

Fox's Strategy in Chiapas Opens Door to National Disintegration

by Marivilia Carrasco

Immediately following his inauguration as President of Mexico on Dec. 1, 2000, Vicente Fox, to signal his readiness to reopen the so-called "peace dialogue," gave the order for the Mexican Army to begin withdrawing from areas dominated by the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) in Chiapas, under the battle cry that "actions speak louder than words." Fox thus conceded to the demand to "liberate" a portion of national territory to indigenism's separatist project, creating the immediate conditions for violent confrontation between the population that supports the Zapatistas, and those who are resisting being subjugated by them.

The EZLN responded to the President's gesture by demanding three conditions, the which would enable them to retake the political offensive, something they have been unable to do for the past two to three years. Indeed, although the initiative to withdraw the Army came from the government, the Zapatistas did not pass up the opportunity to organize violent demonstrations, stoning and insulting the soldiers, seeking to humiliate the National Army, as the soldiers obeyed the order to withdraw. Sebastian Guillén (a.k.a. "Subcommander Marcos"), the political and military chief of the EZLN, stated outright that the intent of the three conditions demanded, was to put President Fox to the test, to see if he is truly the Supreme Commander of the Mexican Armed Forces, and consequently willing to submit to the Zapatista demands, which would signify nothing less than the surrender of a portion of national territory.

The three conditions demanded by the EZLN before they will accept any contact with the government, include:

1. Withdrawal of military forces from seven separate sites in the so-called "conflict zone" (four of which have already been demilitarized);
2. Release of all Zapatista prisoners (only 17 have been released thus far, and 100 more are still being held); and
3. Constitutional recognition of Indian rights and culture, in accordance with the initiative of the Pacification Commission (Cocopa), established by Congress a few years ago.

Each of these conditions fall under different powers of the republic, and cannot be granted without violating the country's juridical, political and Constitutional order. Thus,

it is evident that they serve as the merest pretext for launching a new phase of provocations. The most dangerous of all, however, is the last condition, which would set the precedent of separatism, which threatens the integrity of the nation as a whole.

To back up the demands, "Marcos" convoked a spectacular march of the *comandantes* from Chiapas, to Mexico City, which he is to personally lead, on the pretext of organizing "civil society" and forcing the Legislature—which already has four different bills to reform the Constitution on the table—to approve the proposed constitutional reform bill which would grant them social, political, cultural, and military autonomy. The Zapatistas intend to enter Mexico City in the early days of March, after putting more than half the country on a war footing. They intend to traverse a third of the national territory, accompanied by hundreds, at a minimum, of international supporters, on a crusade whose goal is not to win the three conditions posed to Fox, but the destruction of the very idea of the sovereign nation-state.

Fox Offers To Give the EZLN What It Wants

Fox is offering to grant the EZLN what it is asking for, as long as they sign a peace (which will never come), under the chimera of thus beginning the march of the *maquiladoras* (virtual slave-labor assembly plants) into the country's southeast. The international financial oligarchy is hoping to turn Mexico's south and southeastern region into a new free trade zone, integrated with Central America in the so-called "Puebla to Panama" project. This strategy to turn that region into a new "Hong Kong" of sweatshops, plantation agriculture, and offshore banking, was elaborated in the early 1980s by Henry Kissinger's Commission for Central America. It was revived as part of Wall Street and the City of London's new offensive to impose a Free Trade Alliance for the Americas (FTAA), under which the dollar would become the legal tender continentally, eliminating the monetary sovereignty of Mexico, as well as other countries, as is already occurring in El Salvador and Guatemala.

With the illusion that many new *maquiladoras* will spring up, Fox adopted as his own the original draft of the

EZLN-Cocopa bill, rejecting the modifications introduced by the Zedillo government in 1996 to eliminate the bill's anti-constitutional ambiguities. The EZLN had used those modifications as a pretext to break off the peace talks at the time. On Dec. 6, 2000, immediately after assuming office, Fox sent the EZLN-Cocopa initiative to the Congress, as a federally backed bill. That step became a de facto call for an uprising by forces even more radical than the EZLN in other parts of the country, so that, instead of sowing peace, it is leading toward war.

