

Dateline Mexico by Gerardo Castilleja and Hugo López Ochoa

EZLN denounced as foreign mercenaries

A cardinal is warning that behind the Zapatistas, are foreign interests which seek to separate Chiapas from Mexico.

In a Jan. 10 press conference, the cardinal of Guadalajara, Juan Sandoval Iníiguez, denounced the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) as mercenaries of foreign interests: "Who pays the expenses and maintains the EZLN?" he asked. At least 2,000 fighters who are with the EZLN's Subcommander Marcos "are not Indians, but well-educated people, who have been in rebellion for at least two years, and for who knows how many years of preparation; they are well-equipped, well-fed, and must be well-paid," he said.

"I have always suspected that there are international interests involved, because there, there is oil, natural resources, and it is located in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, which could provide communication between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. There are many interests behind this, and I believe that the last thing which these Zapatista gentlemen wish, is the good of Mexico," he added.

The cardinal raised the possibility that what stands behind the movement, is a foreign separatist bid. It is "symptomatic," that "this subversive group" has demanded autonomy for Chiapas, he said. He warned that Mexico could face a repeat of "what happened with the separation of Panama from Colombia in the last century; that this part of the Republic be broken off."

Sandoval delivered his warning after the Zapatistas' "Marcos" launched a New Year's offensive, absurdly welcomed by the Concordance and Pacification Commission (Coco-

pa) of the Mexican Congress, as a step toward peace.

Emboldened by the public support which the British Crown had just extended the real commander of the EZLN, Bishop Samuel Ruiz in Chiapas (see *EIR*, Jan. 5, p. 44), "Marcos" issued a call for the formation of a "Zapatista National Liberation Front" (FZLN), in order to provide the EZLN with a national political formation—but without disbanding the EZLN, or turning in their weapons. "Marcos's" Jan. 1 "Fourth Declaration from the Lacandón Jungle," which called for the formation of the FZLN, specified that the objectives outlined by the Zapatistas in their "First Declaration" remain in force, including the disbanding of the Mexican Army and establishment of a new national constitution.

Ignoring the threat to the State, Sen. Heberto Castillo, the president of Cocopa and a leader of the Revolutionary Democratic Party, welcomed the declaration: "The EZLN will not disappear; with this, its most important effort, that of entering into political struggle, the bridge is established over which the EZLN will stop being an organization whose force lies in its arms, to become a legal and peaceful organization."

Cocopa, made up of congressmen from all the parties represented in Congress, also threw its support behind another flank of the EZLN offensive, the so-called National Indian Forum, whose central theme is "Community and Autonomy"; that is, securing passage of laws which define Indians as a special class of persons,

distinct from Mexican citizens.

Participating in this forum, which opened on Jan. 3 in San Cristóbal de las Casas, were Cocopa, San Cristóbal Bishop Ruiz and his National Mediation Commission (Conai), delegates of the EZLN, and dozens of "advisers," mostly anthropologists and sociologists. It was an EZLN event. *El Nacional* reported on Jan. 4, "In convoys, each formed by Red Cross International vehicles, two groups of members of the Zapatista leadership arrived" at the forum.

In his greetings to the representatives of 32 different ethnic groups from around the country, "Marcos" cynically recognized that "the principal work in building the Indian Forum was done by the 'advisers,' " whom he hailed as being like Indian "elders" who set policy in a community.

Not everyone has accepted this national agenda. Various congressmen from the PRI; the National Action Party; the head of the Mexican Labor Federation, Fidel Velázquez; and various bishops of the Catholic Church, have all denounced the new FZLN as an attempt to expand the Zapatista insurgency nationally.

"Marcos" had announced that the EZLN would build "centers of cultural resistance" throughout the country, to help organize the new liberation front, each to be called *Aguaascalientes*. The Mexican Army objected that the *Aguaascalientes* would be logistical centers for armed attacks.

The EZLN had designated the so-called Free Center of Dramatic and Artistic Experimentation (CLETA), a notorious terrorist outpost which had functioned for 26 years in Mexico City's Chapultepec Park, 800 meters from the Presidential residence, as the site of the "First *Aguaascalientes*." That plan ended, however, when police raided the CLETA on Jan. 13, and bulldozed the facilities.