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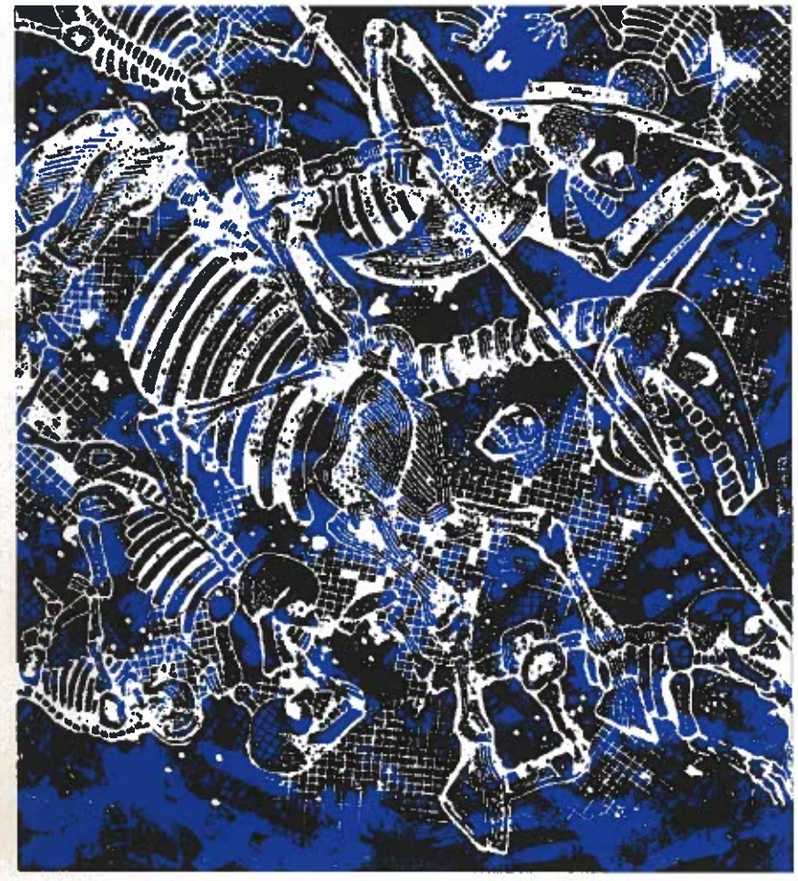

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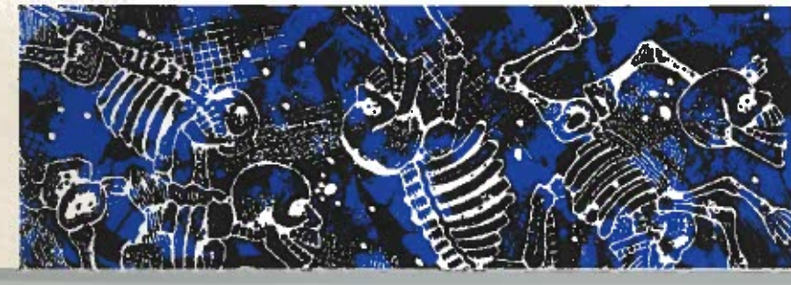

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CONTENTS

GLOSSARY

Acasillado: house servant
Cacique: local indigenous leader
Campesino: rural cultivator and labourer
Colono: tenant farmer
Comuneros: small plot holders of communal lands in indigenous villages
Ejido: land-grant community
Indigenismo: pro-Indian policies
Ladino: non-indigenous person of Spanish cultural origins
Mestizo: person of mixed bloods
Milpa: corn field
Porfiriato: period when Porfirio Dias was president of Mexico
Zocalo: main square

ACRONYMS

EZLN: Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, Zapatista National Liberation Army
CCESC: Centro de Capacitación en Ecología y Salud para Campesinos, Campesino Ecological and Health Training Centre
CEOIC: Consejo Estatal de Organizaciones Indígenas y Campesinas, State Council for Indigenous and Campesino Organizations
CNC: Confederación Nacional de Campesinos, National Campesino Confederation
CND: Convención Nacional Democrática, National Democratic Convention
COCOPA Comisión de Concordia y Pacificación; Commission of Agreement and Peacemaking
COIAC: Central Independiente de Obreros Agrícolas y Campesinos, Independent Centre for Agricultural Workers and Campesinos
CONAI: Comisión Nacional de Intermediación, National Commission of Mediation
CONPAZ: Coordinación de Organismos No Gubernamentales por la Paz, Coordination of NGOs for Peace
INI: Instituto Nacional Indigenista, National Indigenist Institute
OCEZ: Organización de Campesinos Emiliano Zapata, Emiliano Zapata Campesino Organisation
PAN: Partido de Acción Nacional, National Action Party
PRI: Partido Revolucionario Institucional, Institutionalized Revolutionary Party
PRODESCH: Programas para el Desarrollo Económico y Social de Chiapas, Programs for the Ecomomic and Social Development of Chiapas
SAM: Sistema Alimentario Mexicano, Mexican Food System

THE EXPLOSION OF COMMUNITIES IN CHIAPAS

JUNE NASH

As indigenous and mestizo campesinos - rural small holders and agricultural workers - of the southernmost state of Chiapas have mobilized during the past three decades to assert their rights to land and political participation, the traditional bases of their defense in corporate communities have been transformed. The isolation, homogenity and egalitarianism that once seemed to ensure their cultural integrity and automony from state and national intervention and the *ladino* (mestizo, mixed descent) population in their midst are fractured as communities have become linked through highways to market centres, as migration from rural to urban areas and to the rainforest extends old territorial allegiances into new arenas, national and international development agencies, armies and religious sects penetrate their boundaries, and as protestant conversion, multiple party affiliations, and female participation in wage and commercial markets promote a plurality of identities. Communities are the space in which these diverse economic, political and cultural interests meet and collide.

We are concerned in this Document with the transformations within Chiapas Mayan communities that make these processes of change visible. Our focus will be the period from 1974 when the first hemispheric congress of indigenous people took place in San Cristobal de las Casas, to the Zapatista uprising and the turbulent forces released by it. We will also take into account the continuities and disjunctures in community organization and regional relations in preconquest, colonial and independence times that provide clues to central beliefs and values affecting social control, the ordering of social relations by class and

ethnicity, the control of resources, and the degree of autonomy in relation to the region and state in contemporary villages and townships.

Chiapas society is, as Thomas Lee (1994:67) characterizes it, a mosaic of plurilinguistic, pluriethnic and pluricultural groups at least since the Late Archaic period, 4650-2150 BC. John Clark and Michael Blake (1993:39) hypothesize that the Olmecs had their roots in the Maya, Oto-Mangue and Mixe-Zoque, and that they were not so much the great mother culture but the first great mestiza culture of Middle America whose genius consisted in incorporating the various traditions of its multiple roots around 1300 BC. In the process of 'Olmecization', Late Archaic (1800 to 1650 BC) villages of 400 to 1200 inhabitants of the Zoque-Mixe speaking group that Clark and Blake (1993:28) call the Mokaya, 'People of Corn', were integrated in larger political circuits linked by political-religious ideology (Clark and Blake 1993:43) that is still discernible in contemporary villages.

This art of incorporating new populations and cultural traits in an expanding network of ceremonial centres and peripheral settlements organically linked through the exchange of special products is amply demonstrated by archeologists and ethnohistorians in the three thousand years of Maya expansion in the Chiapas area. Five hundred years of Spanish domination brought about a contraction of indigenous communities within bounded entities defined by Spanish overlords and restricted by exploitative labour relations existing with ladinos. The explosion of these corporate communities in the context of migration, commercialization, changing gender roles, political engagement and revolution is spelled out in both highland and tropical rainforest communities within this volume.

In bursting the limits of indigenous communities, Chiapas Mayas are sundering the boundaries imposed by the Spanish colonial and independence governments on the political and economic participation of men and particularly women in the national society. Indigenous peoples have aligned themselves with mestizos and ladinos in the context of campesino and labour organizations, addressing their demands to national politicians and institutions. As these figures have ignored their demands, they risk the alienation of indigenous peoples and a turn to pan-Indian rebellion.

RESTRUCTURING ETHNICITY IN CHIAPAS AND THE WORLD

GEORGE A. COLLIER

Introduction

Two recent events underscore subtle but important shifts in the ethnicity of indigenous populations in Chiapas. On March 19, 1995 several thousand people from dozens of diverse indigenous communities, among them Protestants and Catholics who have often been in conflict with one another, joined in the demonstration in support of Liberation Theologian Bishop of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Samuel Ruiz. Barely a month later, on the April 19th eve of the scheduled renewal of peace talks between the Mexican government and the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), an equally diverse gathering of representatives of distinct indigenous communities and sometimes competing indigenous organizations from throughout the region converged on San Andrés Larraínzar to demonstrate support for the Zapatistas.

Ethnic identity once divided indigenous communities from one another in the Chiapas central highlands. Both recent events underscore a transformation: now, in the wake of the Zapatista rebellion, peoples of diverse indigenous background are emphasizing what they share with one another in revindication of economic, social, and political exploitation.

How has this shift in indigenous identity come about? This article argues that the transformation reflects changes in Mexican rural society stemming from fundamental redirections of Mexico's policies for national society and its place in the world order, marking the ending of an era of Mexican social policy and statescraft.

For decades, Mexico effectively managed peasants and indigenous peoples as distinct sectors within its 'institutionalized' revolution, along with workers, ranchers, merchants and industrialists under policies fostering development of a sheltered national economy. Mexico's all-embracing Institutionalized Revolutionary Party (PRI) used a corporatist approach of giving each sector a role in sheltered national development as well as corresponding rewards. As the government developed rural programs, it focussed on communities, using agrarian reform to conform them separately, and Indianist policies that tended to "naturalize" ethnic differences among indigenous communities while distinguishing them from those of non-indigenous peasants.

But in the past twenty years Mexico's national leaders have reoriented Mexican development to global commodity markets and international high finance. More generally, national planners have embraced the philosophy of structural adjustment that governments throughout the world are using to shuck off social responsibilities to the poor. In Mexico, leaders have set aside the nation's social contracts with the peasantry and indigenous people, abandoning long-standing programs of agrarian reform – uniting peasants and indigenous peoples in opposition to the national state.

As the reorientation ripples through the Mexican countryside, the gap has grown between the better-off and the poor, the powerful and the powerless, and the old structures of community that once framed ethnicity have eroded, making way for a new and evocative indigenous discourse voiced by the Zapatistas on behalf of Mexico's poor. The Zapatistas, what is more, speak out from the position of indigenous peoples' historic subordination to protest problems that beset poor Mexicans everywhere, blurring the lines between indigenous, peasant, rural, and urban poor. To borrow a metaphor, we might say that the rebellion is recrafting ethnicity as an ecumenical rather than parochial discourse, evoked from and spanning society's base rather than being articulated from on high[1] .

Oil Development and the Crisis in Mexican Agriculture

The Zapatistas chose January 1, 1994 – the inauguration of NAFTA – to rebel as a way of protesting the government's 'selling out' of Mexico to foreign interests. But NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) was only the last link of a chain leading back to Mexico's decision, after the OPEC crisis of 1973, to sell oil into global markets, unexpectedly transforming and destabilizing Mexican agriculture and ultimately removing its insulation and protection from the global economy.

For decades after Lázaro Cárdenas nationalized foreign firms' oil holdings in 1938, Mexico reserved petroleum as a resource to tap for the internal needs of the national economy through a state-run petrochemical industry. To help the depression-era economy recover, Cárdenas subsidized Mexican industry and commerce, keeping the price of oil low and erecting tariffs and restricting imports to protect nascent businesses from foreign competition. Cárdenas stepped up agrarian reform so that peasant and indigenous farming could produce inexpensive foods enabling workers to get by on low wages favorable to developing Mexican businesses. These relationships among oil production, peasant and indigenous agriculture, commerce, and industry in the sheltered economy of 'import substitution industrialization' sustained Mexico through several decades of growth.

After the OPEC crisis raised world petroleum prices in 1973, Mexico's decision to export oil distorted these relationships. To produce oil for export, not just for internal consumption, Mexico borrowed massively from the world banking system, glutted at the time with petrodollars from the mid-East and eager to place loans. Mexico used credits to finance new oil exploration – especially in Tabasco and along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico – and to build new infrastructure throughout the country. In Chiapas, the government established the existence of oil reserves under what has become the heartland of the Zapatista rebellion. It also constructed hundreds of miles of roads and completed three major hydroelectric dams along the Grijalva river that now supply the country with about half of its hydroelectric power.

The resulting boom drew labour into construction, commerce, and transport and began to undercut and transform

agriculture. Agriculture declined from about 14 percent of GDP in 1965 to about 7 percent of GDP by 1980. In addition, farmers sought to cut labour costs by shifting to chemical inputs – fertilizers and herbicides – that reduced labour while intensifying production but that also made producers dependent on credits and subsidies. Responding to the crisis in agriculture in the late 1970s, the government extended credits, subsidies and marketing assistance in an attempt to revive agriculture through López Portillo's Mexican Food System (SAM). Planners worried that the country had become too dependent on corn imported from the United States, a threat to Mexico's sovereignty at a time when US politicians spoke of using grains as tools or weapons of foreign policy.

But the 1982 debt crisis shattered Mexico's development boom and the ability of the government to subsidize the transformed agriculture. Collapse of world petroleum prices left Mexico unable to service $96 billion of external debt, mostly borrowed on the unfulfilled promise of oil exports. The international banking system forced austerity on the Mexican budget. Credits, subsidies, and market supports began to dry up in the Miguel de la Madrid presidency. Six years later, Salinas de Gortari embraced policies of liberal restructuring under which Mexico began to sell off or dissolve state- controlled enterprize in various sectors. Salinas targeted peasant agriculture as inefficient, removing remaining supports for peasant production, and redrafting the agrarian code to bring agrarian reform to a halt while allowing privatization and sale of indigenous and peasant lands that the code once protected.

