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The celebrations for the Fifth Centenary of what in Mexico was tactfully called the “Meeting of Two Worlds” (so as to remain within a politically correct framework) led to heated debates and controversy both sides of the Atlantic. The event served as a catalyst for trends we had sensed taking root in both Mexico and Peru. Paradoxically, the question of the Conquest caused a greater stir with colonizers’ descendants in Europe and America than it did with the Indians themselves. In fact, this only appears to be a paradox. In truth, apart from the still-minority fringe of leaders versed in political activism, few of the continent’s indigenous communities felt concerned with the event’s commemoration.¹ Few Amerindian groups see the year 1492 as a defining moment in their historical or cosmogonic tradition. In some places, the impact of the contact left traces that can be found in the hidden recesses of the collective memory, in myths and rituals, in a modified, sublimated form.² It is not necessarily seen as such by those involved, even when they refer to their own history, which does not fit into the linearity peculiar to our Western conception but instead relates events to the Earth’s cycles, with the Flood and the rebuilding of the world as background.

This amnesia about the traumatism of the Conquest is far from being absent everywhere. For the neo-Indians, it constitutes the stock-in-trade of their doctrine, and this is also the case for the mexicanidad movement, as can be seen in *Izkalotl*, one of its newspapers: “Did the Europeans discover *Ikkxachillan* [America] or did the *Ikkxachillankah* discover Europe, Asia and Africa? Nahua-type pyramid constructions [exist] in the Canary Islands, Nahua petroglyphs in Spain, pre-Nahua pyramids in Egypt and the Mayan arch in Agamemnon’s tomb.”³

According to neo-Indian vernacular, 1492 marks the start of the “deterioration of our continental ecology through the genocide of the peoples from the Atlantic Islands.”⁴ An instructive example of the strength of this neo-Indian tidal wave is the date October 12, 1992, in Mexico, the “Day of Race,” celebrated in both Latin America and Spain. The

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day before, 500 runners from the entire American continent gathered together in Teotihuacan, central Altiplano's most spectacular site famous for its pyramids of the Sun and the Moon, before being received in triumph on October 12 at the Zócalo, Mexico City's central square, by the organizers of the Peace and Dignity Journey. It had been elegantly decorated for the occasion with an immense cosmogram drawn on the ground with symbols inspired by the Aztec tradition, its edges enhanced with beautiful motifs in colored pebbles from Mayan iconography. Groups of conchero dancers courteously hailed bystanders, offering them impromptu lessons in Aztec religion. In the minds of the organizers and participants, the day did not represent the commemoration of a discovery but "five hundred years of resistance to colonial domination, imperialism and genocide." There was nothing formal or dogmatic about the event—it unfolded in a good-natured atmosphere, livened up by incense-burning rituals and the distribution of food organized by a caucus of shamans or so-called *sacerdotes*, eager to exercise their talent on the public.

The aim of the ritual on October 12 was to link Teotihuacan to Mexico City, some thirty kilometers away, with each of the 500 chosen runners symbolizing one year of the "half-millennium of colonization," a challenge cheerfully called the Voyage of Rediscovery. Two hundred thirty marathon runners had set off from Alaska back in May, and 276 from Peru. "The North American group arrived before noon at the ancient Aztec [*sic*] pyramids of Teotihuacan, the spiritual crossroads of the indigenous Americas," wrote one commentator. In Teotihuacan, the Inuit from Alaska and the Mapuche from Chile decided to set up sweat lodges and smoke peace pipes, chanting prayers in their native tongues. The runners formed quite an ethnic kaleidoscope—Apache, Sioux, Comanche, Navajo, Seri, Huichol, Tarascan, and many other Indians from other Central and South American countries. Their creed was as follows: "The Indians think that Columbus was the first invader, but we have taken the floor to correct History. The Europeans built temples upon our temples; they stole our land and left us on the margins. But we are still here." Other groups gathered in Teotihuacan for a quest of a different nature—to receive the Sun's energy, to get in touch with their ancestors, "to dance, philosophize or repudiate."⁵ From the morning onward, the concheros (looking as though they were straight out of a Hollywood blockbuster, and the most photogenic group by far) were ready to receive the cosmic energy. Small groups rapidly formed at the foot of the Pyramid of the Sun, along the Avenue of the Dead and up toward Huitzilopochtli's shrine. A young man appeared dressed in the costume of an Eagle Warrior,⁶ whereas another, a conchero, adjusted his fox skin costume. Hastily left on the shrine of Huitzilopochtli,⁷ to avoid getting caught in the crowd, were the leaders' *bâtons de commandement* allocated to each of the groups, purified beforehand in baths of incense in front of the Pyramid of the

