
Interview: Cuauhtémoc López Sánchez

'Foreign interests may well be looking toward taking apart Mexico'

Cuauhtémoc López Sánchez is a member of the Mexican National Congress for the state of Chiapas, from San Cristóbal de las Casas (second electoral district). He is a former president of the High Court of Justice of the state of Chiapas.

On Aug. 21, a presidential election is scheduled in Mexico. The climate is one of violence, in which foreign interests have made themselves felt. One should recall that on March 23, 1994, the presidential candidate of the ruling Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI), Luis Donaldo Colosio, was murdered during an electoral rally. (On July 11, his widow, Diana Laura Riojas de Colosio, was received in private audience by the pope in Castelgandolfo, Italy.) On July 27, the bishop of Guadalajara, Msgr. Juan Sandoval Iñiguez, announced that he had delivered to Papal Nuncio Msgr. Geronimo Prigione, documents suggesting that his predecessor in the Bishopric of Guadalajara, Cardinal Juan Jesús Posadas Ocampo, murdered in the airport of that city on May 24, 1993, was killed deliberately and not as a case of mistaken identity as the press had originally reported.

On July 25, the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) candidate for governor of the state of Chiapas, Amado Avendaño, was seriously hurt in a suspicious traffic accident. Along with Bishop Samuel Ruiz García of San Cristóbal de las Casas, Avendaño, a close collaborator of PRD presidential candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, was the main public support for the so-called National Zapatista Liberation Army (EZLN), a separatist "indigenist movement" which launched an armed uprising in Chiapas on Jan. 1, 1994. Due to the circumstances of the accident, Avendaño's victory as governor of Chiapas on Aug. 21 seems virtually assured.

In Chiapas, the terror generated by the EZLN has reached proportions such that, on July 20, a general strike was called by the farmers and businessmen of the state, which lies on the border with Guatemala, to demand that the government intervene militarily in their defense. Heavily armed bands of the EZLN roam the countryside, illegally expropriating landowners, mutilating, torturing, and kidnapping those who resist. Over 200 have fallen victim to the EZLN, which is now thought to number 4-6,000 guerrillas, since the January offensive. In January, the hitherto-unknown group, which is believed to enjoy powerful support from Anglo-Saxon and allied financial circles, targeted, as does the Shining Path in Peru, hospitals, schools, and elec-

trical and hydraulic installations.

In early July, the head of the Defense Commission of the Mexican Congress, Gen. Ramón Mota Sánchez, told the plenary session of the commission that foreign groups were financing the secessionist movement in Chiapas. The Mexican press identified the German branch of the Comité Catholique Contre la Faim, the German group Misereor, and the Summer Linguistic Institute, an American "cultural" association, among others, as involved. General Mota Sánchez's remarks were seconded by the head of the Justice Commission of the Congress, Castillo Mota, and by Congressman López Sánchez, whose remarks follow.

EIR: How would you explain, in simple terms, to an American or European reader what is now happening in Chiapas, and whether there is a risk that the insurrection might spread to other parts of the country?

López Sánchez: Those who decided that the conflict should take place precisely in the state of Chiapas, did so taking into account the geography, the social problems, the backwardness, the injustice, and the history of the state of Chiapas. The state of Chiapas is located in the south of the republic, and has a very long border with Guatemala. The zone of the conflict lies along the so-called Petén zone of Guatemala; it is a humid, tropical area with little means of communication, formerly very sparsely populated, to which Indians from other regions emigrated, and to which refugees from Guatemala and other Central American countries have fled. It is also most likely that other fugitives from justice have found a haven in the area.

From 1960 to 1990, the population of Chiapas almost tripled, from about 1.2 million to 3.2 million. This was mainly due, not to immigration from other areas, but to the rise in the birthrate, and in life expectancy, due to the public health programs. I should note here that the population of the state is most sparsely distributed: There are 5,000 villages of fewer than 100 inhabitants each.

This growth had a considerable impact on land ownership, land having been redistributed in the state up until 1988; some 53% of the total area is common land, i. e., under a form of common exploitation. About 25% is private property, and the rest is either cities, or roads, dams, etc., which means that unless we wish to eliminate private property, the most

productive, there can be little chance of distributing more land. From the 1960s on, when Bishop Samuel Ruiz García arrived, ideology entered upon the scene, with the application of the theories of Theology of Liberation.

