop the destruction of the environment, in short stop making capitalism now. Stop making capitalism and, in the same process, make another world, a world of many worlds.

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way forward and sometimes they are as big as the Lacandon Jungle or the argentinazo of three years ago or the revolt in Bolivia. These refusals can be seen as fissures, as cracks in the system of capitalist domination. Capitalism is not (in the first place) an economic system, but a system of command. Capitalists, through money, command us, telling us what to do. To refuse to obey is to break the command of capital. The question for us, then, is how do we multiply and expand these refusals, these cracks in the texture of domination?

Revolution, in other words, is necessarily interstitial: the spreading of cracks or gaps in the structure of capitalist domination. Each of these cracks is firstly a space of refusal but it is also a place of creation, a place in which we develop our own power-to-do and our own drive towards self-determination. The NOs contain Yeses, many different Yeses pushing experimentally in different directions. Prefiguration, not pivotal thinking. The utopian star

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capitalist bosses, then the workers are no longer workers and the capitalists are no longer capitalists. All these people who want to command us, who want to tell us what to do, would realise that they depend on us, and not the other way around. We are stronger than we think.

4. So first NO: strike, mutiny, boycott, disobedience, refusal. NO is what we have in common, NO is urgent, NO is the source of our strength.

5. We make capitalism. If capitalism exists today, it is not because it was created in the eighteenth or nineteenth century, but because it was created today, because we create it today. If we do not create it tomorrow, it will not exist tomorrow. We tend very often to blame them - the imperialists, the Americans, Bush, the capitalists but when we blame them, we cast ourselves in the role of victims, and if we are victims we are helpless to change things: we have to ask someone to do it on our behalf. But it is

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not they who create capitalism, it is we who create it. And if we have the power to create it, then we have the power to stop creating it. Only if we realise our responsibility can we recognise our strength.

6. The question of revolution then is not “how do we destroy capitalism”, but “how do we stop creating capitalism”? This does not solve the problems, but it gives us a different way of thinking about changing the world.

Firstly, it changes time. It cannot be a question of building for revolution in the future (building alliances), but of action here and now to break capitalism, to stop creating it now.

Secondly, it focuses our attention on refusal. There is now no time to be lost. We must refuse and do everything possible to make our refusals effective. Our whole history is a history of refusals of strikes, mutinies, boycotts, refusals to pay debts, of walking

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away from those who try to command us. Very often these refusals have been used simply as a means of negotiating acceptance on better terms - striking for higher wages, for example but not always. Recent years have seen a whole series of actions to veto neo-liberal development, often successful and often on a very large scale (Bolivia in October of 2003, for example). How do we make these refusals more effective, how do we refuse not in order to negotiate better terms but in order to bring to a halt the rush towards the destruction of humanity?

Thirdly, we do not live in a world where there is one great refusal. Rather, there are millions of refusals, millions of people who say or scream NO every day, who say, NO, we will not allow capital to determine our lives, we shall shape our lives the way that we think necessary or desirable. Sometimes these refusals are so small that even those involved do not perceive them as refusals, but often they are collective projects searching for an alternative

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