Sun. The operation was repeated by the Cree, the Cherokee, the Huichol, the Nahua, and the Otomi. Only the “councilors” were authorized to approach the shrine, led by Tlacaoel (alias Francisco Jiménez), “high priest” of Nahua origin, “recognized by all the continent’s *calpulli* as a spiritual leader,” who, with great pleasure, denounced the celebration to commemorate 500 years of oppression.

According to Tlacaoel, the different sun “visions” experienced at Teotihuacan were similar for all the peoples of the continent: “The vision is universal”; “Mexicanity is universal.” This is why the Temple of the Sun and Huitzilopochtli’s Temple at Teotihuacan were chosen, being sites said to have the highest energetic charge. Alas! A disagreement then broke out between the event’s organizers and government authorities anxious that all events should be held in Mexico City in the Zócalo, which Tlacaoel refused. A representative of the Cree from Alberta fervently maintained that the purpose of gathering indigenous groups in Mexico should be to “relive the ancestors’ founding philosophy and seek a more direct contact with the continent’s *calpulli*.”⁸ In the middle of the day the dancing became more intense, with the indispensable concheros as masters of the dance, to the sound of *tlalpanhuehuetl*,⁹ *huehuetl*,¹⁰ *teponaztli* and shells,¹¹ while a stone figurine portraying the face of Cuauhtemocztin (the eponymous hero of mexicanidad) was bathed in incense. The “councilors” witnessed the event seated at Huitzilopochtli’s shrine, along with dozens of tourists lost in the fray and a few yoga adepts. The rest of the day was taken up with dances while awaiting the other groups invited to this noisy, transcontinental ceremony.

Another event celebrated on October 12 was the 500th anniversary of the evangelization of Latin America in Mexico City’s Plaza de las Tres Culturas around five o’clock in the afternoon in front of a crowd of 2,000 members of the main Christian communities from all over the country. Indians from Guerrero and Morelos took the subway or marched toward the Tlatelolco District, “where,” they said, “our forefathers fought and died in the final battle before the fall of Tenochtitlan.” However, for the people of Guerrero, one of the reasons for protesting was also to demonstrate against the project to build a dam in the Alto Balsas region. At two o’clock, the Mixe delegation joined the Marcha por la Dignidad Indígena on its way from Oaxaca, one group having set out from Chilpancingo on October 2 with 300 people, the other on September 20 with fewer than 200. Gathered together in Tlatelolco were Rarámuri from Chihuahua, Huichol from Jalisco, Nahua, Tlapanec and Amuzgo from Guerrero. It was easy to recognize the Indians from Oaxaca in the procession by their chests girded with black cloth as a sign of mourning. Cultural leaders of indigenous communities were listened to attentively as they outlined in their native tongue the everyday problems faced by Indians. Then, in the rain, began the Danza de los Retos, a strange exercise retracing the Spanish efforts to convince Indians to

accept baptism, to the sound of the San Luis Acatlán fanfare. On one side of the square, before almost 5,000 enrapt spectators, the dancers brandished machetes in the presence of the Devil, an angel, and then a child and an old man. At the same time, at the other end of the square, the Danza del Tigre was performed.¹² The men and women then hurried to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Guadalupe,¹³ where they spent an uncomfortable night before celebrating Mass the next day in the presence of respected shamans. At the same time, a meeting was held between representatives of the Coordinadora Nacional de Pueblos Indios, the mexicanidad, and the Consejo Mexicano 500 años de Resistencia Indígena, Negra y Popular. All of a sudden, the din gave way to five minutes of silence, “one for each century,” to the sound of conchs in the background. A fire was lit by the Consejo Mexicano, and October 12, the day celebrating the Spanish Conquest, was declared a “day of mourning” (Angélica Enciso and Raúl Llanos).¹⁴

