

# Will the narco-terrorist insurrection in Chiapas be Mexico's 'Sarajevo'?

by Carlos Cota Meza

There are strong parallels between the instigators of the uprising in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas, and the Serbian aggressors who have unleashed war in former Yugoslavia. It is no exaggeration to state that the 18 masked "negotiators" of the Clandestine Committee of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) represent for Mexico what the Serbian leaders Slobodan Milosevic and Rodovan Karadzic represent to the Bosnian Muslims and Croatians who have been the victims of their genocidal "ethnic cleansing" programs. Nor is it difficult to identify the Mexican "Serbs" among the *zapatistas* without masks: government "peace commissioner" Manuel Camacho Solis, and the so-called mediator Samuel Ruiz.

The objective of the ongoing "peace negotiations" in Chiapas is to alter the Mexican Constitution so that the existence of "Indian nations," or "reservations"—with their own pre-Columbian mechanisms of government—may be accepted within the national territory. What this implies is that existing municipal and federal government entities would be supplanted, along with the structures which have been built on their basis and which have become part of Mexico's institutional heritage.

From its first bloody attacks on New Year's Day, the EZLN has maintained that it is addressing an "ethnic" problem. In its first statements, it asserted that "as Indians, we need our own autonomy; we need that identity, that dignity." The EZLN's "Commander Marcos" has repeatedly stated that his movement wants "administrative and political autonomy in the Indian regions" of the country, and a "reform of Article 4 of the Constitution, to recognize the existence of ethnic regions with their own structures. . . . What the comrades are proposing, is a collective government at every level." Marcos insists that if this problem is not resolved to the EZLN's satisfaction, they are prepared to spread their armed struggle to the north of the country, and even into U.S. territory.

## An attack on the family

The article of the Constitution which the *zapatistas* and their sponsors have demanded be changed, was originally drafted to deal primarily with the *family* as the basis of society: "Men and women are equal before the law. The law

shall protect the organization and development of the family. Every person has the right to decide in a free, responsible and informed manner on the number and spacing of their children." The article was later broadened to include "the right to health" and "the right to dignified and decent housing" for all Mexicans.

And yet, as part of the innumerable government concessions to win U.S. congressional approval of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), President Salinas stupidly incorporated the following paragraph into the same Article: "The Mexican nation has a pluricultural composition originally upheld by its Indian peoples. The law shall protect and promote the development of their languages, cultures, habits and customs, resources and specific forms of social organization."

But the *zapatistas* are not content with that. They want to dismember the historic federated structure of the Mexican republic, and the municipal structure along with it. They seek to expunge the precept that the family is the basis of society and represents Western Christian tradition. And this is no mere theoretical proposition; it is already being widely debated, and communist agents have presented their proposals to the President of the republic.

According to communist Arnaldo Córdova, a specialist in the Marxist theory of Antonio Gramsci and adviser to President Salinas, the conflict in Chiapas is not economic, but "social and political," and can be resolved by reforming Article 4 such that Mexico is defined as "a pluricultural, pluriethnic, and plurinational" country. Córdova says Mexico must accept "a constitutional regimen of politically, culturally, economically, linguistically, and socially autonomous ethnic regions, with the total right to self-government without interference from other instituted powers." Córdova warns that there are two things which the EZLN is not going to compromise on: "They are not going to allow themselves to be disarmed, and they are going to try to force recognition of themselves as sovereign nationalities within the national state."

Maoist agent Gustavo Esteva (an old advocate of eliminating structured societies—i.e., the sovereign nation-state—and of returning to primitive social forms) maintains that "we are forging a new treatment for the Indian peoples

at the Cathedral of San Cristóbal. . . . This demands that we reconstitute ourselves. Our Magna Carta states that Mexican sovereignty emanates principally from its people. We now recognize . . . that it emanates from all the peoples that make up Mexico.”

### War against non-Indians

Just as the Serbian leaders have refused to recognize the Croats and Bosnian Muslims, and have claimed their lands as property of “Greater Serbia,” so, too, the *zapatistas* have unleashed a war against everything *mestizo* in the townships where the conflict is centered.

Through public advertisements, the cattle ranchers of Chiapas have requested the intervention of the federal government in the face of repeated invasions of “ranch properties [where] equipment, crops, and homes have been destroyed, and cattle stolen—all to the detriment of the family economy and that of the nation.” The ranchers add that 3,450 rural properties, which annually contribute 24,000 tons of meat, 18 million liters of milk, and other rural products to the national stocks, are at risk. They warn that the attacks against their property threatens “the judicial order, our institutions, and social peace.”

The social discontent of the *mestizo* population and of displaced Indians (otherwise dubbed the “other victims of the conflict”) in the battle areas is already evident. Recently, an enraged crowd expelled from the town of Altamirano the president of the National Human Rights Commission Jorge Madrazo, who had arrived in the community to defend the “human rights” of 10 nuns belonging to the Order of the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, accused by the town of being EZLN members. At the same time, the displaced Indians are more and more publicly insisting that the Mexican Army intervene in their defense against the attacks of the *zapatistas*.

### The NGOs’ ‘splendid little war’

The outbreak of this racial war, which at the moment has been confined to Chiapas, was supervised by various so-called non-governmental organizations (NGOs) recognized by the United Nations. At the beginning of the so-called “peace talks,” the EZLN’s Clandestine Committee sent a public letter to the NGOs in which it stated: “We know that the so-called non-governmental organizations have become a fundamental part of the movement for a dignified peace. . . . The NGOs have remained neutral. . . . We owe our arrival, safe and sound, at the dialogue site to the protective and vigilant mantle of all those good people who, without payment of any kind, have dedicated their time, their efforts and their labor to us, and who are protecting us at the risk of their own lives, freedom, and well-being. We have decided to entrust our lives and freedom . . . to the NGOs, because we have seen in them the future to which we aspire, a future [which] will render not only wars, but also armies, unnecessary.”

## The tragic winter of 1994 in Armenia

by Haik Babookhanian

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The small nation of Armenia this winter has withstood not only Azeri military aggression along the whole border, and especially in Nagorno-Karabakh, not only a political ultimatum from Georgia, but also bitter cold weather. Living under the Turkish-Azeri blockade, the Armenian population did not have much at their disposal in their battle to survive: They used anything they could get their hands on for fuel, from the trees growing along city streets and parks, to furniture and wooden floorboards. Especially hard was the fate of hundreds of thousands of refugees from Azerbaijan, who miraculously escaped the terrifying butchery in Sumgait, Baku, and the whole territory of Azerbaijan. There were also refugees from Karabakh and from the territories close to the border, whose houses were either occupied by the Azeri Army or destroyed by artillery attacks and air strikes against civilian targets. It has been as difficult to survive this winter as it was to survive the 1988 earthquake.

The tragedy of the winter in Armenia has shaken the world. International charitable organizations, as well as the Armenian diaspora and people of good will, started to organize humanitarian aid. Governments of a few countries joined in. The Armenian nation had high hopes regarding the decision of the American government to allocate \$15 million to Armenia for the purchase of 50,000 tons of oil, which should have been delivered by the end of November and distributed to the most needy groups of people, such as families with many children, pensioners, and invalids. However, most of them have not been able to redeem their coupons, since the date of delivery of the aid has been constantly postponed, whether because of new demands on the part of Georgia, or the Christmas holidays in the United States. Finally, the first oil deliveries arrived at the beginning of February.

The Armenian authorities, like the population, lived on hopes, and distributed small strategic reserves of oil in December, planning to replenish them once the promised aid came from the United States.

But that was the end of the international “carrots” for Armenia, and the beginning of “the stick.”