Restructuring of Peasant and Indigenous Landscapes

Throughout Mexico, these changes plunged peasant and indigenous agriculture into crisis. Poorer peasants, who lacked capital or access to credits needed to purchase fertilizer and herbicides, abandoned their land or to rented it to wealthier compatriots. In many areas of central Mexico peasants and indigenous people gave up farming and migrated to seek work in the urban peripheries or in the United States.

In Chiapas, reliance on chemical inputs began to differentiate the poor from the better-off within indigenous communities, often pitting wealthier indigenous elites of the *cabeceras* (municipal centres) against the poor of the outlying *parajes* or *aldeas* (hamlets) and breaking down community ethnic solidarities. Many of the poor were driven out of their ethnic homelands or left to seek their fortunes in the frontier colonies of eastern Chiapas and in squatter settlements around San Cristóbal de Las Casas. Others took up employment as unskilled workers in construction in oil and hydroelectric development. After the 1982 debt crisis, when austerity curtailed construction, unskilled workers who returned to Chiapas' agrarian economy no longer could find employment, swelling the ranks of the impoverished.

As a result, ethnic populations that once had been community-based began to spread across the geographic and social landscapes of southeastern Mexico, intermingling with different indigenous and non-indigenous rural and urban poor, sometimes even in new livelihoods and new kinds of communities. Many of those marginalized from Chiapas' highland indigenous communities joined indigenous people and peasants from other states flowing into the tropical forest frontier lands of eastern Chiapas from which the Zapatista rebellion has since emerged. While some retained identities of ethnic origin, others turned to religion to consolidate frontier settlements, establishing them as communities of diverse worship – Presbyterian, Baptist, Seventh Day Adventist, Mormon, etc. as well as Catholic-linked Christian-based.

Even as oil development redeployed people and identities in this supposedly remote area, it left them vulnerable to dependency on credits, subsidies and the marketing mechanisms of INMECAFE, the Mexican Coffee Institute. Eastern Chiapas' colonists allocated one-third of their production to coffee as a cash crop, another third to livestock and the remainder to subsistence crops such as corn and beans. When austerity and restructuring set in, colonists might have been able to weather the shift in economic tides had not the world price of coffee also plummeted in 1989, further devastating peasant producers who had invested in coffee as their principal cash crop. The collapse of coffee prices coincided with Salinas' abrogation of agrarian reform, dashing colonists' unfulfilled quests for land.

Zapatista condemnation of NAFTA thus implicitly protests the trade liberalization and structural adjustment that began two decades ago with Mexico's decision to enter global petroleum markets. Oil-led development threw agriculture into crisis; it undermined the solidarity of indigenous and peasant communities by differentiating people within them; it impoverished those made vulnerable to the collapse of credits and markets needed to survive in a transforming rural economy. Little wonder, then, that Chiapas' rural poor, no longer protected by the solidarities of old ethnic communities, should embrace the protest voiced by the Zapatista rebellion.

From Governing by Pact to Exclusion

The restructuring of ethnic identities in Chiapas responds as well to a fundamental shift of Mexican government away from social policies that drew pacts among and support from the various different sectors of Mexican society. Increasingly, the government and its ruling party, the PRI, have opted for policies that favour only the 'modernizing' sector linked to international high finance, with waning commitment to other sectors. Many Mexicans, including most of those in peasant and indigenous communities, now feel excluded from the government's social contract. Some have joined parties and organizations opposed to the ruling party.

For decades, beginning with the 1934-40 presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas, the ruling party successfully managed public policy to give different sectors of society a sense that each had a voice in a political system that would mediate their sometimes-conflicting interests. In the countryside, the ruling party gave political access to peasants and indigenous peoples as well as to ranchers and commercial farmers; urban labour and industry also could count on being heeded. The government claimed to sustain a social contract acknowledging the legitimacy and needs of each sector. Mexico's relative social peace, and the willingness of the 'electorate' to allow the endorsement of ruling party candidates in decade after decade of managed elections, reflect the success of government by pact.

Pacting reached into agrarian landscapes and evoked a style of indigenous and peasant leadership in which, for the most

part, organic leaders worked through the framework of municipal institutions and through those of the ruling party, the PRI, to help extract state resources for their followers in return for delivering the vote for ruling party candidates. The success of agrarian reform and Indianist policies in conforming ethnicity to municipal institutions matched the relatively strong loyalties of peasant and indigenous leaders to the government's ruling party.

Austerity, forced on Mexico by the world banking community after the 1982 debt crisis, undercut the government's ability to sustain its social contract and sectoral pacts. Then, as modernizers within the PRI embraced the ideology of structural adjustment, the government cut subsidies for peasant agriculture and social programs for the burgeoning urban populace living in poverty.

As a result, the hegemonic success of the PRI eroded. In the 1988 presidential elections, the PRI faced its first serious electoral opposition from the National Action Party (PAN) and from supporters of Cuauhtámoc Cárdenas, many of them PRI defectors who opposed the policies of structural adjustment promised by Carlos Salinas de Gortari. Under Salinas, government policy ceased to represent all sectors of society. Programs such as Solidarity, ostensibly intended to assist the poor, channeled funding behind the scenes to PRI supporters, to the exclusion of those in the growing opposition.

Peasant and indigenous leadership shifted in style, meanwhile, as rural production concentrated in the hands of PRI-affiliated power holders who controlled the capital and scarce credits needed to farm with chemical inputs. Elites who had established themselves in power by winning rewards for their followers in return for delivering the vote for the PRI began to monopolize government resources for themselves, using them to capitalize their own production in the transformed agrarian economy. As they no longer needed the labour of poorer compatriots in agrarian production, power-holding elites could cast off economic and political responsibilities to the growing numbers of expendable labourers in their own communities. The organic leaders of yesteryear thus transformed themselves into the caciques of contemporary times.

As support for the ruling party eroded, and as marginalized peasants and indigenous people began to affiliate with the

opposition parties, the PRI resorted increasingly to coercive tactics to hold onto the peasant vote, withholding funds and services from those whose loyalties are suspect. Even in indigenous hamlets, authorities withheld the benefits from government programs from those who did not support the PRI. Such practices further fractured rural communities, sharpening the divisions between powerful elites and marginalized poor. Increasingly, as a result, organic leadership among rank-and-file peasants and indigenous populations has coalesced around opposition to the PRI, in coalition with political parties of the opposition, with independent organizations and now with the Zapatistas.

Uniting against Arbitrary Agrarian Policies

Extremely diverse ethnic and religious affiliation marked the colonization that flowed into eastern Chiapas in response to the restructuring of the agrarian economy in the 1970s. What brought people together in a movement that now spans ethnic and religious diversity was resistance to the arbitrariness of government agrarian policy in the region.

During the 1970s, Luis Echeverría opened up eastern Chiapas to long-distance colonization by modifying the agrarian code to permit peasants to relocate far from their homes, even across state lines. Yet as colonists settled frontier areas, the government decreed huge tracts of the colonized land off limits to them as 'bioreserves.' The huge Montes Azul 'bioreserve,' which encompassed dozens of new frontier settlements, was 'reserved,' it turned out, for government timbering.

Agrarian authorities ordered colonists in the bioreserves to relocate, but most refused. Attempts by the PRI to coopt peasants in eastern Chiapas and to divide followers from dissidents only heightened antagonisms. As colonists resisted continued pressure to relocate during the 1980s, most of them aligned with opposition to the PRI. When the government claimed overwhelming electoral support in 1988 from eastern Chiapas for the PRI's presidential candidate, Salinas de Gortari, colonists knew the elections had been rigged.

Upon taking office, Salinas de Gortari rewarded colonists allied with the PRI in the Montes Azul bioreserve by legitimating their land claims – while denying the claims of dissidents and opponents. Shortly thereafter, Salinas announced legislation to 'reform' Article 27 of the Constitution, bringing agrarian reform to a halt. In effect, Salinas broke the nation's historic covenant with the peasantry to honour the hope, if not always the reality, of legal agrarian reform. For the first time the Zapatistas, present in small numbers since 1983 and advocating armed resistance to the national state, won recruits among colonists who believed that they had lost legal recourse to their lands claims.

These arbitrary and contradictory government agrarian policies unified dissident colonists across lines of ethnic and religious difference, while forging links to agrarian activists of other regions in Chiapas and Mexico's south. The Zapatista movement has helped generalize the alliances to span indigenous and non-indigenous peasants throughout and beyond the area of frontier colonization in eastern Chiapas.

New Ecumenism in Indigenous Discourse in Chiapas

There is a new ecumenism in the ethnicity that is emerging in Chiapas as a result of the Zapatista rebellion — ecumenism with respect to religious difference as well as other kinds of difference. 81 percent difference as well as other kinds of difference.

The joining together of Protestants with Catholics among the indigenous groups who have been demonstrating solidarity with Bishop Samuel Ruiz's role as intermediary between the government and the Zapatistas in recent negotiations is an important development because religious difference has been a significant axis of conflict among indigenous groups in Chiapas in recent decades. I believe that the Zapatista rebellion furthered the evolution of such ecumenism.

Many analysts believe that the 1974 Indigenous Congress, organized by Bishop Samuel Ruiz at the request of the government of Chiapas to commemorate Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, laid the foundations for the indigenous movement that has coalesced in the Zapatista rebellion. The Congress pulled together indigenous representatives from various regions of Chiapas, including the colonizing region of eastern Chiapas, allowing them for the first time to articulate common demands for social change. In the wake of the Congress, independent organizing of

indigenous and peasant communities in eastern Chiapas built upon the networks and channels of communication established in the Congress.

One must remember that the 1974 Indigenous Congress built on the catechist networks established by Bishop Ruiz in part to counter the spread of Protestant and evangelical churches in eastern Chiapas, where new religions afforded solidarities needed to consolidate frontier communities. Even though Liberation Theology galvanized indigenous alliances in the 1974 Congress, non-Catholic religious affiliation continued to grow, encompassing up to 40 percent of the frontier population by the 1980s. In this context, independent organizers had the advantage over religious organizers of being able embrace groups of different religious persuasion into their movements. The Zapatistas built an inclusive movement in part by disavowing religious affiliation while affirming religious tolerance, epitomizing an ecumenism that has since become more prominent even in Bishop Ruiz's church efforts.

More generally, the Zapatista movement has adopted what one might characterize an ecumenical stance with respect to differences of political persuasion by welcoming diverse groups of civil society into a broad-based movement seeking reforms of Mexican society as a whole. As a result, diverse indigenous and peasant organizations have coalesced in organizations such as the State Council for Indigenous and Campesino Organisations (CEOIC) that echo and reinforce the Zapatistas' challenges to the national state.

The Transnational Context of New Regional Movements

The shift of ethnicity in Chiapas to transcend, yet embrace, difference parallels the emergence of new regional movements in many parts of the world where 'borderlands' bring distinct cultures together in interaction without necessarily erasing their differences. Global development moves production 'offshore' and circulates people, goods, money and information in new kinds of translocational spaces shaped by economic restructuring. Peoples drawn together in new ways confront ambiguities of identity and polyvalent senses and possibilities of being. They experiment with guises and roles, and sometimes they forge,

reformulate and mobilize ethnic identity to hail new sympathizers — as the Zapatistas' faceless indigenous visages have appealed to those who project their own identities onto those imagined behind the Zapatista masks.

Contemporary Chiapas illustrates how alliances can span heterogenous peoples in borderlands without necessarily dissolving their differences. Oil-led development transformed southeastern Mexico, drawing the ethnically distinctive indigenous peoples out from Chiapas' agrarian economy and thrusting them together with non-indigenous peasants, workers, independent organizers and even evangelizers, in work, politics and religion not previously open to indigenous peoples. New alignments of wealth and power surfaced and sharpened the basis for a regional indigenous identity that emerged as the reversals of Mexico's energy development thrust the region into crisis. The Zapatistas tapped the discontent and consolidated a movement that elevated indigenous identity out of its old parochial loyalties, linked to patronage and protection of the corporate state, into something new, the shared identity of those whom politicians have spurned in pursuit of neo-liberal modernizing.

There are other ways in which encompassing transnational political and economic systems reshape and sometimes consolidate loyalties and identities drawn from ethnic landscapes. A new pan-'Mixtec' identity, for example, has spanned the primary loyalties to township that Mixtec speakers once held in Oaxaca. It grows from Mixtec migrants' shared experience of border camps in Tijuana and work in the tomato fields of California, Oregon, Florida and other parts of the United States where transnational agri-business has brought seasonally migrant workers from Oaxaca together in new collective identity.

Regional identities and subnational popular movements also gain support from one another — much as the Zapatistas have tapped support from within Mexican civil society, from native-Americans organizations and their supporters throughout the continent, from the Chicano movement and from sympathizers in Catalunya. They draw support from independent organizations that challenge the state and from non-governmental organizations whose resources and constituencies transcend national controls. While contemporary nation-states are in many instances struggling to reassert their primary claims on citizen-

ship and identity, they are no longer the only game in town in the post cold-war and increasingly transnational order, which is giving rise to new, multivocal solidarities and alliances.

Notes

1. For an analysis of the roots of the Zapatista rebellion, see *BASTA! Land and the Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas* by George A. Collier and Elizabeth Lowery Quaratiello (Food First Books, 1994).
2. Even Mexico's oil sovereignty is falling victim to restructuring as the Ernesto Zedillo government contemplates privatization of the state-run petrochemical industry after having pledged oil revenues to U.S. banks to guarantee repayment of the recent Clinton administration bailout.

COMMUNITY, ETHNICITY AND THE MEXICAN STATE

JUNE NASH

In the resurgence of ethnic identity that surfaced in the quincentenial year of Spanish conquest and climaxed in the dramatic uprising of a few hundred poorly armed members of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) on New Year's morning in 1994, indigenous populations are defining a new relationship between autonomous, pluriethnic regions and the state. The brief occupation of the town hall and nearby regimental headquarters in San Cristóbal de Las Casas and of the municipal buildings in gateway cities to the Lacandon rain forest - Las Margaritas, Ocosingo, Altamirano, and Nuevo Rancho, by EZLN troops made up of indigenous *Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Chol, Tojolabal* and *Mam* - became world news.