In a suburb of Mexico City stands a venerable *ahuehuete*, the Tree of the Sad Night, renamed for the occasion “the Tree of Victory,” where a protest march denounced the hardship in rural areas and the ensuing exodus to cities. Its leaders, members of the National Assembly of the Urban Working-class Movement (ANAMUP), had undertaken a “long march” toward the Zócalo, incorporating into their protest the commemoration of the Fifth Centenary. At eleven o’clock, a series of dances freely adapted from the conchero tradition staged the four cosmic cycles of the Nahuatl, tentatively joined by artists from the Metropolitan Autonomous University before being replaced by a performance of experimental music by Óscar Hernández and the screening of a documentary movie about Mexican cultures. At the foot of the *ahuehuete* (the Tree of the Sad Night, where a disillusioned Hernán Cortés believed that the Spanish had been defeated), a vote was taken to rename the sacred monument. Meanwhile, a note was circulating among the crowd demanding that the education authorities devise a study program to teach Nahuatl in schools to preserve the customs of their ancestors. As noon drew near, a strange spectacle unfolded—500 participants moved off to return to the Zócalo along the symbolically marked route in the opposite direction of the route supposedly taken by Cortés, starting by following the Mexico-Tacuba road, across the Alvarado Bridge and down the Juárez and Madero Avenues to join up with the rest of the groups taking part in the commemoration.¹⁵ It was hardly surprising that on the way, the statue of Columbus, on one of the *glorietas* (traffic circles or roundabouts) of the Paseo de la Reforma, was vandalized, but it was curious that some of those taking part tried to break the hand of Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas at the sailor’s feet.¹⁶

Ceremonies were also held around the Templo Mayor, the impressive Aztec site and the center of the capital’s politicoreligious nexus, recently excavated by archae-

ologists, amidst the din of the Insignas Aztecas group's huehuetl. Tension was mounting. The "captain" of the dance was accused of wanting to exploit the Peace and Dignity Days with the complicity of the director of the Mancomunidad Indígena Solar (Solar Native Supracommunity), and the deputy director of public relations for the Institutional Revolutionary Party's National Executive Committee—in short, the leaders of the ruling party who currently have the monopoly on power. The Council of the Kalpulli Koakalko quickly distanced itself from the event to underline its disagreement with such aims. No less turbulent, converging on the capital's suburbs and appearing out of nowhere were other concheros bearing punk battle flags celebrating two icons of neocontestation, the Virgin of Guadalupe and Che Guevara. Their message: "We are Mexica and celebrate the Aztecs. We come every year because it has been a tradition for generations. This is an act of protest against something which happened five hundred years ago." According to Raquel Peguero, during the ceremony, "we did not know who was being prayed to"—some claimed it was Quetzalcoatl, others God, others the Virgin Mary or the Guadalupeana "so that we may respect this obligation" (to celebrate deities from the Mesoamerican pre-Hispanic tradition or those of colonial origin).¹⁷