In his Jan. 13 radio program, President Fox stated that "the Chiapas matter, which is so important, is moving forward; it is developing. In his latest message, the EZLN Subcommander indicated that there would not be peace in Chiapas unless the Vicente Fox government fully met the guerrillas' three demands. I took him at his word! I took him at his word! If there is peace, if they put down their weapons, and if we reach agreements, certainly, for our part, we will fully meet the guerrillas' three demands. Now, we can match their expectations. . . . We want to integrate the vision of the Indians; we want to give them autonomy; we want to respect their dignity; we want to help our Indian brothers; we want to do this now, right away, and we are doing this throughout the country. And we certainly want to do it in Chiapas."

Abandoning Non-Intervention

The Fox government is undermining the defenses of national sovereignty on the foreign front, as well. At the beginning of the year, Fox's Secretary of Foreign Relations, Jorge Castañeda, a participant in George Soros's campaign to legalize drugs, announced a break with Mexico's traditional support for the Estrada Doctrine of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other nations. Dismissing the doctrine as the "inertia" of previous governments, Castañeda said the Fox government will replace it with a new policy of participating actively in United Nations' supranational interventions, "with the Armed Forces, or of another sort . . . with civilian and logistical components, engineers, military doctors and nurses, etc."

Given that Mexico has long participated in foreign humanitarian missions, such as when earthquakes and other natural disasters occur, the ominous change in Mexican foreign policy signalled by Castañeda does not stem from charitable concerns. Rather, it is the first step toward implementing the doctrine of "limited sovereignty," and the formation of a multilateral hemispheric force, the policy promoted by the Inter-American Dialogue and U.S. State Department since the Sir George Bush government, as part of his "New World Order," to which Mexico had always adamantly refused to submit. Such a policy reorientation implies authorization for supranational incursions in the name of Wall Street into any country or region in the continent: for example, in Chiapas.

Lorenzo Meyer, a Mexican member of the Inter-Ameri-

can Dialogue, welcomed Castañeda's announcement, in a manner revealing precisely that the real purpose of such a change is to subject Mexico to international oversight, and to supranational interventionism: "The policy of non-intervention served to hide a great deal of abuse, illegality, and violation of human rights in Mexico," said Meyer.

In fact, Castañeda himself is certain that only internationalization can resolve the conflict with the EZLN. According to the Jan. 29 edition of the newspaper *La Jornada*, during an International Colloquium entitled "Building for Peace, Teachings for the New Millennium," organized by the Autonomous University of Guerrero in Acapulco on June 15-18, 2000, Castañeda argued that mediation is required in a conflict such as that in Chiapas, and if an arrangement is to be reached, "recourse is going to have to be made to some form of international mediation." According to him, Mexican society is so polarized, that there is no one inside Mexico today who "can serve as mediator."

It is in this context that Castañeda visited Chiapas at the end of last December, heading up a large group of Ibero-American ambassadors who could serve as international witnesses to the army's withdrawal from one of their positions in that state.

This is also the policy Mexico is now applying toward Colombia. For example, Castañeda's step-brother, Andrés Rozenthal, Fox's Ambassador for Special Missions, recently travelled to the so-called "demilitarized zone" in Colombia's south, to meet with the genocidalist head of the narco-terrorist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), Manuel Marulanda (a.k.a. *Tirofijo*), supposedly as part of Mexico's efforts to facilitate peace negotiations in that country. It is not a coincidence that these efforts ignore the information in the hands of the Mexican Attorney General's office regarding collaboration between the FARC and the bloodiest of the Mexican drug cartels, that of Arellano Félix.

President Fox is so divorced from strategic reality, that his government views as positive for Mexico's tourism industry, the shameless intervention of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Chiapas, and nationally, backing each and every EZLN maneuver. The representative of the National Institute of Migration (INM), Felipe de Jesús Preciado, went so far as to advocate "guerrilla tourism" as good for the country. Preciado announced on Jan. 19 that the hundreds of foreigners applying for visas to accompany Marcos and the *comandantes* on their march to the capital are more than welcome. "In some Romantic way, they think the Zapatistas are making the French Revolution," the INM official explained. "Everything in this life has its advantages and disadvantages. I repeat, tourism for Mexico is key. We are called upon to be pioneers in world tourism," he said, adding, "Throughout the world, there is enormous interest in what is going on in Chiapas, and Marcos has won a lot of clientele among the international NGOs, who are coming to help them and see how they can participate."