

Separatist strategy advances in Mexico

by Cynthia Rush

As a prelude to holding talks with the leadership of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), Mexican commissioner for "peace and reconciliation" Manuel Camacho Solís announced the government's decision Feb. 1 to create two "free zones" in the southeastern state of Chiapas. This concession to the EZLN's demand for the creation of demilitarized zones is a dangerous one. The alleged EZLN "indigenous" army which militarily assaulted six municipalities in Chiapas on Jan. 1 has nothing to do with defending the region's Indians. It is a sophisticated and well-financed narco-terrorist operation whose ultimate goal is to dismantle Mexico's vital institutions, particularly its Armed Forces, and to break up the country into warring ethnic enclaves.

The establishment of two free zones in San Miguel and Guadalupe Tepeyac in Chiapas lays the basis for creating separate enclaves *outside* the authority of the federal government. As announced by Camacho, only the Red Cross will be authorized to operate in the designated areas, and will be responsible for distributing food and medicine. "No one with weapons" will be permitted to enter, Camacho explained.

Camacho's plan couldn't be implemented because the EZLN refused to give up control of Guadalupe Tepeyac, one of the two designated demilitarized areas. Moreover, peasants in the area have begged the Army not to withdraw, because they fear the EZLN's brutality. Nonetheless, EZLN spokesmen brag about their separatist plan to create the "Republic of Chiapas." One member of the group's central committee told the daily *La Jornada*, "It could be that every ethnic group should have its own government. . . . As Indians, we need autonomy, we need identity."

Military analysts are concerned over the implications of Camacho's plan. Army documents quoted in the Feb. 2 *El Sol* warned that "if a precedent is set in Chiapas, any indigenous or non-indigenous group will at a given moment demand similar recognition; and after this, international recognition would be a logical step. This could lead to Mexico's dismemberment, and its Central Americanization in the sense of creation of several states."

The 'indigenous' church

A central element in this separatist strategy is the attempt by the Marxist Theology of Liberation faction of the Catholic Church, which includes Bishop Samuel Ruiz of San Cristóbal de las Casas in Chiapas, to create a schismatic "autochthonous" church to oppose Christianity, which it says was forced

on the Indians by the Spanish evangelizers. Claiming that the Indians need a church more responsive to their culture, the terrorists want to set up a pagan, anti-Christian institution which tells Indians that their "ethnicity" is what defines their humanity.

Bishop Ruiz, who for years has coordinated a network of pro-terrorist Marxist priests in the Chiapas region, has baldly stated, "We as the Church of God, are responsible for the schizophrenia of the indigenous populations. To our evangelizing message, we add an identification with western culture . . . imposing [it] on [Indian] shoulders, [such that] they have to stop being themselves, having to abandon their culture to be able to fulfill themselves in one that is far from them, in a foreign culture."

Despite the national security implications for both Mexico and the United States of the EZLN insurgency, the Anglo-American establishment, including the U.S. State Department, backs this nation-wrecking strategy. On Feb. 2, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Alexander Watson offered the insane analysis before the Western Hemisphere subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee that events in Chiapas were a positive "energizing factor" which had contributed to the "deepening of [Mexico's] reform process." In Watson's eyes, "deepening the reform process" means tearing apart institutions which have historically held Mexico together as a functioning nation-state. Now, its dismemberment is a desired goal of Anglo-American policy.

Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari has succumbed to the international human rights lobby and its banker allies by giving Camacho *carte blanche* to appease the narco-terrorists. On Feb. 4, Camacho acknowledged receiving a secret communiqué from the EZLN leadership, and except for rejecting the demand that it be granted belligerent status, announced that all other conditions were acceptable and he was ready to begin talks. Belligerent status was not possible, he said, because this would mean imposing international law on an internal Mexican affair. He gently added that he would be happy to recognize the EZLN as "a political force in formation."

As a result of this policy, the EZLN has been able to manipulate the political situation to its advantage. Around the announced peace negotiations, its leaders have organized a media circus, including granting press credentials to over 600 national and foreign media. The international media has obligingly portrayed the EZLN as an increasingly popular organization, which "knows how to deal with the media" and has developed a "cult following."

But the EZLN's "deputy commander Marcos" also issued a clear threat: "The government's arrogant attitude is aimed at putting us on our knees before talking to us. . . . What happened on Jan. 1 was not enough for the government to learn to speak on equal terms with those it rules. . . . More January Firsts seem necessary."