This is how Blanche Petrich described the memorable day at the Zócalo: "It was a festival of dancers, Indians, middle-class 'esoterics' who practice the 'Mexica cult,' anarchists with red and black flags, sporting tattoos and green hair, dressed in black with army boots, torn shirts and trousers with holes in the knees, made up like American Goths or *Locos Adams* [the Addams Family]." Their creed: "Somos indios, somos libertarios y no queremos celebrar el Quinto Centenario."¹⁸ Columbus's statue was covered with garbage, and horns were added to his head to cries of "Death to the State!" Members of the Unión de Indígenas Triquis were there, residents of the Calle López, a community of poor artisans and shopkeepers from the capital. Also demonstrating loudly were youths from the Yanhuikanahuac group, who, according to them, are not concheros but merely amateurs of pre-Hispanic dance and followers of a certain Xoconoztli who demands the return to Mexico of Moctezuma's headdress, currently in the Museum für Völkerkunde in Vienna. The calmest (discreet, even) people there were the men and women dressed in immaculate white and holding hands "so as not to break the circle of energy," or raising their hands to the heavens to receive the aspersion of incense to the sound of conchs. Their leader was a man by the name of Ehecateotl Kuautlixan, who organized two ritual sequences, the "ceremony of universal fusion" and the "harmonic chant." Each of them then scattered chrysanthemum petals as a live eagle was promenaded through the crowd and an old man was presented with a jade statue, a "heart of green stone." The ceremony blessed what is known as the "Refoundation of the Great Tenochtitlan," followed by this communion:

Father Quetzalcoatl who speaks like the serpent, return to our villages,
We are all sons of the Father Sun.
All hearts are made of wind. A man cannot rule the stars.
Any one of us can become intoxicated with books, but could never invent a plum or a
handful of corn on our own.

While a woman from Veracruz proclaimed that she was the legitimate descendant of the emperor Moctezuma, close by on the Calle Madero, banners bearing the inscription "El indio, unido, jamás será vencido" fluttered in the wind.¹⁹ Opposite the Federal District Department building, the act to coordinate the 500 years of "Indigenous and Black Resistance" was taking shape. Political demands poured forth. Demonstrators called for the release of the 5,000 Indians incarcerated in Mexican prisons for having demanded the allocation of land, and at the same time, opposite the National Palace, the act for the national coordination of Indian peoples and the Unión de Campesinos Emiliano Zapata was being arranged. A scarecrow on a platform represented the Holy Inquisition. Once again flags were waving in honor of Cuba, Emiliano Zapata and Che Guevara, or to demand the release of Chairman Gonzalo, leader of the Maoist Shining Path movement, and supporting the "People's War" in Peru. A Televisa vehicle made its way through the crowd with difficulty, smeared with slogans reading "Vendepatrias, prensa vendida, Televisa y Colón al paredón" and pelted with tomatoes as it went.²⁰

The same day in Puebla, a cheerful demonstration was organized by young people protesting "against the cultural, economic and political domination that the Europeans and North Americans have been exercising for five centuries." It included people from the city as well several native groups that had come down from the Sierra Norte de Puebla and up from the Mixteca to join in the protest against the Europeans who came 500 years ago "to impose a religion and culture as well as to murder and pillage the wealth of the nation." Some indigenous leaders formally demanded that the government recover treasures confiscated abroad, in particular Moctezuma Xocoyotzin's headdress. People from Campeche set off on a march toward the capital of the state to protest against "marginalization and exploitation." In Guerrero, the archbishop of Chilpancingo hastened to remind people of the Catholic Church's blamelessness for the colonizers' abuses of power, and did not refrain from attacking "Protestant sects that commercialize faith and strike out at the Church." The same day in Acapulco the forty-four Concorde passengers took off on a thirty-four-hour trip around the world.

At the other end of the country, in Felipe Carrillo Puerto in Yucatán, a march under the aegis of the National Pedagogical University teaching staff set off from the Sanctuary of the Talking Cross,²¹ where three blankets were burned, each symbolizing one of Columbus's ships. Representatives of the Supreme Mayan Council, the Mayan

Council from the Yucatán Peninsula (the Quintana Roo delegation) and ceremonial centers came to plant trees, one for each community. Still in Yucatán, in Chichen Itza (now an international tourist hotspot), over 5,000 Indians celebrated *Cha'cha'ac*, which culminated with offerings laid in the sacred cenote.²² Members of the Supreme Council used the occasion to denounce poverty, hunger, and unemployment while at the same time in Oaxaca, a delegation of Mazateco Indians in the town of Flores Magón gathered in front of the Government Palace to demand a health center in the village. From a different perspective, in the village of Colón in the state of Querétaro was held the only celebration in the whole of Mexico in honor of the Genovese sailor, attended by authorized representatives from a dozen Latin American nations.