Less attention has been paid to the social movements of indigenous and mestizo supporters of the uprising who are striving to bring about democratic changes in the wake of the uprising. The participants in these movements are demanding access to land and rights promised yet never delivered in the Constitution of 1917. They are also seeking constitutional changes that will promote the free expression of distinct languages and cultural practices in the context of social justice. The actions of indigenous peoples, who constitute about a quarter of the population of Chiapas, are challenging hegemonic control exercised by the Institutionalized Revolutionary Party (PRI) through the 'mestizocracia' that dominates it. This term identifies the autocratic control by mixed blood descendants of the conquest who pretend to advance native traditions while coopting them in the ideology of *indigenismo* (pro-Indian policies) that in fact relegated them to second-class citizenship.

The social movements that culminated in the uprising are the outcome of two decades of resistance and opposition to precipitous changes in which indigenous peoples have been integrated in neoliberal political and economic institutions that denied communitarian values and distinctive cultural practices. These movements challenge the boundaries of corporate communities created by the Spanish crown in the colonial period that fragmented preconquest pluriethnic regions and extensive commercial and political interrelationships prevailing among Mayas and their predecessors for over two millennia. The fictive cultural autonomy within municipalities masked an exploitative relationship that tapped the communities for labour power and products in an unequal exchange that benefited the state and non-indigenous dominated cities while allowing indigenous peoples to engage in internecine witch-hunts and expulsions.

In the year and a half following the New Year's morning surprise attack, organisations of campesinos and popular fronts of *comuneros* (small plot holders of communal lands in indigenous villages) have carried out seizures of town halls, opposing PRI incumbents who often gained office by electoral fraud. They have occupied lands that were part of communal holdings before the Porfiriato but to which they never gained title in accord with Article 27 of the 1917 constitution. Some of the activists in these independent communal organisations that split from corporatist organisations controlled by the ruling party over two decades ago are incorporated in the Institutionalized Revolutionary Party (PRI), others in the Civil Society linked with the National Democratic Convention hosted by the EZLN in the Lacandon rainforest shortly before the August 21 elections. A third group includes the populations of Rebel Municipalities and Territories of the Zapatista National Liberation Army and the autonomas regions and municipal councils that recognise the government of Amado Avendaño, the independent candidate for governor of the state of Chiapas. The common goals of these diverse groups include autonomy and an end to the fragmentation of indigenous society and control from above by the PRI.

In the struggle to maintain their position in the semi-subsistence economy of small plot cultivation, the indigenous peoples have forged alliances with mestizos who share their poverty at the same time that they have challenged the control by caciques-

indigenous leaders coopted by PRI officials within their midst. Jacinto Arias Perez (1994) shows how, in the process, "the limits of Indian-ness have widened, and are less definable in themselves now that many of those who were considered Indian have as much of the outlook of conqueror or invader." Although he occupies an important position as a Tzotzil anthropologist in the state constitutional government of the PRI as Secretary for the Care of Indigenous Peoples, Jacinto Arias has supported these movements for cultural autonomy, declaring at a meeting of the Centre for Social Anthropological Studies and Research that "the people have a right to autonomy guaranteed in the 1917 Constitution".

The putative homogeneity contained in bounded communities that was once predicated as the basis for ethnic identification is no longer viable as the indigenous peoples engage in pluripolitical, plurireligious, and pluricultural settings in colonising areas of the jungle and in urban settings of Chiapas. In the new settings to which indigenous people have migrated we find the vanguard of movements that are changing the notion of what is 'tradition'. These movements of campesinos and marginalized urban populations are engaging members of corporate communities that had defended the few resources they held against members of their own group as well as outsiders.

This 'cultural rehabilitation', by which I mean the opening up of ethnic inclusion to all those who have been marginalized in the mestizocracia that emerged after the Revolution of 1910 while still containing the essence of cultural traditions that typified their distinctive groups, is the culmination of a series of changes which can be traced within communities of Chiapas and in the space they are occupying beyond the boundaries of communities.

Caciquismo and The State

'Caciquismo', or the domination by indigenous leaders coopted by the ruling PRI, evolved in distinct paths related to internal ethnic patterns during the decades of increasing integration in the 1950s. Prior to the 1950s the state intervened only indirectly in indigenous communities of Chiapas through ladinos as mayors and secretaries. The exploitative relations between ethnic groups in highland communities with ladinos in their midst or in

neighbouring towns were often cast in patriarchal and personal terms that contained and masked the conflict. This contrasted with labour relations between indigenous *colonos* (tenant farmers) and *acasillados* (house servants) with owners of the coastal Incas to which they migrated seasonally, or with large landowners in the few fertile valleys of the highlands and central plateau where brutality, deception and ruthless exploitation prevailed. As deculturated Indians lacking community ties who spoke Spanish, colonos were not subject to the gerontological hierarchies characteristic of highland communities nor to the paternalistic relations prevailing with ladinos in their midst.

Ethnic relations were also influenced by the demographic makeup of indigenous communities. Townships where there were no resident ladinos, such as Amatenango and San Juan Chamula, had greater control over the internal administration of their resources than those communities in which ladinos dominated the town centres, as in San Pedro Chenalhó, Tenejapa, San Andrés Larrainzar, Simojovel, Villa Las Rosas and Venustiano Carranza. Ladinos tended to monopolise commercial as well as political relations even when they were a distinct minority in these bicultural towns.

Resistance to ladinos in their midst often took the form of spiritual control over animal spirits exercised by seers or diviners called *u'uletik*. Esther Hermite (1992) provides a fascinating insight into the defensive mechanisms of indigenous people in a township dominated by ladinos in her study of Villa Las Rosas or Pinola as it was then called by the indigenous inhabitants. During 1995 when she lived there, two systems of social control prevailed: Mexican legal codes maintained (and subverted in their own interest) by ladinos along with supernatural sanctions exercised through indigenous *nahualistas* (diviner-curers) who could introduce sickness or overcome it with spiritual cures. Control over public spaces in the church and *cabildo* (town offices) alternated between the two ethnic groups. National fiestas were orchestrated in the plaza and municipal hall, with the indigenous peoples participating as spectators. On May 3, the Day of the Cross, the indigenous civil hierarchy took charge of adorning crosses that defined municipal limits. Carnival was also a fiesta where indigenous people took over the public space, with men dressed as women performing dances that caricatured the dominant ladinos during the three day period of

'Crazy February' when the world is out of control and social hierarchies reversed. During Hermite's fieldwork the ladinos abolished the indigenous offices in the civil religious hierarchy, but the last incumbents held sway even after their death through their animal spirits, *nahwales*. Thus the *me'iltatiles* (mothers and fathers or ancestors of the people) were able to guard the village from outside dangers and punish the sins of the locals through lightening, meteors and whirlwinds controlled by the animal spirits of previous officeholders.

The core of resistance and rebelliousness lay in this spiritual world controlled by diviner curers and the cargo holders for Christian saints and deities during the colonial and independence period. Indigenous people of Chiapas were not voluntary participants in the wars that swept through the countryside during the 1910 Revolution, and revolutionary gains came late, or in some regions of Chiapas, never arrived. With the exception of Zinacantán, where young men in the municipal government knowledgeable about the Land Reform guaranteed in Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution started legal action to regain communal lands in 1920, most indigenous communities in Chiapas did not begin to make claims until the 1930s and then were able to regain only a fraction of eligible holdings. The Agrarian Commission charged with distributing lands during Lázaro Cárdenas' presidency from 1934 to 1940 provided entry into political leadership of a few indigenous scribes, men who had gained literacy in the boarding schools set up by Cárdenas. Since most highland Chiapas Indians were monolingual and non-literate until the 1950s, it was frequently the colonos, or wage workers on plantations, who learned of the revolutionary gains and initiated the land restitution guaranteed in Article 27. This was the case in Amatenango del Valle, where the rich flat lands of San Nicolás privatized during the Porfiriato were seized by colonos who had worked them. They in turn were expelled by Amatenangueros when they tried to move into the town centre and occupy public offices.

These new opportunities for leadership did not in themselves create the conditions for cacique rule that is often implied in the literature on campesino movements. Since there were few national or state resources made available to the localities until 1970, the indigenous leaders that emerged in these contexts were often highly motivated to bring progress, literacy and land

rights to their communities without self-gain. Manuel Arias who served as scribe and later president of San Pedro Chenalhó, Salvador López Castellanos, who fought the traditionalists of his time in San Juan Chamula (Arias 1994), and Ceferino Gomez who was instrumental in bringing the land reform to reality in Amatenango del Valle (Nash 1970:236) do not fit the mold of opportunism implicit in the term caciques. Factionalism and the contest between a gerontocracy in the upper offices of the civil religious hierarchy and a young cohort of educated indigenous men were the basis for political competition rather than national parties. The clash between the two cohorts of leadership was fought out on grounds of witchcraft accusations in Amatenango del Valle or in terms of adherence to tradition as in Chamula and Chenalhó, but in all the highland communities it was premised on the crisis between a system of government that defended indigenous people from "perils of the soul" (Guiteras Holmes 1961) through spiritual powers that were under attack from youthful supporters of modernising agencies. The compromise that emerged in Chamula became a model for municipal government elsewhere: two municipal authorities served, one a monolingual old man who had served in the lower ranks of the traditional cargo system and the other a scribe (Rus 1994:15). The vote was delivered to the ruling party, the Partido Revolucionario Nacional, later changed to the Partido Revolucionario Institucionalizado by the indigenous municipal government, which marked all the ballots delivered to it. That system has persisted in most communities until 1988 and in Chamula until 1994.

The vehicle for the cooptation of indigenous leaders during the 1950s and 1960s was the National Indigenist Institute. Programs were relatively low capitalised agricultural and marketing cooperatives that became increasingly directed toward individual privatized enterprises. As the country opted for commercialized agriculture with highly capitalised ventures, indigenous communities were integrated into widening networks through the Programs for the Economic and Social Development of Chiapas (PRODESCH), introduced during the presidency of Luís Echevarria 1970-1976. PRODESCH coordinated national and regional offices with funding from Mexico City as well as the United Nations for education, health, agriculture, communications, electrification and community organisation. Most of the funding went into roads, and in five years 3,000 kms were built with the labour –

often unpaid – of indigenous workers. PRODESCH also promoted cash crops in indigenous municipalities, particularly coffee cultivation, forestry and cattle ranching.

The rewards of these programs, both directly in the disbursement of funds that were not closely supervised, and in the benefits from projects taken advantage of by the leaders themselves such as fruit cultivation and trucking on the newly paved roads, were highly unequal. This indigenous bourgeoisie became close allies of the PRI constituting the 'cacicazgo' that subverted grassroots movements in the subsequent decades of campesino struggles discussed below.

Pluriethnic responses to Centrist Development Projects

Development projects capitalised by the national government for Chiapas not only widened the wealth gap within communities but led to the flight of profits from the state. The government has pursued contradictory policies of development in the state that have created their own antagonists in campesino movements of revindication. In 1980, the same year that the government passed the Mexican Food System (SAM) to stabilise subsistence production, they passed the Ley Federal de Fomento (Federal Law of Public Works) to increase capitalist relations of production, subjecting campesinos to the same financial controls as the agrarian bourgeoisie. Two years later SAM was demobilised by the government to release the brakes on programs promoting highly capitalised and increasingly privatized ventures. At the same time they ignored the pleas of comuneros to legalise indigenous land claims in Chiapas. Campesinos then broke from the National Federation and Agrarian Community League, which was part of the cooptive structure of the PRI's National Campesino Confederation (CNC) in the 1970s. Stimulated by the Indigenous Congress which was organised with the help of the San Cristóbal de Las Casas Diocese led by Bishop Samuel Ruiz (see Christine Kovic, this volume) in 1974, independent groupings of campesinos emerged out of the government-sponsored Independent Campensino Confederation to form the Independent Centre for Agricultural Workers and Campesinos (CIOAC) in 1975, and in 1977 the Coordina-

tion of Independent Revolutionary Campesinos expanded into the National Plan de Ayala Coordination. These organisations were constantly under siege as official channels fought with left wing groups to control the social forces released in these organisations, using tactics of cacique intervention and corporative approaches. As Harvey (1994) points out, these forms of government penetration in the rural areas through corporative control that characterised INI, the CNC and their off-branches could no longer be relied upon as the Ejidos Unions emerged in the rainforest. The new social forces released by the Indigenous Congress and the Bishop's outreach organisations in conjunction with increasingly independent campesino organisations overcame the cooptive tactics of the PRI. By 1991 government funds rarely reached the Ejidos Unions that the Agrarian Reform Secretariat formed in 1976, especially those such as the 'Quiptic Ta Lecubtecel' (United by our Strength) in Ocosingo and 'Land and Liberty' and 'Campesino Struggle in Las Margaritas (Harvey 1994:30).

During the governorships of General Absalón Castellanos Domínguez and his successor Patrocinio González Garrido, the State resorted more and more frequently to outright repression by the army as they ensured the conditions for the growth of large scale cash crop production at the expense of self-sufficiency and subsistence products. This alliance with highly capitalised, export oriented sectors became patently evident in the last year of the Salinas presidency when he succeeded in passing the 'Reform of the Agrarian Reform' that allowed for the sale of ejido lands and freed the resources in communal lands, particularly oil that has always been considered the core of the national patrimony.

Venustiano Carranza, Simojovel and San Andrés Larrainzar share a similar history as communities with rich agricultural land within municipal limits that had been taken over by large land owning families in which indigenous campesinos organised both within and outside communal institutions to demand their rights to the land as guaranteed in the constitution. In Simojovel, which was dominated by large plantation owners who owned the processing plants for coffee and sugar refineries, indigenous workers had few opportunities to gain access to the revenue producing activities of cash crops promoted by PRODESCH.

A similar relation between landowners and indigenous small holders prevailed in Venustiano Carranza, where the owners of large scale sugar cane cultivation and refineries along with cattle ranches were favoured by State governors in the many conflicts that prevailed.

The construction of La Angostura dam reduced the lands available for campesinos of Venustiano Carranza and divided the community over the government's payment of the land for seven million old pesos (about 2,500 USD). The state produces 52 per cent of the electricity generated in the nation, but to this day, 34.92 per cent of the residents do not have electricity. The recent discovery of what some call 'an ocean of oil' under the Lacandon rainforest is already committed to payment of the debts incurred by the Salinas government. The very presence of these resources explains the militarisation of the state in the face of increasing pressures by militant colonisers and campesinos to redistribute some of the proceeds.

