

for Inter-American Affairs Alexander Watson described the Chiapas uprising as an “energizing factor” in the Mexican reform process, thus enraging Mexicans everywhere.

‘Negotiating’ . . . with terror

Although the Salinas government, desperate to prevent a further outbreak of violence, is virtually pleading for negotiations with the EZLN, the Zapatistas are letting the situation “ripen.” And while they stall for time, pleading security and logistical problems, peasant mobs in Chiapas have seized oil wells, farms, and ranches, and more than a dozen townships in the last weeks. They have threatened and even kidnapped government officials, blocked highways, set fire to city halls, and are now demanding the resignations of all local government officials in the state of Chiapas.

On Feb. 11, some 10,000 teachers marched in support of the EZLN in Chiapas’s capital city, replicating a tactic of the Shining Path narco-terrorists of Peru in infiltrating the teachers union and the schools, where children are “recruited” to their terrorist cause. And when the EZLN finally decided to release the former governor of Chiapas, Gen. Absalón Castellanos (ret.), who was taken hostage by the terrorists in the first days of fighting, they actually charged an admission price and obligatory lunch fee for anyone—press, politicians, observers—who wished to be present at the event.

Far from condemning these outrages, the government is rushing to do the terrorists’ bidding. Mexican Army troops are being withdrawn from urban areas in Chiapas in anticipation of the much-ballyhooed negotiations with the Zapatistas. And when the EZLN indicated its willingness to suspend collection of “war taxes” from the Chiapas population, it was government-appointed peace negotiator Camacho Solís who announced it. Prominent *El Universal* journalist Francisco Cárdenas Cruz wrote in his column Feb. 16, “Nothing I know of can explain why the government’s peace commissioner has decided, since yesterday, to become the official EZLN spokesman!”

Despite the government’s humiliation, military leaders are trying to hold their ground. In a speech delivered Feb. 9 for “Loyalty Day,” National Defense Minister Gen. Antonio Riviello Bazán addressed the situation in Chiapas for the first time, emphasizing that the military had conducted itself according to its constitutional duty and that its intervention was “legal, legitimate, necessary.” He insisted that it was the EZLN, not the Army, which was the transgressor, and warned that “no one should try to glorify those who resort to violence.”

That same day, Gen. Miguel Angel Godínez, in charge of military operations in Chiapas, gave an interview to *Siempre* in which he furiously denied the charges of human rights abuses that have been directed against the Army. “In a town of 15,000, why not ask the 15,000 how the Army conducted itself, instead of the 10 who were arrested?”

Chiapas: a first-hand report on the ‘war’

by Juan Manuel Martínez R. and Carlos Cota Meza

If you, dear reader, are one of those individuals influenced by international propaganda regarding the ill-named “war” in Chiapas, what you are about to read will surely make you uncomfortable. What we can assure you is that “Subcomandante Marcos” may enjoy a fine image abroad courtesy of the international media, but that doesn’t translate into popularity for the immense majority of the population of Chiapas.

From Feb. 3 through Feb. 9, we toured Tuxtla Gutiérrez, capital of Chiapas state, for the purpose of giving several private presentations of the *EIR* Special Report entitled “Shining Path North Explodes in Mexico.” Those we met with, including students and university professors, priests, businessmen, government officials, and other interested citizens, were stunned by the depth of information available on the true nature of the political conflict in the Chiapas Highlands (which are not all of Chiapas, much less all of Mexico).

The state of Chiapas has approximately 3.7 million inhabitants. Of the zones surrounding the townships attacked by the Zapatista National Liberation Army, or EZLN, (Las Margaritas, Altamirano, Comitán, Ocosingo, and San Cristóbal) where some 100,000 Chiapans live, some 20,000 have already fled their homes to seek “refuge” (that is, food, medicine, and a roof over their heads). Their abandonment of their miserable “properties” is because of the constant harassment they have suffered by the Zapatistas, more properly dubbed the Samuelistas, that is, followers of San Cristóbal Bishop Samuel Ruiz.

Ironically, the help being provided these “internal refugees” is coming from the federal and state governments, as well as from the Catholic Church (the non-Samuelista elements, that is), in camps protected by the Mexican Army. The presence of the National Red Cross and the possible arrival of the International Red Cross only serves the propagandistic interests of the EZLN and its mentors.

The high-profile Jan. 1 “uprising” was a fiasco, in military terms. The 800-1,000 who made up the ranks of the EZLN assault columns represented just 10% of the 8,500 “indigenous” lay-priests Samuel Ruiz has trained since 1968. With respect to the population as a whole, the Zapatis-

tas represent an insignificant number who can be resisted, even captured, by the organized population itself, as occurred in Oxchuc, one of the towns the EZLN made the mistake of attacking.