But what took place in a spot as emblematic of ethnic tourism as San Cristóbal de las Casas, in the heart of the Maya highlands? Nearly 2,000 Indians (Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Tojolabal, Chol, Chamula, and Zoque) led by the Broad Front of Social Organizations of Chiapas, moved off from the Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas monument toward the town's main square. Banners were waved protesting against the Free Trade Agreement, Article 27 of the Constitution, and government policy that "intends to exterminate them." Such a concentration of Indians had not been seen in this spot since Lázaro Cárdenas's presidential campaign in 1933. The demonstrators marched through the central park, where Indians devote themselves to crafts for tourists. Just as they passed by the Church of Santo Domingo, a young man climbed onto the statue of Diego de Mazariegos, the *conquistador* who founded the town. It fell to the ground and was immediately destroyed with hammers. Without delay, the mayor denounced the act, which he suspected was ordered by missionaries and members of the diocese of San Cristóbal, who seemed to be trying to conceal their responsibility for the Indians' present situation. The same day in Morelia, the statue of the viceroy Antonio de Mendoza was toppled, spurred on by the Frente Cívico Michoacano, and in Solola in Guatemala, Rigoberta Menchú (later awarded the Nobel Peace Prize), appealed for the rights of indigenous people to be respected throughout the continent. The ceremony was attended by the mayor, a native Indian from Solola, the prosecutor for human rights' envoy, and members of religious brotherhoods. After a series of speeches, the public was honored with songs, poems, and a performance of the *Danzas de la Conquista*.²³

It is easy to infer that the Fifth Centenary celebrations were part of a vast ideological construction of Pan-American dimensions. The succession of rituals uniting all the continent's indigenous populations along a north-south axis gave rise to the key idea of the race from Alaska and Chile toward the focal point of Mexico City. The Anahuac valley, home of the capital, has the advantage of having a very large population of Indian communities, and, in its center, are spectacular pre-Hispanic sites, first

and foremost Teotihuacan, which became for the occasion a kind of “umbilicus of the world,” a point of reference not only for the populations who lived there (from AD 300 to 900) but far later for the Aztecs. Its symbolic structure with the two symbolic pyramids of the Sun and the Moon constitutes a sort of cosmic quintessence.

The race stems from a tradition with pre-Hispanic antecedents—especially in the Southwest, associated with agrarian fertility—as well as contemporary ones for the Rarámuri Indians of Chihuahua. Moreover, the idea of migration, the successive populating of the continent, is implicitly taking shape.²⁴ In addition, a pre-Hispanic assumption is emerging concerning the articulation of notions of time and space as each of the runners represents one year of colonization, evoking the porters in the Maya religion who were supposed to follow the course of the Sun from sunrise to sunset. Teotihuacan thus appears as the spiritual crossroads of native America, which is total fiction, as is its being considered an Aztec site.²⁵ It is considered as a “center of the world” of which Mexico City’s Zócalo would be the epicenter. The square’s decoration with cosmic motifs inspired by Aztec and Maya designs illustrates this preoccupation with universalizing the ritual in the spirit of the Mexica religion by conferring specific semantic properties to each cardinal point. Each of the groups present in Teotihuacan expressed itself through its own cultural items such as sweat lodges. The encounter was an opportunity to highlight shared ethnic concerns as well of those of foreigners tempted by mind-altering experiences to a backdrop of Indian religion. “Energy” cults, particularly those with a “Sun” aspect, find in the Mexica religion arguments for worshipping the Sun and a conceptualization of the process of entropy said to affect the cosmos. However, also emerging is the mythical figure of Huitzilopochtli, guide of the Aztec Nation and high priest of migration, with the antithetic figures of Eagle and Jaguar Warriors creating a contrast with the search for harmony, probably more inspired by Pueblo Indian philosophies from Arizona and New Mexico.

