

Chiapas separatist plot sparks resistance to breakup of Mexico

by Gretchen Small

“Why is separatism, secession, so frightening? . . . The concept of self-determination is not based on the state, but on the people. . . . There is no rationale that says that it is better to have 20 states rather than 2,000. . . . For me, the ideal would be to have only one world state. Why not? But with a lot of local autonomy. Perhaps we will get there some day.”

So argued Rodolfo Stavenhagen on the eve of the outbreak of the so-called “ethnic” insurgency in Chiapas, Mexico in the November-December 1993 issue of Argentina’s *Revista de Antropología*. A prominent anthropologist and Maoist, Stavenhagen is today a leading player in the Chiapas crisis, both as a member of the Mexican government’s National Human Rights Commission, and president of the Inter-American Development Bank’s Indigenous People’s Fund, an outfit whose role in financing and fomenting so-called indigenous revolts in the Americas against the nation-state was detailed by *EIR* two weeks ago.

As Stavenhagen stated in *Revista de Antropología*, he and his co-thinkers view ethnic violence as the means by which “the post-colonial state,” premised on the “idea of a homogeneous nation-state, of citizenry for all,” will be destroyed. Guatemala, which borders Chiapas, will be the test case in Ibero-America where “the nature of the state itself must be rethought” along ethnic lines, he specified.

Stavenhagen’s diatribe confirms *EIR*’s charge that the Anglo-American financial interests orchestrating the Chiapas events are out to eliminate the nation-state itself, implementing in the process the old British geopolitical project to carve up the Americas into smaller, ethnically based satrapies. That project has long foreseen the creation of a mini-state carved out of Chiapas and parts of neighboring Guatemala. Already the first talk of a separate Chiapas has been raised. According to the Madrid newspaper *El Mundo*, “Captain Cristóbal” of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), has proclaimed that “if its demands are not met, the EZLN will declare Chiapas independent.”

Mexican analysts have begun to warn that if the government continues to grant the demands of the EZLN, it will bring about the “dismemberment” of the Mexican nation. Writing in *Novedades*, *Reforma*, and *Impacto*, analysts point to three demands of the EZLN and its national and international support apparatus which, if met, will, de facto, split

the nation:

- the demand that the government grant the EZLN belligerent status, a precondition for international recognition of the territory held by the EZLN as a separate nation;
- the proposal for an “exchange of prisoners” between the EZLN and the government, which would de facto grant the EZLN belligerent status;
- the most vociferous demand raised internationally: that the Mexican Army withdraw altogether from Chiapas.

As Juan Bustillos, director of *Impacto*, wrote in the magazine’s Jan. 22 issue: “If the government decides to grant belligerent status, then it should be prepared to resign itself to having belligerence permanently in Chiapas and to permit it to spread, financed by foreign governments and organizations. This would be the first step to the creation of a demilitarized zone, in which the Mexican government would abdicate its authority, which would be . . . the beginning of the end of the republic.”

Nationalists have begun to rally in defense of the institutions. Advertisements defending the Mexican Army have appeared in newspapers nationally. Two thousand people demonstrated in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas on Jan. 25, demanding the Army stay to protect the area. Reports abound that “profound disgust” at the government’s handling of the crisis is spreading through the military high command.

On Jan. 26, eleven media turned out in Mexico City for a joint press conference called by *EIR* Ibero-American editor Dennis Small and the head of the Ibero-American Solidarity Movement in Mexico, Marivilia Carrasco, to release *EIR*’s new Special Report on Chiapas, “‘Shining Path North’ Explodes in Mexico.” *Excelsior*, Mexico’s largest daily, headlined its article on the conference, “International Banks Finance the EZLN,” and reported Small’s warning that if the insurgency is not put down, “we will witness a balkanization of Latin America, in which Mexico will come to mean a new Bosnia.” A private *EIR* seminar on the same subject was attended by over 50 people, including military officers, Catholic priests, and businessmen.

Carving up southern Mexico and Guatemala

The project to carve a new state out of Chiapas and the northern regions of Guatemala is far more advanced, howev-

er, than has been recognized in either of the targeted nations. Yielding to the hue and cry raised by EZLN-supporting human rights activists, the Mexican government ordered the Army to pull out of the cities and towns it has been protecting in Chiapas Jan. 20, and hand over distribution of food and medicines to the myriad non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating in the area. Two days later, government envoy Manuel Camacho announced that he had reached an agreement with the EZLN to exchange 100 terrorists held by the Army, for the former governor of Chiapas, Gen. Abasalon Castellanos Domínguez, kidnapped by the EZLN as one of their first acts of terror.