Chiapas and the new world order

With this in mind, the majority of those who met with the authors asked: What really happened? And what is happening now?

One instructor of international law was explicit: "Bush's new world order managed to establish an international 'law' parallel to reigning international law, and applied it in Panama, Iraq and Somalia. This is what is now happening in Chiapas. The problem with President Salinas is that he never thought it would be applied here because he believed himself to be part of the new order's elite. Thus his inactivity and his fear. He knows whom he is up against."

Several government officials, whose offices had already received copies of the *EIR* Special Report, stated: "It is amazing that this whole international scenario you are presenting is being applied step by step in Chiapas. Definitely, the goal here is the destruction of the Mexican Army. A slander campaign based on lies is being waged through all of these human rights organizations that are now in San Cristóbal." Another high-level official, who has already read *EIR's* book *The Plot to Annihilate the Armed Forces and Nations of Ibero-America* (published in Spanish in 1993, and soon to be available in English) commented: "You were the first to really understand the kind of conflict we are now facing."

Tapeworm defense league

Truly instructive was a meeting with third-year law students. Responding to all the propaganda which claims that it is "objective conditions" of poverty and isolation which caused the uprising, one student insisted: "I'm not a racist. What I want is for the Indians to get medical treatment, to get rid of the tapeworms, and get cleaned up. But this isn't allowed because they say this would violate their cultural values and traditions."

This is more than a simple observation of the ominous work that foreign anthropologists and ethnologists have been carrying out in the Indian communities of Chiapas for the past 50 years. At a certain level of the educated population, the work of the "Harvard Chiapas Project," of the Summer Linguistics Institute, and of various Protestant sects in the area is well known. Even the state government presented the work of these agencies for years as intended to "rescue" the cultural traditions of Chiapas. Now, they are facing culture shock: the rebels argue that their *casus belli* is poverty and isolation, while at the same time—under the pretext of preserving their cultural heritage—they have never allowed the Indian population to break out of that cycle and develop itself.

How do you say 'Marcos' in Tzotzil?

Regarding Bishop Samuel Ruiz García, the best commentary one can make is to report the joke now going the rounds in Tuxtla: "Do you know how to say 'Subcomandante Marcos' in [the Mayan language] Tzotzil?" "Samuel Ruiz!" Some say that *Marcos* is an acrostic composed of the initials of the first villages attacked—(Margaritas, Altamirano, Rancho Nuevo, Comitán, Ocosingo, and San Cristóbal); others claim the *R* is for Ruiz and the *S* for Samuel.

In meetings with laymen of the Catholic Church here, we were told that Marcos must have learned his several languages and received his good education at a seminary; that the supposed Indigenous Superior Command of the EZLN doesn't exist, and that it is actually Samuel Ruiz himself and the vicar of San Cristóbal Cathedral, Father Gonzalo Ituarate who, together with other "theology of liberation" priests in the region, function as the Zapatista commanders.

It is the San Cristóbal vicariate which arranges Marcos's interviews with the international press, and it is Vicar Ituarte who gets to choose which media can be present at the "peace talks" between federal Peace Commissioner Manuel Camacho Solís and the EZLN. The San Cristóbal Cathedral is already serving as the EZLN's press office; the pulpit is its soap box and the bishop's sermons are political speeches.

"They are schismatics and want to cause a split in the Catholic Church," one high-level lay figure told us. "They are animists, theologically they have committed a great mistake. Throughout the history of the Catholic Church, schisms have always ended when the pope excommunicated the schismatics. I am sorry for Samuel, but he should be excommunicated." (Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the church's top authority on doctrine under the pope, defined liberation theology in 1985 as the "theologically unacceptable and socially dangerous . . . mixture of Bible, politics, sociology, and economics," which can produce a "fanaticism" leading to "the worst injustices and oppressions.")

What happens now? If President Salinas maintains his policy of appeasement and surrender to the EZLN, he is going to sacrifice the entire state of Chiapas to a civil conflict of incalculable proportions. Everyone in Chiapas knows that Samuel Ruiz's "indoctrinated" view their enemies as those who own a ranch, as those who own cattle. Within the Messianism exalted by Ruiz's sermons on the "Theology of the Incarnation" or the "Theology of the Exodus," everything and everybody *criollo*—the term refers to Mexicans of European ancestry—must be destroyed.

There will be gubernatorial elections in the state at the end of 1993, and the big question is whether the victor will also surrender to "Commander Samuel," or whether he or she will govern with *all* of Chiapas, including those who live in the so-called buffer zones which the Zapatistas want to deliver over to the jurisdiction of some supranational entity.