The “Nahuatlization” of the leaders’ ceremonial names and the re-creation of a sociological category such as the *calpulli* (which, in the Aztec universe, was a socio-territorial unit) is part of the process of invention of a supratribal political and cultural unit. The idea itself of *calpulli* extends across the entire American continent in an often-repeated attempt to unify its cultural areas. Tlacaelel (the name of an Aztec king), one of the neo-Indian leaders, is also doing this by asserting the Pan-American nature of Sun worship, for which Teotihuacan is an ideal site to practice these cults, which delegations of North American Indians accept. The “solarization” of an incipient continental religion implicitly suggests the subtle strategies for power at work in Mexico in the invention of this atypical ritual represented by the celebration of the Fifth Centenary.

It is also worth examining the events commemorated at Three Cultures Square. The site is made up of various buildings of pre-Hispanic origin, with a temple, a colonial church founded at the beginning of the seventeenth century by the Franciscans, and a modern housing complex opened in 1964. In fact, the commemoration of the missionaries' arrival on the American continent was held at a site that evokes the layout and combination of pre-Hispanic, colonial and modern cultures, although for some participants it was also the ultimate site of resistance before the fall of Tenochtitlan. Stranger still is the connection between the site of Tlatelolco and the sanctuary of Guadalupe, the most popular center of worship of the Virgin for Amerindians from beyond Mexican borders, and this is why shamans are also associated with the site. The demonstrators thus found themselves in the paradoxical situation of rejecting the Spanish contribution to their culture in the name of defending autochthonous authenticity while calling for the glorification of the *mexicanidad*, which retains a very strong Christian influence. Moreover, the coordination includes in its program the defense of black populations, of which there are few in Mexico, apart from on the Caribbean and Pacific coasts, and whom, traditionally, the Indians held in mistrust. Looking after "working-class" interests has become one of the movement's main concerns. The coordination endeavors to combine public protest on a cosmological backdrop with sectors of the underprivileged social classes. Indigenous demands are also devoted to current conflicts, in this case the construction of a dam on the upper Balsas, which would flood the land. The decreed day of mourning appears as a desire to repudiate colonization and a need to cancel out the weight of a rejected history.

This opening up to contemporary economic problems is also gaining strength in San Cristóbal de las Casas with the emergence of a groundswell against the Free Trade Agreement that marks the aspirations of Mexican business in the orbit of the American market. With regard to the destruction of the statue of Mazariegos, this is one of a series of spectacular actions led by (native?) leaders for whom the character of the colonizer is invested with an extremely strong historical charge (which is not necessarily the case for Indians). The same political ambivalence can be seen in the attacks on the statue of Viceroy Mendoza in Morelia and Christopher Columbus in Mexico City. In San Cristóbal de las Casas, the issues surrounding indigenous heritage are, as we have seen, far more complex. This is an overwhelmingly Indian region, one of the most representative areas of traditional Mexican Indians, and which, because of this, has been drawing the attention of anthropologists and "ethnic" tourists for several decades. The Indians thus find themselves in a position of representation with regard to a demand for curiosities and native "authenticity," hence the presence of the autochthonous families established permanently in the city's main square. We can also sense the underlying conflict between political and religious authorities

and the question of power sharing in local communities. The celebration is, then, an opportunity to bring to light extreme tensions, especially concerning conflicts about land and the missionaries' support for the Indians in these demands.