The land struggles in Venustiano Carranza date back to 1768 when the colonial government earmarked 350 caballerías (one caballería was 42 hectares) for Indians without their ever gaining title. Four large landowning families emerged during the Porfirio Díaz regime and dominated the region until recently. Comuneros renewed their struggle for land in 1939, 21 years after the Land Reform Act was included in the constitution of 1917, but little was regained. In 1965 a Presidential Resolution gave 700 agriculturalists 50,000 hectares, of which only 5000 hectares were effectively distributed. A year later, 5000 fertile hectares were inundated by the hydroelectric dam constructed in La Angostura within the township and many more campesinos were left without any lands. The government paid for only half the land lost.

The need to consolidate the movement for land outside of the traditional community institutions and government appointed agents led to the formation of the Emiliano Zapata Campesino Organisation (OCEZ) in 1967 with its base in the Casa del Pueblo, the heart of the indigenous community in the centre of Venustiano Carranza. With these bases, the struggles initiated by comuneros resulted in confrontations with the army in May 1971, and again in 1976 when the army seized the Casa del Pueblo (People's House) but were later repelled. Following the

defeat of the army, the government deceived the comuneros into coming to the plaza on the promise of settling the land issues when the army seized 100 indigenous people in a surprise attack and jailed them. The comuneros responded by joining forces with the neighbouring towns of Villa de Las Rosas and Teopisca, but the alliance did not hold up in ensuing struggles. Comuneros then expanded their alliances with the Independent Centre for Agricultural Workers and Campesinos CIOAC, an organisation that began in 1977 among coffee plantation workers and later spread to municipalities engaged in land struggles. The OCEZ was engaged in several demonstrations with CIOAC in the 1980s that attracted the attention of the PRI governor, Patrocinio González Garrido. Shortly after his election in 1988, the leaders of both these organisations were killed.

During González Garrido's administration, the government perfected another tactic favoured by the PRI: giving land simultaneously to two competing groups and letting them kill each other. In Venustiano Carranza, the González government released 1200 hectares to members of two factions, causing further dissension within the ranks of communal property holders. One of the factions called Los Coras split from the Casa del Pueblo and sided with the large landowners who then proceeded to plant sugar cane, thus ending the unity of the indigenous people within the township. In six years of struggle 25 were killed, 200 jailed with many of them tortured by the police, and three disappeared. Four of the presidents of the Communal Lands Commission who refused to go along with government policies favouring the large landowners were killed.

The land struggles in Venustiano Carranza clearly illustrate the need for indigenous campesinos to go beyond the boundaries of community to seek allies in regional organisations. They also show the contradictions in state government policy which, under the guise of indigenist politics favoured the highly capitalised enterprises. The entry of the Federal Commission of Electricity in the promotion of hydroelectric power added to the pressure on lands as smallholders were evicted to make way for the dam.

In the government's quest to modernise relations of production and to incorporate resources in the national economy, campesinos were the sacrificial lamb. Since the Zapatista uprising, campesinos throughout the state, and particularly in the beleaguered townships of Venustiano Carranza, Simojovel and San Andrés Larrainzar have found new allies beyond municipal boundaries and are acting with greater assurance. Both Simojovel and San Andrés Larrainzar have openly shown sympathy with the Zapatistas and many of the comuneros have joined the ranks of the EZLN, including 'Ramona' who is part of the high command. The Zapatistas chose Simojovel as the site of their takeover on December 19, 1994 when they again surprised the army with a show of sympathetic support in 38 towns. San Andrés, now called by its indigenous name, San Andrés Sak'am Ch'en, since it hosted the renewed dialogues of the EZLN with the government, was so enthusiastic in its support of the insurgents' high command in the first two days of the dialogue that the government representatives were afraid to enter the town until they brought in 200 military police as a backup. On March 30, 1995 comuneros of OCEZ seized four of the 23 lots designated for land reform by the 1965 Presidential Resolution without experiencing any violence. They assured the press that they would continue taking over the rest of the 23 lots owed to them by the Secretariat Agrarian Reform (Leticia Hernandez Montoya, 'Comuneros de OCEZ toman cuatro predios in Carranza,' *Expreso* Tuxtla Gutiérrez, March 30, 1995).

Clearly the government can no longer rely on cooptation through PRI municipal leaders nor the CNC and has turned to outright military force, quartering hundreds of soldiers within the embattled municipalities such as Simojovel and Altamirano and assigning 60,000 soldiers to garrisons throughout the states. Soldiers were withdrawn from the town centre of San Andrés Sak'am Ch'en as a condition for the dialogue, but hundreds remain stationed within 400 metres of the town centre. The story of how the corporative structure of the municipalities has been undermined is detailed below.

Pluripolitical Municipalities

So long as caciques continued to deliver the vote to the PRI the monopoly of power paraded as traditional homogeneity in indigenous communities masked the class conflict that was the outgrowth of development policies. Opponents of the caciques

were expelled, often on the charge that they were Protestants who were also not tolerated by the self-styled traditionalists (see Kathleen Sullivan, this issue).

Following the Zapatista uprising, discontented groups in municipalities throughout Chiapas openly challenged the PRI officials, sometimes seizing town halls or engaging in marches to the state capital in Tuxtla to demand the resignation of mayors and other officials whom they charged with corruption. Very often the leaders of these demonstrations were inhabitants of the rural *parajes* who fought the control by officials in the town centres and the failure to provide them with basic services such as potable water or electricity. That was the case in Teopisca, the first takeover after the uprising, where discontented residents in surrounding hamlets deposed the mayor on February 9, 1994. Tila and Simojovel asked for the State Congress to remove the mayors — on February 8. Comuneros of Tenejapa renounced the mayor on March 2 and Chenalhó followed their example with the election of a new Municipal Presidente on March 17. On March 6, one thousand members of the State Council of Indigenous and Peasant Organisations (CEOIC), an organisation that represented 280 indigenous and campesino organisations formed in January, 1994, marched into the city of San Cristóbal de Las Casas calling for the removal of all 110 municipal officers and the formation of municipal councils that would include campesinos and indigenous people. The Unión de Organizaciones y Partidos Políticos de Venustiano Carranza demanded the removal of the Municipal Presidente for fraud, misappropriation of funds on April 10, 1994.

When the state government failed to respond to the collective demands of these organisations, citizens within each of the municipalities proceeded to carry out their objectives throughout the months of April, May and June, bringing to 28 the towns in which actions were taken. Following the elections on August 21 and up until the end of March 1995, six more town councils were taken over in towns with deep-seated discontents, bringing the number of towns governed by councils to 34. In addition there were towns which rejected the elected authorities as fraudulent and continued to stage protests and further removals. Some of the dissidents were members of the PRD or the Sociedad Civil (Civil Society) which sponsored the candidacy of Amado

Avendaño. He rejected the legitimacy of state elections in which he was defeated by the PRI candidate. Appeals were frequently made to the Human Rights Centre 'Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas' as indigenous people began to gain a sense of their rights as citizens.

Following the municipal takeovers and removal of incumbent mayors, the towns sometimes elected to carry out plebiscites to determine who should occupy the presidency. Amatenango chose this path after the takeover of the town hall on January 2, 1995. The PRD had won the presidency in the August elections, but the PRI incumbent, who had completed his three year term, had been prevailed upon by his party to stay in office. We had watched the ceremonial change of office, with the majordomos playing traditional music at the church door and marching around the plaza with the banners of the local, state, and national governments, just as they had done in the 1960s when I did field work. It was apparently calm until we learned that on the following day the PRD mayoral candidate and his supporters broke the window and entered the premises. When we arrived the following day we saw the PRD supporters pushing the municipal vehicles from the patio of the incumbent president. Knots of PRI supporters stood on the church side of the plaza while the PRD were holed up in the town hall. They stayed that night and the following day we found them gathered around a bonfire in front of the town hall. Posters tacked on the wall of the town hall appealed to militants of the PRD and the police of both sides of the dual division to support them. The young men we spoke with objected to the loss of the standard carrying ceremonies which they attributed to the PRI mayor being a Protestant. He, like many supporters of the PRD, was from one of the hamlets which have rejected the control over money and power in the centre.

The plebiscite was set for January 13, and representatives of the PRD stationed themselves in the town hall day and night until that day. When we arrived at 10 a.m. to see the action, the plaza was full of people, with international and national reporters and television crews. Just scanning the crowds who occupied the church or the town hall side of the plaza in accordance with their affiliation with the PRI or the PRD, it looked like the PRD would win, and there was a clear majority of women in their

cluster. This proved to be the case when, after a time-consuming count, with women and men counted separately as each voter walked through a narrow channel formed by the distended bellies of the state congressman and local officials who performed their own counts, it was announced that the PRI had 892 votes, 324 of which were women's and the PRD 1095, 600 of which were women.

Later in conversation with my comadre, whose sons occupy important posts in the PRI local government, I asked why she thought people were turning to the PRD. She discounted the trend as the preferences of people from the peripheral hamlets whom she clearly thought should not have a voice in town affairs since these people are not considered to be descendants of the 'original' townspeople. The town was, in fact, a product of the colonial reduction, when scattered populations were settled in hamlets around what had been the core community. As for the preponderance of women in the PRD support group, she attributed it to disgruntled widows and other women without men who wanted the town to respond to their needs, particularly in reference to the ejido plots which were allocated to male heads of families. She was accurate on both counts, although her reasoning was biased. While widows could have usufruct in the ejido lands if they had sons old enough to cultivate the land, women heads of families were always passed over. Some of the hamlets had never received potable water or electricity, and they never had served in the lucrative posts with salaries and disposable funds. I asked what influence she thought the EZLN uprising had on local events, and she responded with the ambiguity PRI supporters feel about the event. She said that many people considered 'Marcos', the EZLN subcommandante, to be the 'Rey Cha'uk', or King of Lightning, a term applied to outstanding curer-diviners who had powerful nahwales, and she wanted to know my opinion since she felt uncertain.

Despite the vote, the PRI officials contested the results and the final decision by the State Secretary of Government and congressional committee was that the town should be governed by a council of three PRI and three PRD officials with a seventh member chosen by the these officials until a special election in November 1995.

This proved to be the solution taken in other hotly contested municipalities. In Las Margaritas, a gateway city to the ejido

lands opened up in the rainforest, militants of the PRD seized the municipal offices on April 3. Three days later, members of the Tojolabal People's Organization named five comandants and 40 police, "in accord with their traditions" (Fredy Martin, "Se suman a la solicitud de desaparición de poderes en Las Margaritas," *Expreso* April 7, 1995:1). This seemed to signal the end of one party control in this municipality. When they failed to gain recognition of their act and the PRI president, whom they accused of ordering the assassination of two of their indigenous leaders, remained in power, the CIOAC and members of the PRD organized the march of an estimated 1000 to 1500 Tojolobales from Las Margaritas to the state capital that started out on April 28 and arrived on May 3. Trying to make the best of a devastated party, Placido Morales Vásquez, the PRI director for the state of Chiapas, assured reporters at a press conference held while the dissidents were crowding the municipal plaza in Tuxtla Gutiérrez that there would be "clean and transparent" elections (elecciones limpias y transparentes) in all the municipalities of the state. The agreement reached in Tuxtla Gutiérrez was a council of equal numbers of PRI and PRD representatives who now administer the town.

Even with manipulation of the August 21,1994 elections, which most observers felt was more flagrant in Chiapas than elsewhere in the country, the PRI lost 25 of the 110 towns, and in the following months as towns took individual action against their municipal leaders the figure rose to 35. In all of these municipalities, the demands have been for profound democratic changes with the hope of exercising new forms of government. Towards this goal they are formulating their own laws and are reordering the territorial patterns in a new relationship between the governed and the governors.

Communities in Rebellion in the Lacandon Rainforest

The municipalities that have been designated as Rebel Territories of the Zapatista National Liberation Army along with the autonomous regions and their parliament and the municipal councils that recognise the rebel goverment of Amado Avendaño includes 31 municipalities in Chiapas. These governments,

concentrated in colonised rainforest settlements, as well as some regions of the northern part of the state and the Highlands, are in fact exercising the autonomy that many dissidents throughout the state aim for in the future. They write their own laws, settle land disputes and are trying to put in practice a new relationship between the governed and the governors.

Thirty of these independent municipalities are EZLN creations and are governed by civilians from the villages and communities that were formerly defined as part of their support. The self-constituted authorities act in accord with the Constitution of 1917, the laws ordained by the Zapatistas, and laws drawn up in local municipal committees and ordained by popular vote. Their charter as autonomous indigenous villages was drawn up in the act of the General Executive Council of Autonomus Regions of Chiapas, realised in Jovel on January 20, 1995, fulfilling the constitution of autonomous regions on October 12, 1994.

These autonomous regions are formally included in municipalities such as Ocosingo, Las Margaritas and Altamirano, all of which encompass vast territories extending into the rainforest, but they meet in separate spaces from the formally constituted authority. Las Margaritas, for example, contains within its limits self-constituted autonomous regiones of El Valle Tojolabal comprised of 37 villages with 1800 indigenous people who support the 'parliamentarians' who work full time in the offices of the ejidal house and Santo Domingo Las Palmas. Only the massive presence of the Mexican Armed Forces maintain in power the PRI councils which, until the recent breakthrough in Las Margaritas resulting from the march of Tojolobales in late April and May, 1995, dominated these cities. The multi-party councils put in place in Amatenango del Valle and the Tojolobales of Las Margaritas in the state capital of Tuxtla Gutiérrez are an uneasy solution to the problem.

The Northern Autonomous Region, which includes the municipal councils of Bochil, Jitotol, Simojovel, El Bosque, Ixtapa, Huitiupán, Soyalo, Rayón and Pueblo Nuevo is legally recognised by the local regional Congress, but not by the State. After the withdrawal of the EZLN military in early 1994 the territory has been completely militarised.