That latter deal, however, has yet to be implemented.

Attempting to propitiate the insurgency's "indigenous" cover, the government of President Carlos Salinas also handed control over "indigenous" policy to the Inter-American Dialogue, one of the principal foreign bankers' groups running the separatist revolt. Beatriz Paredes Rangel, a member of the Dialogue, was named to head a new national commission on indigenous peoples. The Dialogue has a special Ethnic Division project which coordinates closely with Stavenhagen's Indigenous Peoples' Fund; the head of the Dialogue project, radical anthropologist Donna Lee Van Cott, also argues that racial conflicts serve to force through a "rethinking" of "the very concept of nation state and national culture."

Once named, Paredes first met with confessed Guatemalan terrorist (see her biography, *I, Rigoberta*) and Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú, who has been personally coordinating "indigenous" resistance to the Mexican nation in Chiapas since the EZLN went into action. Both women have been working closely with radical "indigenous peoples" groups in Chiapas which are demanding that the government "demilitarize" Chiapas, "recognize the bravery of the EZLN," and grant them belligerent status, as the first steps toward an "urgent reformation of the Mexican state."

Complementing the political and military advances of the EZLN on the Mexican side of the border, however, has been the little-noticed establishment of new areas of virtually "liberated territory" under the control of the Guatemalan Revolutionary National Union terrorists (URNG), just across the border. The Guatemalan side of the operation is under the personal direction of Menchú. Like Stavenhagen, Menchú recently threatened to unleash ethnic warfare in Guatemala, telling a press conference in Bogotá, Colombia Dec. 1, "I hope that we do not have to turn ourselves into an ex-Yugoslavia."

At the beginning of 1993, she staged the return to Guatemala of more than 2,000 of the approximately 45,000 refugees who have lived in U.N. camps in the south of Mexico for over ten years. That was internationally publicized, providing favorable propaganda for the publicity-hungry Menchú.

Not reported, however, is that, with U.N. backing, the

refugees refused to live in government-designated lands, where at least minimal infrastructure existed, and insisted instead on establishing themselves in an undeveloped area in which the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP) terrorists are active. There they formed Peoples' Resistance Communities (CPRs) as "liberated territory" where no government authority is allowed to operate. The Army is not allowed within a certain perimeter of these CPRs; refugee commanders have ordered that no child in the camps be registered with national authorities; all mayors, teachers, or other officials named by the government have been rejected by the CPRs.

U.S. policy debacle

Terrorist forces are rallying across Ibero-America off the Chiapas insurgency. On Jan. 25, some 1,100 delegates of narco-terrorist and so-called popular movements and parties began a four-day conference in Havana, Cuba. At the top of their agenda, according to Argentine delegates, will be organizing "autochthonous peoples" to defend "their" lands, in the wake of the Chiapas uprising.

But what are Washington and the U.S. elites saying? The U.S. media have uniformly fawned over the EZLN *comandantes* in a manner reminiscent of the *New York Times's* infamous 1958 promotion of Fidel Castro, while painting all military operations, even simple arrests, as human rights violations of innocent peasants.

Assistant Secretary of State Alexander Watson—just back from Peru where he demanded that the Peruvian government overturn the conviction of every Shining Path terrorist tried by a military court, including that of Shining Path's leader Abimael Guzmán—told the press corps in a State Department briefing Jan. 25 that "things are going really quite well in Latin America." He stated that the U.S. government has no evidence that "any external actors were involved" in Chiapas, specifically adding, "I don't think that it's linked with the Guatemalans at all."

He singled out Camacho for special praise for his handling of the crisis, and emphasized that the U.S. government had warned the Mexican government that it was concerned about military violations of human rights—*before any allegations had been raised*—because the U.S. government sought, and seeks, for the Mexican government to "deal with this situation in a political way." The warnings on human rights began "from the outset," Watson said. "It was not reacting to information. It was preemptive"—an unusually frank admission that the attacks on the Mexican military began before they had ever fired a shot against the assaulting terrorists.

The next day, CIA director James Woolsey and Defense Intelligence Agency officials testified before the Senate Intelligence Committee that the situation in Chiapas is under control. The DIA is barely monitoring the situation, because it is not viewed as a threat to U.S. national security, the senators were told.