The rituals associated with the event of the *Noche Triste* testify in a spectacular way to the celebration's splitting into two different directions, one involving the middle classes (because of its being supported by the ANAMUP [Asamblea Nacional del Movimiento Urbano Popular], an essentially populist and nonindigenous movement), and the other concerning intellectual elites with the participation of artists from an academic environment, even going as far as performing an experimental music concert.²⁶ We should note here the reference to an Aztec ritual governed by systematic cardinal references on the theme of movement, and traveling around the *Noche Triste* tree toward the center of Mexico City in the opposite direction to the route taken by Cortés. This movement is even more remarkable because of its insistence on the educational aspects of cultural resistance, particularly through advocating the development of teaching Nahuatl. One of the organizers of the events in the Zócalo recalled that in the 1960s, there were only two establishments teaching Nahuatl in Mexico City compared with twenty-four today.

The ceremonies at the Templo Mayor represent one of the crucial moments of the celebration insofar as this is the capital's most central site as well as its holiest, and where extremely important archaeological discoveries have been made over recent decades. Disagreements surfaced between the groups organizing the commemoration of the Fifth Centenary, with the intrusion of the Institutional Revolutionary Party, and the perfect ambiguity that hovers over the supernatural entities venerated during the ceremonies, both Quetzalcoatl and the Virgin (Mary or Our Lady of Guadalupe). Behind the apparent *concientización* (awareness) of the event, a network of power was forming, with each party struggling for control. With these rallies, they attempted to build a new political structure, indiscriminately drawing its ideological and symbolic references from the arsenal of representations evoking the pre-Hispanic era. This balancing out between divinities extends to the emblematic figures of the modern world, encompassing in the same mythological fiction Che Guevara and Chairman Gonzalo, leader of the Shining Path. Xoconochetl Antonio Gomora, chief of the Yanhuikanahuac group, who is campaigning for the return of Moctezuma's headdress to Mexico City, claims that "the last five hundred years have been like a kind of slumber descending upon our minds. This circle of time has just closed and we are now entering a new era of wakefulness."

Throughout the country we can see the way in which pre-Hispanic symbols have been recovered and reinterpreted in order to introduce national claims, as testified by the reference to the "Talking Cross" in Quintana Roo and the celebration of a

rite on the edge of a cenote in Yucatán. A discordant demonstration in this context of rebellion was the one honoring Christopher Columbus in the town that bears his name (Colón) near Querétaro as well as the way in which the Chicano movement used the event to draw attention to one of its main concerns, the international border closely guarded by the American authorities in their struggle against illegal immigration. In another register, the case of Guatemala illustrates the intensity of the native issue in the American countries with the highest proportion of Indians, as seen from a human rights perspective thanks to, among others, the influential figure of Rigoberta Menchú.

In all these commemorations of the Meeting of the Two Worlds we can see this amorphous neo-Indian grouping drifting toward politically uncategorizable formulas, “punk anarchists” and “esoterics.”²⁷ With the ritual of “universal fusion” and “harmonic chant,” the energy concerns that are part of Mexica cosmology have found a perfect area of expression and adapt admirably to the aims of these neo-Indian philosophies. From their central core we can see emerging the clash of two concepts on a planetary scale: “One which is energy-based, cosmogonic and scientific, established in Ixchallan, now known as America by the Atzin-echica-Tenochca, and the other mythological, mystic and land-based, established overseas and brought to these shores by the Spanish Moors.”²⁸ All these movements present their program in terms of “return,” of refounding the great Tenochtitlan or resurrecting Quetzalcoatl. It is also symptomatic on a political level that the equation “Indian = People” is giving rise to a new instrumentalization of the rallying cry “El pueblo unido, jamás será vencido” heard on all the forums of the Latin American world, from Santiago to Cuba. Lastly, a surprising symbolic element stands out—the relationship between the protest movement and the media. Televisa, a veritable audiovisual empire, is finding itself stigmatized despite the fact that the media coverage of these events incites mexicanidad’s defenders to make use of the audiovisual stage to manufacture new native popular opinion under the sign of “ethnic purity” and the rejection of any compromise with the colonizers.