The demands of these independent municipalities, as with those of Las Margaritas, is complete withdrawal of the armed

forces and legal recognition of their autonomy at the state level. But each day the tension grows as the army reinforces its presence with the construction of airfields, solidly constructed barracks and redoubled forces. Women from the rainforest and highlands who met for the Third State Convention of Women on May 6 forcefully denounced the presence of the army, which has attracted prostitutes and drawn girls of the area into the traffic. They objected to the forced domestic services of women and men without pay by these military personal (Gaspar Morquecho, '60 Indias en la Convención Estatal de Mujeres,' E*xpreso* May 7, 1995:1). Each day the militarisation of the zone increases, with constant movement of trucks and observation planes. One hundred and fifty of the communities that the army invaded on February 9 remain destitute, their owners still living in fear in the canyons. Carlos Bertoni Unda, state representative of the PRD, denounced the expenditure of 50 million new pesos to acquire armaments and prepare a paramilitary police force of more than 1600 members. Noting that "Here in Chiapas a cow has more land than an Indian, and if you complain they put you in prison," he denounced the expenditure on paramilitary organisations (*Express* May 7, 1995). Despite the interim governor's repeated assertions that there is no war in Chiapas, the experience of people in the rainforest and in the north belies his words.

Forgoing a New Federalism

During a national assembly of 48 indigenous organisations from 20 states that took place on April 26, 1995 (*El Financiero* April 27, 1995) indigenous participants defined the basis for a new federalism. This would include changes in articles of the Constitution. Specifically, Article 4, which nominally recognises the existence of distinct ethnicities would be linked to propositions concerning human rights, legal rights and economic rights; Article 115 that establishes the constitutionally recognised federal, state and municipal powers would create a new governing power for autonomous pluriethnic regions; and Article 73, would allow regional control over natural resources and a system of regional government that would intercept federal, state, and municipal levels of organisation. Recognition of the autonomy

of pluricultural regions is a central demand in the initiatives that they proposed to the Congress of the Union.

These demands are a logical step in the growing self-consciousness as distinct ethnicities among indigenous people of Chiapas and the nation. If they succeed in their goals, they will truly reinvent the notion of nation and the relationships of distinct populations to it throughout the world. This could be the agenda for the second millennium.

I was accompanied on my trips to Amatenango del Valle by four graduate students at CUNY Graduate Centre who received scholarships to attend a month field training in Chiapas in January 1995: Carol Ready, Molly Doane, Suzana Scheld, and Pauline Herrimann. I am grateful for their questions and comments that provided clues to what was going on. I am also grateful to Christine Kovic, also a graduate student at CUNY Graduate Center, who provided some of the data on human rights issues related to community revolts.

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DIALOGUE IN A MAYA BALL COURT

JUNE NASH

The ball court was ready, the baskets at each end flanking a concrete block building hastily constructed within the two weeks set for the main encounter in a dialogue for which Mexicans had waited for over a year. On April 20, a little over a year after the first encounter between government officials, peacemakers and the Zapatista National Liberation Army EZLN, the protagonists were assembling in San Andres Larrainzar, the Chiapas hilltown chosen at the preliminary meeting of the dialogue in San Miguel eleven days before. Members of the National Commission of Mediation (CONAI) with Bishop Samuel Ruiz presiding, were already sitting at the conference table at nine o'clock. They had kept the peace proceedings going throughout the year after the first aborted talks in March 1994. The Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous General Command Committee of the Zapatista National Liberation Army were escorted into the ball court by Red Cross workers. Over 450 press, television crews, radio reporters and photo journalists from around the world who had registered with the government's Comission of Agreement and Peacemaking *(COCOPA)* were positioned just beyond the ball court and a huge dish antenna was set up in the plaza to relay their news to the world.

Red Cross workers formed an inner ring around the basketball court and municipal buildings to ensure the safety of the negotiators. Indigenous people from the region filed into the roped off section between the Red Cross and the 'security belt' of international observers from the US, Germany, France, along with national observers from Mexico City, college students from branches of the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico

throughout the country, artists, development workers, teachers, merchants, housewives, some of them with their children and carrying babies, – all who had come to support the Zapatistas and discourage an attack by the Mexican armed forces stationed just 400 metres from the town centre.

Quietly and without any disturbances, over seven thousand indigenous people congregated from the hill communities and *ejido* communities in the rainforest. Many lived in the town of San Andres Larrainzar, or in Tzotzil San Andres Sakam Ch'en - White Cave - where there is strong support for the Zapatistas. Especially prominent were San Andres women dressed in the brilliantly embroidered and hand loomed blouses that identify them as members of the community. Many youths wore hatbands with the lettering Viva Zapata! Chalchihuitan, Chenalho and Pantelho men in white tunics, some with striped woven sleeves, and women in multicolored striped and brocaded blouses with dark blue woven skirts took up their position in the space between the lines of Red Cross workers and civilian security forces. Tenejapa men in pin striped black wool *serapes (blankets)* and women in brilliantly brocaded blouses with blue embroidered skirts filled in the spaces marked for them with yellow ropes. They were joined about 10 am by Zinacanteco men in their brilliant red and white striped serapes and women with shawls embroidered in a rainbow of colours. A contingent of Amatenango del Valle women in red and gold embroidered *huipiles* (smocks) represented their village, where most of the men were engaged in planting. Men from Venustiano Carranza wore their best 'wedding shirts', made of cotton spun and loomed with the white on white figures of corn plants by women of that village. Villagers that had for hundreds of years defended their separate identity within the boundaries of their corporate communities were joined in the 'security belt' created to defend the Zapatista negotiating team. Many of them had walked from their villages, carrying babies, kettles of food, plastic containers of water, blankets and other provisions for what they expected to be an extended stay. Others came in trucks owned by village cooperatives. About 11 am a contingent of sweating men and youths, their shirts tied over their heads to protect themselves from the glaring sun and wearing rubber boots in anticipation of the afternoon deluges that marked the beginning of the rainy season, arrived after their five hour walk from the jungle.

The seven representatives chosen by the Zapatista command wore skimasks to conceal their identity from a government that still held prisoners accused on the ninth of February of being leaders of the uprising and hence guilty of sedition. On that day President Ernesto Zedillo broke the truce signed a fortnight after the January 1, 1994 uprising, reversing the Salinas government's decision to settle the Zapatista revolt with political rather than military forces. Under the pretext of aprehending subcomandante 'Marcos' and other leaders in the General Command, a force of more than twenty thousand soldiers invaded the Lacandon rainforest, burning houses, raping women, contaminating food supplies with pesticides, killing cattle and chickens and stealing and destroying tools, trucks and radios. The terrorized population fled to the hills and canyons where they remained ten days or longer. Over 60,000 troups remained in the state despite promises by the government to withdraw them as a step toward peace negotiations.

The undeclared war, masked as a police operation to catch the leaders, was a deterrent to the presence of 'sub-comandante Marcos' at the dialogue. But in his absence the indigenous character of the uprising was more evident than in the March 1994 meetings in the San Cristobal cathedral. Some of the seven leaders wore their ceremonial beribboned hats with backstrap loomed serapes and sandals worn by people of San Andres Larrainzar and other towns in the area. David and Tacho, who served as interlocutors, spoke Spanish with the cadence of 'the true language' of their peoples – Tzotzil, Tzeltal and Tojolobal.

Despite the obvious danger to all these assembled participants, with heavily armed troups camped close by, it was a serene and joyful scene throughout the 48 hours that the assembled indigenous peoples held their vigil, waiting for the government agents to appear. As the sun rose in the sky, they drew water from their plastic containers, because of cholera warnings in the area, and at lunch time they built charcoal fires and heated their food. Men hawked ice cream from refrigerated carts and boys sold chewing gum and newspapers. Particularly favored was *El Tiempo,* the newspaper edited and published by Concepcion Villafuerta and her husband, Amado Avendano, the Civil Society candidate for governor of the state of Chiapas who set up an alternative government after the contested election of the PRI candidate in August 1994. These were luxuries

that few Indians can afford since the price of a newspaper is about a fourth of what a man earns for a full day's work, and paid employment is hard come by. But groups of indigenous people purchased issues in common and the vendors had an active trade with visiting press and international observers who also crowded into the three restaurants, one of which was inaugurated for the occasion and named 'Restaurant El Dialogo'.

During the first two days, the missing element in the dialogue was the government delegation from the Comission of Agreement and Pacification (COCOPA): Gustavo Iruegas, who had served as ambasador to El Salvador and Nicaragua when Mexico and France moved for recognition of the FMLN, the National Action Party (PAN) congressman Rodolfo Elizondo Torres, the Institutionalized Revolutionary Party (PRI) senator Oscar Lopez Velarde, Javier Zenteno and Jorge del Valle. Paradoxically it was not the Zapatistas who were under threat of detention or death from 'white guards' patrolling the area, but rather the government representatives who were afraid to come. The show of strength and unity among the indigenous peoples, most of whom had walked many miles to show their support to the Zapatistas, was beyond the understanding of PRI politicians accustomed to moving Indians around in government vehicles as pawns in their power games. They had expected that the two months of 'low intensity warfare' that preceded the peace talks would have the desired effect of demoralizing and intimidating the opposition as described in US College of America manuals.

People waited with the patience borne of five hundred years of resistance to a government and society that took notice of them only to exploit their labour or their resources. At one in the afternoon of the first day, a plane flew overhead. Some thought it might be the COCOPA government representatives, but when it turned out to be a single engine plane, not a helicopter, they returned to their positions. By late afternoon, it appeared that COCOPA representatives would not arrive that day, and possibly never despite repeated telephone calls by CONAI. Then came the first announcement by telephone from the COCOPA spokesperson who objected to the signs of support for the Zapatistas by townspeople, who had installed an EZLN banner in the town hall along with dozens of placards supporting Marcos. Claiming that this was against the conditions agreed upon in San Miguel, he said that the delegation would not make the 45 minute trip from San Cristóbal de Las Casas so long as the indigenous people remained in town. Bishop Ruiz met with ritual leaders of San Andres Sakamch'en de los Pobres to withdraw the indigenous supporters of the EZLN in the interest of the dialogue but without success. With the army still posted at a short distance, they feared for the security of the EZLN command members . Finally, at 4 pm, Samuel Ruiz went to San Cristobal where he met with the COCOPA and CONAI members. The coordinator of the governmental delegation, Marco Antonio Bernal Gutierrez, reiterated COCOPA's objection to the 'organized' mobilization of indigenous people since it negated the agreements reached the preceding fortnight in San Miguel. They insisted that the Indians had been manipulated into coming, bused in by Bishop Samuel Ruiz, even blaming the demonstrations of support for the Zapatistas on the Bishop's assistant, Padre Paulo Romo, who they claimed, was orchestrating the security belt with his walkie-talkie. After hours of consultation late into the night, the president of CONAI and the government representative agreed to reorder the 'security belts', diminishing the indigenous presence and reducing the numbers of observers. In their place would be hundreds of military police chosen from the troops stationed in the mountains near San Andres.

The following day meetings were to resume at 7 am with recesses for press announcements at 9 am, 1 pm and 7 pm. The Zapatista delegation remained in the *Casa del Pueblo* community house and waited for the other contingents to take their place at the negotiating table. The government representatives still failed to make an appearance; frightened by the previous day's reconnaissance indicating the enormous support for the Zapatistas, they accused Zapatistas of planning an attack, trucking in campesinos from throughout the area who were organized by Pablo Ramo, the Bishop's assistant in the Centre for Human Rights Bartolome de Las Casas. Indeed Padre Pablo was on hand to receive the hundreds of international observers, advising them of their positions on a miniscule walkie-talkie, but the thousands of Indians arriving on foot were without visible leaders, despite the highly coordinated movements as they settled into the space designated for them.

About six in the evening, Comandante Tacho read a communication of the EZLN speaking of how indigenous people were threatened constantly by the presence of federal troops and the 'white guards', private police hired by cattle ranchers, but they did not fear them as much as the government feared 'in the presence of thousands of unarmed indigenous men, women and children'. He urged the remaining thousands of Indians to leave. He deplored the Government's assumption that indigenous people were manipulated in their support of the Zapatista movement, charging that they "repeated the error of considering indigenes of being incapable of organizing alone, and that the could only move if someone raised their hand.' Indigenous leaders of the State Democratic Assembly of the Chiapas People defended the mobilization of indigenous peoples: "We came here of our own will and with our own resources. We came because those who took up arms and shed their blood are here awaiting the inclination of the federal government to dialogue. Because the demands of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation are ours, our cause is the same: democracy, justice, liberty and peace with dignity." At the press conference they questioned the government's claim that men, women and children, exposed to the rain and cold, put the dialogue at risk. "Does our misery, our language, our clothing, our culture, our *pozol* (corn gruel) and our tortillas offend them? Do they think that even our misery is simulated?"(Juan Antonio Zuniga M. and Jose Gil Olmos, 'En San Andres, tension antes de retirarse 7 mil indigenas,' *La Jornada* Abril 22, 1995:14). The government investigators searching for amunition discovered nothing but pozol, the corn gruel disolved in water to make a refreshing drink, toasted grain, sacks of beans, and mounds of oranges.

Responding to the urgings of the EZLN and CONAI the indigenous peoples abandoned their positions in the security belt and withdrew to their communities. When they had left, the government representatives finally agreed to come into the basketball court at 7:15 pm. After a brief exchange, the Government and CONAI representatives returned to San Cristobal with the agreement that the meetings would begin on the following day.

On the following day the town was transformed into a military encampment. Two hundred and sixty Military Police stood

with raincapes draped over their metre long billy clubs, with crash helmets in position, two feet from one another, one faced forward and the other back, circling the basketball court and the conference house as well as the town hall and forming a third ring outside of the Red Cross workers and the 'security belt' of peace forces. Two of their commanders communicated to the troops and to the high military command located in their base camp with advanced radio communication technology that put Padre Paulo's walkie-talkie to shame. Red Cross and security force participants had to step through a metal detector armed by several Military Police in order to take their places. These were the only conditions under which the governmental delegation would consent to speak. The meeting was called to order with only limited contact with the press allowed.

