

## Dateline Mexico by Gerardo Castilleja

### Dead-end 'dialogue' with the EZLN

*The third phase of negotiations with the government ended exactly as EIR had projected: in a big fat zero.*

On June 9, the correspondents of *El Herald de México* listened to "Comandante Tacho's" voice clearly issuing orders from the telephone: "Do not make any deal on any point, contest everything, demand explanations over and over. We must buy time." Commanders "Tacho" and "David" were the heads of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) delegation in the peace dialogues of Larrainzar, Chiapas, with the government's Commission of Concord and Pacification (Cocopa).

Marco Antonio Bernal, the Cocopa leader, ended the third episode of the frustrated dialogue by recognizing what had been obvious from the outset: "Two months were lost . . . the attitude of the rebels opens doubts on their willingness to negotiate." Despite everything, Bernal, who was a terrorist back in the 1970s, went so far as to say that these talks had led to a "change in tone" from the Zapatistas.

Cocopa's peace proposal was turned down flat by the leaders of the Defense Commissions of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, Generals Esquinca and Garcías respectively. It called for moving military units into delimited zones, and the EZLN to fixed "corridors" or "détente routes." In the face of the Army's tough stance, the Zapatistas mounted yet another provocation: They demanded the handing over of the symbolic village of Guadalupe Tepeyac, an EZLN bastion retaken by the Mexican Army last Feb. 9. Rebuffed in this, the "indigenous" commanders announced that they would build their own Guadalupe Tepeyac in the jungle, with international aid. And "Subcom-

mander Marcos" sent out a recorded message calling for an international dialogue on the EZLN's future.

Cocopa accepted suspending the talks because the Zapatistas' mentor Samuel Ruiz, bishop of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, announced a trip to Germany. His strategy is to give a wide berth to the peace talks until October, when he hopes to box in the Mexican government by returning to the negotiating table with the Nobel Peace Prize in hand. Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, an Argentine-born British agent of influence, showed up in Chiapas to announce that he will head up the committee to campaign for Samuel Ruiz to win this year's prize.

Since Feb. 8, when President Ernesto Zedillo decided to yank the EZLN out of the territory it occupied and push it back into the Lacanondo Jungle, as he ordered their leaders' arrest, the EZLN and its international backers have been hoping to gain time. Their game is to wait for popular unrest over the economy to shift the correlation of forces against Mexico. Steering this are the São Paulo Forum terrorist international, through its Mexican arm, the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) of ex-presidential candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and their ally inside the ruling PRI: Manuel Camacho Solís, the former regent of the Federal District, named in various media reports as the protector of the EZLN and the former urban bus drivers union, Route 100, a terrorist hotbed.

On June 8, in the middle of the Larrainzar Dialogue, a communiqué of the Indigenous-Command Center Committee of the EZLN proclaimed:

"We need a nationwide initiative to unify and give cohesion to all the organizational forces which have been scattered up to now." Rafael Sebastián Guillén Vicente, a.k.a. "Subcommander Marcos," called for the building of a "new left," according to an AFP wire report of June 10. That same day, the pro-Zapatista daily *La Jornada* transcribed "Marcos's" full message, including a diatribe against the "legal left," supposedly split between Marcos and Manuel Camacho since the crushing defeat suffered in the Aug. 21, 1994 presidential vote. Camacho is trying to build up his own image as a centrist and negotiator, while Marcos calls on the "illegal left" to close ranks with the EZLN, in alliance with Cárdenas.

President Zedillo's flight forward into peace talks with the EZLN plays into Camacho's game. After the Larrainzar fiasco, the President voiced "confidence and hope" in his strategy of peace negotiations. In a recent meeting with Mexican press he denied rumors that he is thinking of giving Camacho a cabinet post, though he admitted meeting with him: "Mr. Camacho paid me two or three courtesy visits, in this sense there is this relationship. We had a few coffees together." While the President is gambling on his powers of conciliation, Camacho is betting on a blowup of the institutions by around August, and is building his own party to move into the power vacuum.

Before ending the peace dialogue, "Marcos" described the national conjuncture ahead: "The economic crisis has gone beyond the stock markets, the big financial centers. . . . The crisis is already alive on the Mexican people's tables. The crisis is achieving what any opposition front would dream of: It is unifying sectors and social classes which plenty kept separated and often at loggerheads."