Notes

1. Criticism of the idea of “discovery” (*descubrimiento*) is emerging in neo-Indian literature, as it is perceived as “a romantic touch to the Eurocentric position of racial and cultural supremacy.” As for the idea of “meeting” (*encuentro*), it is seen as asserting a “bourgeois, conformist and culturalist ideological position in search of a false identity.” *Izkalotl*, August 1991.
2. Aurore Becquelin and Antoinette Molinié, eds., *Mémoire de la tradition* (Nanterre: Société d’ethnologie, 1993).
3. *Izkalotl*, September 1997.

4. *Izkalotl*, January 1974.
5. *La Jornada*, October 12, 1992.
6. Military order such as that of the Jaguar Warriors during the Mexica period of the Aztec Empire.
7. Aztec tutelary deity who guided their peregrination to the central Mexico valley.
8. Clan-type organization created along land-based lines in Tenochtitlan.
9. Ceremonial drum.
10. Coyote-skin drum, played standing, used in all major Aztec rituals.
11. Xylophone drum with vibrating tongues, still used in some Indian communities in central Mexico. With the huehuetl, it represents masculine and feminine cosmic duality.
12. "The Dance of the Jaguar," a favorite choreography during the eponymous saint's day in the state of Oaxaca.
13. The most popular pilgrim site of Indian and mestizo Mexico set on the slopes of Tepeyac Hill, to the north of Mexico City. The sanctuary was built on the spot where the Indian Juan Diego had a vision of the Virgin.
14. Quoted in *La Jornada*, October 13, 1992.
15. *La Jornada*, October 13, 1992.
16. In "Black Legend." Bartolomé de Las Casas denounced the cruel treatment inflicted upon the Indians.
17. *La Jornada*, October 13, 1992.
18. We are Indians, we are free, and we do not want to celebrate the Fifth Centenary (of the Conquest of America). *La Jornada*, October 13, 1992.
19. "The People united will never be conquered!" the rallying cry modeled on that of popular movements, "¡El pueblo unido jamás será vencido!"
20. "Traitors to the homeland, the press has sold out, Televisa and Columbus for the firing squad!"
21. The "Talking Cross" refers to an oracle who in 1850, in Quintana Roo, was said to have predicted the Maya insurrection against the Mestizos. It became the symbol of Indian resistance throughout the second half of the nineteenth century.
22. Cave in the karstic area of Maya country (Yucatán), where subterranean waters reemerge.
23. One of the organizations that refused to celebrate the Fifth Centenary was the National Guatemalan Revolutionary Unit. *La Jornada*, October 13, 1992.
24. In Bolivia, during the countercelebration of the Fifth Centenary of the Spanish Conquest in 1992, there was unprecedented mobilization, which took the form of multiple marches that drew Indians of various ethnic groups toward the Bolivian cities. This leads us to wonder if they were following the alignments of the sanctuaries that crossed the Inca Empire and its political divisions. The "Long March for Land and Dignity" lasted over a month. For the first time Amazonian lowlands federations and Aymara activists had a common cause. La Paz was symbolically surrounded as it had been two centuries earlier by Tupac Katari against the colonial government. In 2003, Bolivian Indianist movements managed to overthrow President Sánchez de Lozada by demonstrating in "sacrifice marches,"

which oddly combined the profound syndrome of migrants and the sacrificial configuration of this culture.

25. A millennium separates the height of the Teotihuacan civilization during the Classic Era around the fourth century AD from that of the Aztec Empire. This historically obvious fact does not prevent confusion about the two periods in popular beliefs. However, Teotihuacan must have been a multiethnic metropolis where languages other than Nahuatl were spoken, but the “Aztecization” of the site in people’s minds is a sign of the symbolic power of the imperial ideology, which we shall be discussing later. Most of those taking part in the equinox rituals at the Pyramid of the Sun are unaware of the site’s history and consider that the pyramid is charged with energy.

26. The metaphor of the “Sad Night” recalls Cortés’s flight from Tenochtitlan before the beginning of his military campaign against it.

27. In Mexico, as in the whole of Latin America, there is a very strong millenarian trend linked to astrology and Protestant sects, who find in it a chosen mode of expression.

28. *Izkalotl*, January 1974.