The leadership which the State Democratic Assembly of Indigenous Peoples had shown in the tense 48 hours of the dialogue impressed most of the reporters present (Elio Henriquez, Jose Gil Olmos and Juan Antonio Zuniga, 'Niega la CONAI haber organizado el desplazamiento de indigenas,' *La Jornada* April 22, 1995:3; Amalia Avendano, Gabriela Coutino, Miguel Badillo, 'Reinician las negociaciones por la paz,' *El Financiero*, April 22, 1995:15; Hermann Bellinghausen, 'Bajo la lluvia y despreciados se fueron miles de indigenas,' *La Jornada* April 22, 1995:5; Antonio Crtuz Coutinho, *Cuarto Poder*, April 25, 1995:3 'Entre Lineas: Los mensajes de San Andres). The dignified acceptance of the racist demands of the government representatives revealed the backwardness of a ruling group that has totally lost touch with the people.

While the dialogue was getting under way, the office holders of San Andres proceeded within the rituals in the inner core of the security belt. At the moment when the governmental delegation arrived in their suburban station wagons, twenty indigenous office holders dressed in black loomed woven tunics with beribboned hats held their staff of office beside three red banners, sounded their drums and shook their gourd rattles before entering the house of the captain of the festival of San Felipe, decorated according to tradition with pine needles, lillies and arum plants. A group of eleven women and eleven men accompanied by a violinist, guitarist and harpist in ritual dress entered the church where they knelt and proceeded to burn incense

before the images of San Andres and San Manuel set before the altar. This festival, like most of those undertaken by the office holders, ensures the balance and order of a universe that Andresanos believe is divided in three planes and eleven levels. When the stewards fired rockets at the conclusion of this first day of real dialogue, they smiled as military police snapped to attention as though on battle alert.

The ritual basis for resistance is deep in San Andres Sakam Ch'en Larrainzar and other highland indigenous towns. Founded in the last quarter of the sixteenth century during the colonial concentration of Indians, the Tzotziles began an intense stage of resistence. In 1850 they fought the large landholders Ramon Federico and Manuel Larrainzar who had taken over village lands and whose surname was given to the town. They confronted ladino landowners in the 'Caste War' of 1867-1869, along with other highland Indians when the region was opened to commercial agriculture which employed artisans, labourers and mule drivers (Antonio García de León, *La Guerra de los Mapaches: El bestiario de la contrarevolucion en Chiapas,* 1978). The consolidation of ladino power led to the dislocation of indigenous people from the town centre and economic and political supordination. The community reinforced the cohesion of the indigenous populations after 1974 when the people initiated action for the restitution of communal lands that went beyond the legal processes followed previously. These actions convinced many of the ladino families to emigrate, leaving indigenous religious officials in charge of the church and council. The most recent expression of the rebelliousness of the town is the election of a PRD candidate for mayor. Recognizing this, the army moved in late in 1994 and withdrew from the centre of the town in partial compliance with the conditions for the dialogue set forth in the preliminary meetings in San Miguel. But on our arrival in the town on the first day, we saw hundreds of soldiers standing on the hills along the highway and bivouaced in their camp.

The dialogue ended on Sunday April 24 when the Zapatista delegation asked for a recess to take the points of discussion back to their people in the hills. The government presented their proposals for *distensión* which in Smart's English-Spanish dictionary is translated as 'loosening' or 'easing' the conflict, and this included the following measures:

1. Positioning troops outside of the localities in which they were stationed. Altamirana and Las Margaritas have become armed camps for the military, and other towns such as San Andres, Simojovel and Tenejapa have hosted substantial military contingents since the uprising.
2. Suspending military patrols and reconnaissance in the conflict zone. Airplane and helicopter movements have been continuous over the rainforest since the uprising, provoking fear and complaints (Marcos refers to the disturbance of his sleep in communiques from the jungle).
3. Guaranteeing the return of populations displaced by the conflict. Thousands of civilians who took refuge in neutral cities are being relocated sometimes in other villages and even in the homes of those who fled to the hills when the army occupied the conflict zone, thus assuring a continuing internal conflict such as the Guatemalan army created in the Ixil Triangle of Guatemala.
4. Suspending the investigation against members of the high command and ending the orders of apprehension.
5. Applying aid and support to the populations who fled. In the April 10 invasion of the conflict area, soldiers ransacked houses, spraying food supplies and seeds for the coming year with insecticide, breaking or stealing tools and, communally owned trucks, grinding mills and radio stations. The army has not admitted responsibility for these criminal acts.
6. Permitting the surveilance of the area by the National Commission of Human Rights (CNDH) and other unspecified agencies, and allowing greater effectiveness in their functioning in the conflict zone. Since the official CNDH, which has been less assiduous in its overseeing of military action than the Centre for Human Rights Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas of the Diocese, was severely censured by the government for the objections it did raise, such as to official as well as unofficial threats of violence to human rights workers of the Diocese, even relaxation of these death threats would fulfill this provision.

For its part, the EZLN would be guaranteed physical safety, food, lodging and health services if they withdraw to specified locations in the highlands, valleys and rainforest.

But as Tacho and David pointed out in their interview with the press, government representatives tried to dominate the dialogue, just as education for the indigenous peoples has always meant imposing the meanings of words and concepts interpreted in the interests of the dominant ladinos. In response to the reporters' question, what is *distensión* for you, the EZLN delegates replied:

> What they (the government delegation) wanted to do with us is teach us the meanings of words as they want to say them. They began as though they were teaching us. We replied what it really was. Then they began to act as though they wanted to deceive us. From that moment on, they began to treat us in a way that departed from the principles we agreed upon in San Miguel, saying let's act in good faith and all that. They did not want to do that. They wanted to run things in their way, so they were very resistant, very aggressive towards us, overbearing.
>
> We believe that it was a trap that they wanted to impose on us from the start. They began to compose a concept regarding *distensión* explaining it as though we didn't understand what we were talking about. We began to say that in order to talk about concrete *distensión* we ought to understand first the objective towards which we wanted to arrive with this *distensión*.
>
> After the explanation that we had, we understood clearly that the objective was to put our heads in a noose and when they had us tied in it, then we could begin talking with them... So we realized that their intentions were to humiliate and deceive us with our proposals, not taking them seriously. This was another indication of the lack of will to respond to the political problem.

Asked by the reports if they thought they could reach an agreement, the Zapatistas replied that they could if they wanted to, but the Zapatista delegation couldn't do it alone.

> They are the great experts, we don't have the knowledge. We came to say what we ought to do, but they didn't present any real proposal. We know how to deal with delicate issues, as in this case. But we also know how to deal without delicacy, according to the collective agreement of both. As Zapatistas that is what we were looking for, but they didn't alow us to take that path, they didn't want to give us the space to really enter into a dialogue and arrive at an agreement for peace with justice and dignity.

The EZLN general command committee took these proposals as admission of defeat, tying their hands so that the dialogue

could not proceed as they had urged, and isolating them in three zones where they would be cut off from the very people who gave rise to the movement. They objected to being restricted to fixed places where they would be cut off from their own means of subsistence and "fattening us up like pigs for slaughter" (*Tiempo* April 25, 1995).

Clearly the government response was that of the Guatemalan army, to create model villages with supplies, food, and basic services for the insurgents who would then be dependent on the military posts containing them in order to avoid the expansion of the EZLN. The zones chosen by the government were the Comitan plateau especially the village of Guadalupe Tepeyac in the township of Las Margaritas, the Lacandon rainforest especially the village of San Miguel in the township Ocosingo, and the highlands, especially in the hamlet of Oventic in the township of San Andres Sakam Ch'en. The area encompases 30 municipalities with a population of about a million. The government, in turn would return to the positions they occupied before the February 9, 1994 invasion providing that the EZLN give up their arms.

In the twenty days granted the EZLN to reconnoiter their supporters, the deteriorating economic and political situation weakened the hard line taken by the government negotiators. Eight thousand PRD members from Las Margaritas, one of the chosen sites, were on the march on the Tuesday after the dialogue to demand the remove the mayor of that city from office because of misappropriation of funds. Campesinos in five townships who had seized the grain depots of CONASUPO protesting the artificially low price offered corn growers, were forceably removed by military police using tear gas. Hundreds of workers laid-off by Ruta 100 in the Federal District were joined by thousands of unemployed workers and supporters of the Zapatistas in a massive march from the Zocalo (city centre) to the presidential residence in Los Pinos that was interrupted by military police using tear gas and clubs. The scandal regarding Raul, the brother of Carlos Salinas, was threatening to extend to the former president himself, and the tracing of funds to the killer of Donaldo Luis Colosio, the slain candidate for the PRI in March 1994, directly to the Presidential offices was hanging in the balance.

Patrols had been stepped up in the rainforest, "putting at risk the dialogue and the peacemaking process between the

federal government and the EZLN, " according to the Coordination of NGOs for Peace (CONPAZ), which had coordinated the presence of international and national observers in prior meetings (Julio Cesar Lopez y Guillermo Correa, 'Podemos ceder en todo, menos en nuestra dignidad, planteo el EZLN', *Proceso* 967, 15 May 1995, 32-3). Tanks were parked on village footpaths impeding the passage of the indigenous people on their way to work in their *milpas* (cornfields) during planting season. Military patrols nearly attacked the convoy carrying the EZLN comandantes to the dialogue. Despite these provocations, the nine representatives resumed their places in the meeting house on the basketball courts on 13 May.

The nine delegates of the EZLN did not include subcomandante Marco, whose very presence in the dialogue might have led to his capture or death, but this allowed the press and government to appreciate the leadership of indigenous commanders David, Tacho and Trinidad. A woman, who, as every reporter noted was in her late fifties or sixties, represented a voice rarely heard at peace meetings, the mothers and grandmothers who have the most to lose in war. EZLN representatives opened the talks with a resounding renunciation of the government plan for reservations for Zapatistas monitored by the military. The tension was palpable as the army regrouped in battle position, holding arms within view of the town centre (Julio Cesar Lopez and Guillermo Correa, 'Acuerdo minimo firmado 'bajo presion', y riesgo de que el dialogo se rompa,' *Proceso* 968, 22 May 1995:40). The government representative announced that they would regroup in rainforest communities including Patihuitz, where I had just spent several days with the CONPAZ observation group. The military encampment there had already attracted a crowd of camp followers and I saw one very drunk celebrant of Mother's Day which occurred while I was present. When the Zapatistas were in charge, liquor was not allowed. Women complained bitterly about the military presence and its effect of the local society.

The government did not yield in its position, and it was agreed to resume the dialogue on June 7 with even more pessimistic forecasts as to what would transpire. Nothing substantive was agreed upon regarding the initial demands of the EZLN or the subsequent issues posed by the government proposal of *distension*.

The discord that is palpable in Chiapas is not the picture disseminated by official media within Mexico or abroad. President Zedillo was able to make an appearance in Dallas, Texas in which he presented himself as the promoter of legal processes and justice on April 24 as an attack of cholera broke out in San Andres Sakam Ch'en. On April 25 the Minister of Foreign Relations, Jose Angel Gurria, announced to an assembled audience of 150 entrepreneurs from 37 countries in the World Trade Center in Mexico City that the 'war' in Chiapas was one of 'ink and Internet', made up by alarmists who exaggerated the extent of the uprising. Claiming that "Chiapas is a place in which not a single shot has been fired in fifteen months," he added that the military attack lasted only ten days in January 1994, and since then the parties have been talking and dialoguing "while in the rest of the world we have multiple and uncountable tragedies." He went on to assert that "all the factors that have made Mexico an attractive country, its entrepreneurs, its workers, are still here." Eager to build up the value of the peso and pump up investments from abroad, the government has suppressed news from Chiapas in national and international news channels. On May 23, 1995 the top official of the International Monetary Fund, Michel Camdessus, announced to a meeting of the Council of the Americas in Washington D.C. that the Mexican financial crisis had been reduced to controllable proportions, and that "Mexico is headed toward recovery" if it sticks with its economic austerity program. The question is, will the people, who have just come out of over a decade of austerity, accept the even more stringent conditions on which 'recovery' is premised.

Those who are pesimistic about the outcome of the dialogue might reflect on the deep reserves of tradition and collective strategies for survival that characterize Mayan communities. Like their ancestors, the Zapatistas played out their political fate on a ballcourt, willing to risk death on the outcome, just as ancient players submitted to ritual death when they lost a game. The game of basketbball played by the contemporary Mayas is considered to be a US sport initiated in Springfield, Massachusetts by Nesbit, a YMCA community worker. However he learned the game from a woman missionary who was inspired by her visit to Mayan ceremonial ballcourts in Chichenitza. Based on her vision of the ballcourt and the bas reliefs of players, she

invented the basketball game that she taught to children of Plainfield, Massachusetts for their winter recreation. During a summer field session in Plainfield, Nesbit learned the game and formulated some of the rules that characterize this national sport. Drawing from the *Popol Vuh*, the Quiche Maya 'Bible', the ball game played by the twin heroes of the upper world with the lords of the underworld was a contest to keep the motion of the sun and the moon in their cycles, allowing the grandmother moon to bring the refreshing rains and rest of the night following the heat of the sun that would otherwise burn the crops if night did not follow day. Today the indigenous people of Chiapas are trying to bring back balance in a country caught up in a fast track global economy that is sacrificing the welfare of its people to the few both in the country and abroad who are gaining enormous wealth from the resources of Chiapas. The recess of twenty days that the Zapatistas asked to consider the government's latest proposal may indeed be a reference point derived from the ancient ritual calendar of twenty day months, each day related to a god. In contemporary villages, this twenty day span is frequently used to assess the time for the entry and departure of the souls of newborns and deceased, and to program rituals related to planting and harvesting.

There may never be as decisive an ending to the game played out in Chiapas as one found in Classic Maya times, but those who are watching the scene up close are impressed with the developing leadership of indigenous Zapatistas and with the growing support they are gaining on many fronts throughout the nation. In contrast to the patience and resolve demonstrated by the Zapatistas and their thousands of indigenous followers from April 20 - 25, 1995, the government did not dare face its own citizenry without a military force of 200 in the town centre and thousands more stationed within 400 metres. Their technical resources may not match the human will that confronts them.