One may *explain* why the EZLN has arisen in the state of Chiapas, but this in no way justifies the arguments of the guerrilla. The figures for population growth, the great advances with respect to roads, schools, health centers, public services, have led to considerable betterment in the lot of the Indian population. One may quibble with this and that, but there is no basis for the EZLN's so-called "social justification."

As for the risk that the EZLN may spread to other parts of the republic, I do not think that will happen, since, even in the state of Chiapas, where there *is* a marked backwardness, the greater part of the Indian population will have nothing to do with the armed uprising. Out of 1.1 million Indians, there are 10,000, at most, in the EZLN. Both inside and outside the state, there is sympathy with the notion that the lot of the Indians, all the Mexican Indians, must be bettered, but not by violence.

EIR: Why have international private bodies become involved in financing the EZLN through the bishop of San Cristóbal, and what are the real causes of the conflict?

López Sánchez: There are a number of reasons. There are reasons which have to do with the state of the world economy; following the NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] . . . foreign economic interests may well look toward taking apart the territory of the Republic of Mexico, either by setting up autonomous regions, or overthrowing the constitutional order of the country, in a thrust to put the country under their own dominion.

Another reason is the strategy pressed by the group of liberation theologians in Mexico, in Central America, and in South America, especially, to set up territories run by a so-called Indigenous Church. We have heard over and again the arguments of Bishop Samuel Ruiz García of San Cristóbal, and of the EZLN's "Sub-Commander" Marcos, who tend oddly to coincide on many points. Those who actually live in the state know that Bishop Ruiz García, over years, has been receiving economic help from various religious and other groups both in Europe and the United States, and the question has been posed, to what end these funds received by Bishop Ruiz García and by other bishops, have been put. In other dioceses, including right here in Chiapas, people are very much aware of what has been built and done with whatever sums have been donated.

But, in the case of San Cristóbal de las Casas, apart from the system of radio-communication used by the various parishes, and which, according to some, has been used to communicate with the Guatemalan, Salvadoran, and Nicaraguan guerrillas, and apart from the hospitals of Larrainzar and Altamirano which are now controlled by the EZLN, there is nothing else known to have been built or carried out by Bishop Samuel Ruiz García.

This does not mean that we doubt the good faith of the bodies which have donated funds for pastoral work, but rather, we do believe that the sums should be put to the aims for which they were originally given, and none other.

Another hypothesis concerning the origin of the conflict, has to do with narco-terrorism, but this is a theme about which too little is presently known for me to go into it here.

EIR: Why have you thrown into doubt the role of Samuel Ruiz García as mediator in the EZLN conflict?

López Sánchez: To my mind, the aim of the mediator should be to bring together the parties to a conflict in order to achieve, in this particular case, peace, and that is not what has happened with Bishop Samuel Ruiz García. He has used the past months to legitimize a movement which has broken the rule of law in this country, sown violence, death, mayhem, and plunged a great number of inhabitants of our state into anxiety, insecurity, and fear.

The bishop has devoted the last months to building up the image of the EZLN both in Mexico and abroad, with the purpose of obtaining for himself the Nobel Peace Prize, with which he believes he shall somehow justify what he has done in Chiapas—the 34 years in a state where he has left behind nothing save death and hatred.

EIR: People such as Bernardo Sepulveda, the former foreign minister and former ambassador to London; Miguel de la Madrid, the former President; and Jorge Castañeda, the U.S. State Department's preferred "political scientist," re-

U.S. destabilizes Caribbean

If Americans are now worried about the impact of thousands of Haitian refugees flooding their shores, they should weigh the implications of a violent "pro-democratic" insurgency in Mexico, a country of 100 million right on the U.S. border.

That potential loomed larger, when the Clinton administration, following the "Project Democracy" scenario scripted by British intelligence and the Bush-Thatcher axis embedded in the U.S. policy establishment, forced the Dominican Republic to tear up its constitution and overturn the results of last May's presidential elections. Incumbent President Joaquín Balaguer defeated the U.S.-backed candidate José Francisco Peña Gómez. Balaguer announced on Aug. 10, that his term will be cut from 4 years to 18 months, and new presidential elections held in November 1995.