FROM COMMUNITY TO WOMEN'S STATE CONVENTION – THE CHIAPAS CAMPESINOS AND THEIR GENDER DEMANDS

ROSALVA AÍDA HERNÁNDEZ CASTILLO

When we meet and participate together with other women, we feel a strength in our hearts Tzotzil woman

This article attempts to take account of the experience of one, albeit minority, sector of indigenous campesinos who in the context of the Chiapas conflict have raised their voices to question the unequal relations between men and women within their communities. Indigenous women – Tzotziles, Tzeltales, Tojolabales, Choles, Mames – and non-indigenous campesino women have spoken out together to demand greater participation in the political struggle which is taking place at present in Southern Mexico.

Since the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) went public on the 1st January 1994, a large sector of the Chiapas campesino movement has taken on board the Zapatistas' demands and have revealed themselves through different political strategies ranging from hunger strikes, road blocks, taking over land and occupying local government buildings as part of a peaceful civil resistance. These measures have antecedents in the long history of campesino struggles in which indigenous women have taken an active part.

In the contemporary campesino movement women have demonstrated together with the men to demand, among other things, a more equal distribution of agricultural lands. Since the beginning of the 1970s various campesino organisations have sprung up in Chiapas linked with the campesino movement at the national level. These have become incorporated into the three national organisations: the Emiliano Zapata Campesina Organisation (OCEZ), the Plan de Ayala National Coordina-

tion (CNPA) and the Independent Centre for Agricultural and Campesino Workers (CIOAC). One of the Chiapas campesino movement's central demands has been land but at specific moments in this struggle it has also taken action against semi-servile work conditions; for better conditions for the commercialisation of products and against an extremely discriminatory judicial system. Indigenous women have taken part in all this action on a par with the men, and supporting the political and economic demands of their communities.

What is new about indigenous women's present participation in the Chiapas conflict is that they have raised their voices not only to support the demands of their male companions and to represent their communities' interests but also to demand respect for their specific rights as women. Parallel with their participation in the struggle for land and democracy, a considerable sector of Chiapas women have begun to demand more democratic relations within the family, the community and the organisation.

It has been recognized that a treatment and style of social relations which has been assumed to be 'normal' and even 'natural' is unjust and that the silenced have a voice, that the doxa (the 'taken for granted') has been converted into discourse (Bourdieu 1977). This represents an important step forward in confronting the patriarchal discourse, both its flourishing in official sectors and in the campesino organisations themselves. These transformations in campesino women's demands and in the strategies of their struggle have taken place at the same time as their greater participation in waged work and in public spaces both inside and outside the community. Economic need or political struggle have meant that women have had to go beyond the bounds of their communities to sell their produce, to look for better prospects and to participate in courses, workshops and meetings.

The impact on the domestic unit of the incorporation of indigenous Chiapas women into paid work has been analyzed from different perspectives: as a factor which gives them greater independence and power within the family (Nash 1993) and as a factor related to marginalisation or conflict (Rus 1990; Flood 1989). Independent of the specific forms which gender relations take, what is certain is that in recent years indigenous communities have found their daily life transformed and relations between men and women changing.

Migration, organisational experience, religious groups and even government programmes have all influenced the way in which indigenous men and women conceive of their identity and see themselves as part of different collectivities. These new social subjects have widened their demands out beyond the community and the region and have begun to organise themselves for the construction of a new nation.

The collective reflection and women's demands

In order to understand the Chiapas political panorama in its present form one has to take into account the increase in new social subjects and new possibilities for establishing identities over recent decades.

Part of the EZLN's social base is composed of colonists from the rainforest and by people evicted and displaced from the highlands. Jan de Vos discusses the second and third generations of indigenous youth who have been born in the rainforest but for whom there is no land left to plant[1].

For the people who colonised the rainforest of Las Margaritas and established the first settlements in the 1950s and 1960s, the government's promises to lead and support the colonisation never got beyond the good intentions stated in documents and studies by the National Indigenist Institute[2]. Extending the agricultural frontier was done with the blade of a machete, without any agricultural advisors.

The rainforest became a meeting place for indigenous peoples from different parts of the State and the Republic. To the cultural exchange was added exchange of organisational experiences which was illustrated in linguistic borrowings and the strengthening of almost defunct indigenous languages such as *Chuj* and *Kanjobal*. For these colonists the community ceased to be their main reference point and they created new collective spaces by means of campesino organisations, religious groups and commercial networks.

For this population, the process of colonisation implied the need to organise themselves collectively in order to survive the rainforest, the malaria and the shortage of food. The indigenous

women took an active part in the new organisational space which was created by the colonisation. Many of the women's traditional activities changed and in the struggle for survival they began to have greater participation in the public sphere.

With the support of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and pastoral agents of the Catholic Church under the influence of the Theology of Liberation[3], new production projects were promoted in which indigenous women had an active part. On the margins of governmental support and control collective farms (mainly chickens and pigs) were set up, artisan workshops and tailors workshops were established and successful agro-ecological cooperatives were formed.

The Catholic Church had developed similar work among the indigenous Mames of the Sierra Madre. Thanks to the pressure from Mame women, the agricultural promoters, who were often lay priests, included the theme 'Women's Dignity' within the workshops. As part of the 'Organised Collective Work' course, which is a pre-requisite for becoming part of existing agricultural cooperatives in the region, the need to revalue women's role in communal life was discussed.

In the conclusions of the Region Forum of Mame and Mochos Communities which took place in March 1994, one of the priorities was considered to be:

> "We want women to participate equally in the life of our people. We women demand participation in assemblies with the same rights and to have our voice heard and listened to in all aspects of community life[4]."

In spite of the eminently patriarchal character of the Catholic Church the new social pastoralism promoted by Liberation Theology has encouraged women's greater participation in community development and has encouraged their training as pastoral agents.

The 'preferential option for the poor' which Liberation Theology promotes has opened up space for reflection and analysis of inequality in Chiapas. From the lowlands of Ocosingo to the lowlands of Las Margaritas, encompassing almost the entire Lacandon rainforest, indigenous catechists fulfilled a dual role as community organisers and religious trainers.

Within this new social pastoralism is the 'pastoral care of women', the main purpose of which is the promotion of greater participation for indigenous women. The reflection encouraged

by the Theology of Liberation takes a class perspective and does not include a questioning of gender inequalities. Nevertheless, the technical and organisational training and the new space for participation has allowed many indigenous women to begin to question their place within their own communities. This process is noted by the Tzeltal catechist in the Ocosingo region:

> "Now we are beginning to understand a little that we women also have rights and worth, that we women also ought to organise ourselves. Now, thanks to God, we are getting used to the gossip and the criticism and women are very happy to participate and, although there are many problems, we are taking a step forward and we can see that God wants us to be united" (Rojas 1994:203).

With the help of NGOs they have also created space for reflection of a secular character and encouraged projects specifically for women. There have been workshops on reproductive health, women's rights, the organisation of production, etc. An example of the new space created by and for indigenous women is the Women's Houses in the Tojolabal ejido of Santa Martha and in the colony of El Porvenir, both in the municipality of La Trinitaria, and in Poza Rica in the municipality of Las Margaritas. These projects were set up with the support of the NGO, Campesino Ecological and Health Training Centre (CCESC), with the objective of creating communal pharmacies and encouraging health projects specifically for women. Over time the 'Women's Houses' gained their own dynamic and became a place where women from the communities could meet. They have also been the headquarters for diverse workshops on organisation, reflection and technical training with support from other women's NGOs.

In the Altos region artisan cooperatives have played a very important role in indigenous women's organisation. Tzotzil artisans, who have a very different experience of participation from the women of the rainforest and are predominantly monolingual, have also begun to demand their rights as traders and as women. For these women the collective space for production and commercialisation has also been a space for developing political awareness. Artisan workers from J'pas Joloviletik, the Independent Organisation of Indigenous Women (OIMI), members of the Council of Indigenous Representatives of the Chiapas Highlands (CRIACH) and hundreds of artisan workers and

independent itinerant traders have played a very important part in the peaceful civil resistance. These organisations have led marches for 'Peace, Justice and Dignity' which have been taking place since February 1994 and have been responsible for setting up many fora for reflecting on the present situation.

New Space for the Political Struggle

The *Women's Revolutionary Law*, drawn up by Zapatista women[5], and the specific gender demands of hundreds of campesino women, which have been published in different places since the 1st January, are an expression of the way in which ethnic and gender identities have been reformulated in recent decades. In the Women's Revolutionary Law the Zapatista women demand, among other things, the right to political participation on an equal footing with men, the right to a life free from sexual and domestic violence, the right to chose one's partner and number of children. This Law has had a symbolic importance for thousands of organised indigenous women who have used it to support their specific demands within their own campesino organisations.

As well as the struggle against the state or 'the system', there is now also a struggle for the transformation of relations between men and wo men within their own organisations. Indigenous women have brought to the debate within campesino organisations the need for internal democratisation of indigenous communities. The inequalities which mark the differences between the sexes within campesino organisations, cooperatives and indigenous communities were highlighted by Tzotzil, Tzetzal and Tojolobal women who came together in a workshop entitled: 'The Rights of Women within Our Customs and Traditions', which took place in San Cristóbal de Las Casas on the 21-22 March 1994.

The indigenous women's discourse has tackled both the vision of some intellectual feminists and the patriarchal perspective which permeates certain approaches within the Indian movement. The generalised discourse of radical feminism is founded in the premise that all women share *the* same experience of oppression because of their gender, a presumption which hinders a historical understanding of different ways in

which one learns to be a woman in distinct cultural contexts[6].

The indigenous women of Chiapas have reclaimed the right to cultural difference indicating:

> 'Not all our customs are equal, everyone has their place within their own traditions. Our predecessors have given us ours and we should not lose it. We do not want to lose our mother tongue; we believe that we are indigenous and that we think differently from those who only speak Spanish' (Workshop 1994:10).

Nevertheless, the claims of the indigenous women do not arise from a culturalist and acritical vision of custom and tradition. By confronting some of the mythifying and purist discourses of the indigenous culture flourishing in sectors of the Indianist movement and among some anthropologists, the indigenous women have highlighted the asymmetry in gender relations and power within their own communities. With respect to the modifications of Article 4, which recognises the right of indigenous peoples to organise their lives according to their 'uses and customs" they indicated:

> "there should be documents in which we indigenous women note that there are customs which do not respect us and which we want to have changed. We are against violence, attacks, rape. It is not right that we are sold for money. These were our customs before but we have also got to change. It is also unfair that because of custom we cannot be represented or have rights to land" (ibid).

Women from the mountains, rainforest and the hills came together for the National Democratic Convention (CND) called by the EZLN which took place for the first time in Aguascalientes, Chiapas from the 6-9 August 1994. Before this CND meeting on the 28 and 29 July, indigenous and mestizo women from independent organisations met in San Cristóbal de las Casas to discuss their problems and produce a proposal to take to the CND which comprised what is now known as the 'Chiapas Women's State Convention'. Building this new space has not been an easy task; differences of perspective and style of work between the advisors of the different organisations has made collective work difficult. However, in spite of these difficulties, it cannot be denied that the Women's State Convention has created a space in which Tojolabal, Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Mame, Chole and Mestiza women have exchanged their organisational

experiences and have begun to reflect on their rights as women in the new national plan for which they are fighting in Chiapas.

In a document drawn up by the Chiapas Women's State Convention the main demands which arose from the women's meetings are summarised:

* We want to participate in the making of laws which relate to us and our peoples.
* We want to participate in the meetings in order to be able to be elected and respected as having authority so that the men listen to us, because as women we can think and make decisions and we are equal in body and blood.
* We want to discuss and analyze among ourselves the importance of being a woman and, together with other women, search for a revaluation of our condition as women and indigenous.
* We demand recognition and respect for our campesino and indigenous women's organisations in all governmental bodies and programs.
* We want respect for our right to have the number of children we want and can maintain, that our husbands are in agreement and that our children are welcome whether they are girls or boys.
* We want translators in the hospitals and we want the government to pay the midwives who help us give birth to our children, that is, recognition not just for official medicine as the only effective means.
* We want an end to the custom of exchanging girls for money, animals or objects; women ought to decide with whom and when they want to marry. Parents do not own women.
* We want laws which allow women the right to own land, to inherit it, to cultivate it and to be considered credit- worthy[8].

Within independent organisations there are some sectors which have wanted to discredit these demands stating that they are the "product of manipulation by mestiza women" (Rojas 1994:216). This position reinforces the racist premises in the government's discourse which indicates that the indigenous Zapatistas are

'manipulated by external forces' and are presented as incapable of making their own political decisions. From this perspective, indigenous women are not social subjects but objects for manipulation.

Within the campesino organisations such as ecclesiastical grassroots communities, communal health groups and productive and consumption projects, indigenous campesinos have begun to reflect on their specific rights as women and have developed a discourse which responds to the national project which up until now has excluded them.

This article only deals with part of the process - the emergence of women's new expectations for their lives, and new demands in terms of gender. It is concerned with the construction of a space in which what was previously unimaginable has begun to take shape. There is still a long way to go to ensure that the new discourses become daily practice and lead to a real internal democratisation of the communities. This is the other struggle upon which women in Chiapas are currently embarking.

Notes

1 In the Mesa-debate organised by the Single Workers Syndicate of CIESAS (SUTCIESAS) on the 11th January 1994.

2 The colonisation proposal by the National Indigenist Institute (INI), which was never carried out, can be found in the mimeo 'Proyecto de reacomodo de los excedentes de población de los Altos de Chiapas en Las Margaritas' drawn up by the INI in 1965.

3 The Theology of Liberation is an approach which developed within the Catholic Church after the II Vatican Conciliation and the Medellín Episcopal Conference (1968). It replaced the Church's social pastoralism and fostered a re-reading of the Bible from the perspective of a 'preferential option for the poor'. Since 1968 the Diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas has promoted this theological line.

4 This Forum was set up by different agricultural organisations linked with Liberation Theology: Indigenous Peoples of the Sierra Madre of Motozintla (ISMAM), KONan Choch, Work Groups Organised Abroad, and the San Francisco de Anio Agricultural Centre A.C. to discuss the armed conflict and propose alternatives.