The United States claimed that the last elections were fraudulent because thousands of supporters of Peña

cently set up a salon, known as the San Angel Group, which meets regularly over lunch in private mansions. How can it be that the vicar general of San Cristóbal de las Casas, Don Gonzalo Ituarte, was invited to address this group last week, during the course of which he proposed they meet with guerilla leader Marcos?

López Sánchez: The San Angel Group carries us back to the days when only the financial or intellectual elites had the right to express an opinion about democracy—the Roman patricians, the Athens of Aristotle, or those early years of independent Mexico, when you had to have landed property or a degree in order to vote. Nonetheless, I feel that the San Angel Group (though of course no one knows who precisely or how many people may be part of it), may somehow be a debating ground for various currents, which might possibly contribute to confidence in the electoral system. Its role may be taken into account as a body of *opinion*, but not as a body having anything to decide about the democratic process.

I have no idea in what capacity Don Gonzalo Ituarte was invited to address the group, but his presence there was probably very useful, in order for the San Angel Group to see for themselves to what extent the aims and ambitions of Bishop Ruiz García and those of “Sub-Commander” Marcos, do coincide, and how suspiciously they coincide with the very views of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the PRD’s presidential candidate.

EIR: What importance does the National Democratic Convention (CND) have? The EZLN has called for the CND to meet in early August, in a newly built auditorium for 4,000

people in the jungle of Lacandonal. Among others, Regis Debray [of France] and Rosanna Rosenda of the Italian Radical Party are expected as guests from the European Union.

López Sánchez: The EZLN has expressly invited those who *oppose* the concept of national unity. Their aim is to destabilize the country and bring the conflict to the whole territory of the republic. That is why they have invited people from other nations to take part in the CND, in order that they endorse a strategy not based upon the reality of the progress which *has* been made here.

For those who know nothing of Chiapas or of Mexico, the first impression they retain upon seeing certain Indian villages is very strong, of course; and they want to express solidarity with their demands, without having, however, a deeper notion of how the backwardness, which is real, shall be done away with. The PRD has manifestly been trying to discredit *abroad* the progress that has been made here, whereas there are sufficient channels in this country for people to express constructive criticism.

People have been invited to the CND from all over the republic, and foreign associations as well. There are opposition groups in Mexico, most of them radical, whose criticism has been shown by the course of history to be destructive, but who seek support from abroad for their views today, through the CND.

I hope that those who are about to arrive here from abroad will be serious and responsible. If not, it would be better, in the interest of peace and in the interest of the future of Mexico, that they stay away.

Gómez—a member of the pro-drug Inter-American Dialogue—could not cast their votes. But while Balaguer is being forced out, the Dominican senators and representatives elected along with him in the same elections will serve their full four years. Peña Gómez’s PRD won a plurality in both chambers!

Backed by Secretary of State Warren Christopher, U.S. Ambassador Donna Jean Hrinak demanded the new elections, and encouraged sedition by the PRD and its allies, which include the Dominican Communist Party of Narciso Issa Conde. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Michael Skol threatened: “Our concern that the Dominican people be represented by a government which has been chosen in free and fair elections . . . is every bit as strong as it is for the people of Haiti.”

Indeed, U.S. policy toward the Dominican Republic is largely driven by the crisis in Haiti, on the other side of the island. While Balaguer has fought the genocidal embargo against Haiti since it was first imposed by George Bush, Peña Gómez supports it and backs an invasion to restore Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power in Haiti. Besides

the constitutional reforms, Balaguer was arm-twisted into signing an agreement allowing U.S. troops to patrol the Dominican border with Haiti.

The Inter-American Dialogue is making headway in infecting the Clinton administration with Bush’s British-inspired “democracy and free trade” rhetoric. At an Aug. 3 news conference, Clinton said that U.S. national security “is caught up in whether the people in this hemisphere are moving toward democracy and open markets.”

The next test for this “Project Democracy” will be Mexico’s Aug. 21 presidential elections. Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, candidate of the left-wing PRD, has declared that the ruling PRI party has “fixed” the results. Cárdenas has allied with the narco-terrorists of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), which staged a bloody insurgency in Chiapas on Jan. 1. The EZLN, along with myriad other radical groupings, recently held a convention in the jungles of Chiapas. The consensus was to overturn Mexico’s system of government. “Civil disobedience” experts have reportedly been brought in to provide advice and training in post-election protests against the ruling PRI, when it wins.—*Carlos Wesley*