5 This law was disseminated through the EZLN channel of information *El Despertador Mexicano* on the 1st January 1994. According to an EZLN communique it is the result of consultation carried out among grassroots women's organisations in support of the Zapatistas (see *La Jornada* January 30, 1994).

6 For a critique of the generalised feminist perspectives see Alarcón 1990; Min-Ha 1988 and Mohanty 1991.

7 On the 28th January 1992, the Official Mexican Diary published an addition to Article 4 of the Constitution. Now the first paragraph reads: 'The Mexican Nation has a pluricultural composition upheld originally by its indigenous peoples. The Law will protect and promote the development of their languages, cultures, uses, customs, resources and specific forms of social organisation and will guarantee their members effective access to the jurisdiction of the state. In agricultural decisions and proceedings to which they are party, their legal practices and customs will be taken into account in the terms laid down by the law'. The Zapatista uprising brought this modification into question and the government began to organise popular consultations in order to discuss the establishment of a Reglamentary Law.

8 This document is much more extensive but because of limited space it is presented in a shortened form: 'Resumen de las Demandas de las Mujeres: Demandas, propuestas y estrategias' in the *Convención Estatal de Mujeres*, Special Section, 'Plataforma para el Diálogo' 29th April 1995, San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas.

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RURAL-URBAN RESTRUCTURING AMONG THE CHAMULA PEOPLE IN THE HIGHLANDS OF CHIAPAS

KATHLEEN SULLIVAN

The marginalization of indigenous peoples in Chiapas has changed little since Mexico's independence from Spain. Life expectancy is 43 averaging 24 years less than other Mexicans (*El Tiempo*, 1995). In Mexico many of the social problems have been exacerbated with the recent liberalization policies in preparation for the Free Trade Agreement. The 1994 Zapatista rebellion brought international attention to the legacy of socio-economic disparities. The frequent missives from the Lacandon rainforest to members of the civil society put the needs of indigenous peoples and campesinos back on the national agenda while plans for strategic organizing for social justice were revitalized at the grassroots level. Being indigenous or 'Indian' has recaptured 'a sense of pride' with the hope of seeing some of the Zapatistas's demands met.

Amidst the dialogue that transcends state and national boundaries many autonomous indigenous communities are struggling for different social structures that allow for greater democracy, increased opportunities and improved social conditions. Among the *Tzotzil* speaking *Maya* the *Chamulas* stand out for re-inventing what Wolf (1966) has called the "closed corporate community." Yet the past two decades reveal that a rising number of village dissidents has prompted the expulsion of more than 15,000 people from the village. Between the numerous voluntary migrations (see Santana this volume) and the all-to-frequent violent expulsions there are approximately as many outside the village as in the approximately ninety hamlets that

comprise the municipality. This article presents a close up of the different ways that Chamulas are attempting the restructuring of their communities inside and outside of the village.

The fiction of Corporate Communities

Ever since the Spanish Crown established its control in the Americas, communal lands have provided an identity for indigenous groups in corporate communities. In the case of the Chamula, the civil-religious hierarchy, once believed to be continuous with the colonial past, has been identified as a product of twentieth century state intervention (Rus and Wasserstrom 1980, Rus 1994). While a brief visit to the village of San Juan Chamula confirms the existence of boundaries at various levels and Chamulas orient themselves from the ceremonial centre (umbilical cord of their origin myths) these limits need not deny the villages integration within markets and other commercial activities (Nash 1995). The different Chamulan settlements outside the village resemble more a diaspora than a migratory pattern (Gossen 1974) although not without some community restructuring.

Land ownership is very important for indigenous communities because participation in economically and politically significant festivals is also related to religious affiliation. Catholicism, introduced by Spaniards during the colonization of Mexico (Ricard 1966), developed into a uniquely Mexican folk religion, as it mixed with indigenous religions to form a new, syncretistic popular belief system which emphasized miraculous saint-patrons, the ritual cycle of the fiestas, and the political and economic ties of the 'cargo system' (see below). But in the context of increasing wealth disparities among the indigenous people, this ideology has come to serve more powerful elites-caciques-, i.e., the 'traditionalists.'

This class division is nowhere better expressed than in San Juan Chamula, where traditional leaders wield economic power over 80,000 Tzotzil speaking Mayas; the caciques justify expelling people from the community by claiming they are not following customs. Indeed, converts to Protestantism are the main targets, but also affected are political dissidents who have challenged the leaders, and some Catholics. Since the expulsions

began in 1964, over 15,000 indigenous people have lost their land, their houses have been burned or seized, and their crops taken. The 'Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas' Human Rights Centre reports that following Chamula's lead, Zinacantan, Mitontic, Amantenango del Valle, Chenalho, and Chalchihuitan have similarly expelled members from their communities. The expelled find refuge in the *cinturón de miséria* (misery belt) surrounding the city of San Cristóbal de Las Casas or in towns such as Betania, 20 km. from San Cristóbal.

San Juan Chamula

Located northwest of San Cristóbal the municipality of San Juan Chamula has an official population of 51,757 (INEGI 1992)[2]. The population density was calculated in 1990 at 147 per square km., as compared to the national average of 41.25. The Chamula community is undergoing a socio-economic crisis marked by inflation and the toll of the national debt, as well as high rates of male unemployment. Almost 20 percent of Chamulas are landless (Rus 1990) while 77 percent of those with land rely upon wage labour to supplement their harvest from land that is too small and of too poor quality to meet consumption needs (Wasserstrom 1983).

The centre of Chamula, *lumaltik* in Tzoztil, is the *cabecera* (municipal offices) and ceremonial centre generally referred to as the *mi' chik banamil* or the earth's umbilicus. Chamula is not a homogeneous village but a stratified and complex society. There are liquor-shop owners, transporters and money lenders who control the political-religious organization and occupy the majority of the political administrative positions. The caciques belong to this tightly knit class of elites. A small group of rich farmers rent land and hire farm hands while the majority of Chamulas diversify their livelihood just to survive. Among women, differentiation is not as visible. Since many women earn an income through traditional roles of raising sheep and weaving, this gives an illusion of homogeneity; however, my research has shown that some raise their own sheep, weave and sell their own products while a growing number of women buy and resell women goods, lamenting the fact that they no longer have time to weave (Sullivan 1992).

The Expulsion Phenomenon

The expulsions of indigenous people from their land and from their villages because of a presumed change in their religious affiliation are little known outside of Chiapas. Some scholars see the religious aspect as a veil to cover political differences between the victims and the caciques (Wasserstrom 1976a, b and 1983; Enriques 1990). While for others, this religious intolerance is understandable since change in religious affiliation is a threat to indigenous social and political order (Earle 1990:135). It is perceived that any form of external interference violates the village's autonomy, jeopardizing its cultural survival (Arias 1991) while yet others question the future of a village's autonomy in a multicultural state (Parra Vasquez and Moguel Viveros 1994).

The expulsion of Chamulas has historical roots in the cargo system, an elaborate civil-religious hierarchical structure based upon services rendered to the various saints. Each domestic group is expected to contribute through a fiesta tax collected annually. The *cargo de mayordomo* (steward or caretaker of the saint), the pinnacle of the system, is assumed by married couples rather than individuals (Cancian 1965; Gossen 1974). Although the cargo system in Highland Chiapas no longer serves as a levelling devise, a wide variation does exist between villages. For example, while the cargo system in Zinacantan legitimizes the accumulation of wealth and validates the growing socioeconomic disparity (Cancian ibid), in Chamula it is a means of accumulation of wealth among the power elite through their control of the production and sale of liquor and candles (Rus and Wasserstrom 1980).

Liberation Theology has also influenced the development of the expulsions phenomenon in Chamula. In the 1960s, several Dominican priests (inspired by the challenge of linking social justice to the message of the Bible) focused on the poor of Chamula. They established several community - based chapels in the more distant hamlets that were directed by local catechists and trained leaders (Iribarren 1980). This posed a threat to the centralization of worship within the cargo system while the *cacicazgo*'s control over the electoral process was jeopardized by the National Action Party's (PAN) decision to open an office in the ceremonial centre.

In 1973, the members of what appears to be a growing 'middle class'[2], comprised of truckers, small farmers, school

teachers and merchants, successfully organized to oust the exploitative cacique, Salvador Lopez Castellanos, seeking greater political representation through a democratic process. In response to this overt form of political dissent, the oligarchical families rigged the election to replace López Castellanos in favour of Augustine Hernández López who vowed to "cleanse the village of all the Protestants" who were inciting the people. Several attempts at seeking justice at the local, state and federal levels for violating legal voting procedures ended with the imprisonment and later expulsion of large numbers of Chamula's "middle class" during 1974. Although the majority were traditional Catholic, some were Protestant.

Protestantism in Chiapas

The interaction of land tenure, religion, and politics precedes the Protestant penetration into this formerly 'Catholic' region[3]. Protestantism arrived in Chiapas with the Summer Institute of Linguistics in 1938, and through the Central American Mission it began expanding among indigenous communities. While mass conversions occurred in Oxchuc in the 1940s, it was nearly thirty years before there were any 'converts' in Chamula. Despite its Catholic roots, Protestantism is growing rapidly throughout Latin America (Brusco 1986; Annis 1987; Nash 1960; among others), as in Mexico's southern region. In 1986, the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Cristóbal had 1,099,164 inhabitants, 80 percent of whom were Catholic and 14 percent Protestant, while 6 percent did not profess belief in any religion. The rate of increase throughout the state of Chiapas over the past two decades is significant: in 1970 there were 8 percent Protestant, 1980 11 percent and in 1990 16 percent. Today there are 1442 temples representing 29 sects within Chiapas (Giménez 1988).

As an ideology, Protestantism stresses individualism and differentiation, as compared with the community orientation of traditional Catholicism. Yet neither the demystification promised by the secularists nor the Protestant dream of reforming Latin America along Anglo-American lines of progress has occurred (Garrard-Barnette and Stoll 1993). Still the new religious democracy that Martin (1990) describes has opened up new forms of association, authority, and dissent. Protestantism also removed the social pressures for ceremonial consumption

(Muratorio 1980:54) and when peasants escape these demands reducing ceremonial funds, that is, the expense of the cargo system, is one possible strategy to achieve economic betterment for their families (Wolf 1966:14-5). Some Chamulas refuse to pay the fiesta contribution without changing their religious affiliation, similar to the invisible converts described by Goldin and Metz(1991) in Guatemala. These non-contributing families pose a threat to the existing cargo system and are incorrectly labelled *evangélicos* (the term commonly used to describe Protestants) by the village leaders. These pseudo 'converts' are scattered throughout the Protestant enclaves surrounding San Cristóbal.

Religious 'conversion' is a different dynamic from change in religious affiliation or 'religious identification', although current literature and 'converts' themselves frequently conflate the two. This article defines 'conversion' as the internalization of beliefs that motivate changes in behaviour, rituals and other practices. It also questions the adequacy of the catchall term 'conversion' in describing the situation in Chiapas because it obfuscates the multiple processes at work. My research reveals three processes: 1) change in the social relations of production with the movement of 'peasants' (rural producers) into wage labour and artisan production; 2) conversion from 'traditional Catholic' to 'fundamental Protestant'; and 3) the movement of people from rural to urban settings when families are expelled from their hamlets by village leaders because they have changed or are thought to have changed religious affiliation.

Religious 'conversion' appeals to people's desire to find effective remedies against the trials of alcoholism (Brusco 1986; Nash 1960), illness and both poverty and landlessness (Annis 1987; Enriques 1990; Gimenez 1988; Morcheque 1989). Still to adequately understand the conversion process necessitates reflecting upon the modernization movement of the past thirty years that emphasized the promotion of the individual - educationally and economically. In addition, the pastoral strategy of the protestants is focused upon the 'personal conversion' of the individual, which has provided tremendous impetus to the official indigenous policy of personal promotion. According to the protestant schematic process, the conversion requires 'heroic' ruptures:

The first manifestation of the conversion process was the complete abandonment of *trago* (alcohol): the evangelical convert does not drink. The new-born is gradually expected to make further ruptures as instructed by the missionaries: the local saints, the municipal and neighbourhood fiestas, the 'traditional' prayers, indigenous ceremonies, i.e., cures and blessings. Eventually the convert is no longer satisfied within his traditional setting and simultaneously the community through the leaders denounces them as traitors to the 'traditional way of life.' In order to avoid further problems with the caciques and the community the Protestants opt to emigrate to the outskirts of the city (Editorial, *El Tiempo* 1982:10).

Thus the Protestants replace the idea of a collective salvation: "among the indians, men and women might attain salvation only if their villages outlived individual members, only if their descendants lit candles for them and wept over their graves on the Day of the Dead" (Wasserstrom: op. cit. 77) with a personal one in Jesus. However, this change plays out in a new sense of brotherhood or community. Kelly (1941:41-2) describes this change as a new kind of life-sharing and of love that by no means includes everyone of a convert's friends or relatives. Yet those that are seen in this new and special light appear in this new alignment of their personal relations as now known from within. Because this sense of community attracts from within among Chamulas the required ruptures are not a burden too heavy to bear. The Protestant enclaves are defined on the basis of religion and their collective memories of conversion experiences and expulsion. Still hostility from the village leaders and the hostile *ladino* urban environment turns these communities inward where the ideology of closed, autonomous community persists. Political life is restructured with the 'new' caciques: the appointed block leaders for the ruling political party and elected syndicate secretaries both of whom expect votes for the PRI in return for favours received such as, paper work at the municipality, facilitating acquisition of documents, permits, exemptions, voting cards and drivers licenses. Despite the fact that many men learn some Spanish and could accomplish their own paper work, the custom of seeking an intermediary for official documents persists in many of the urban settlements.

Fieldwork among the expelled communities reveals that they still consider themselves to be Chamulas and as one walks through the colonies the presence of sheep, traditional clothing, steam baths and Tzotzil confirm this. Instability fuels the need to

maintain an ethnically and religiously homogeneous society, enabling them to feel comfortable among 'their own', amidst growing class stratifications as the 'new' caciques exploit the new communities. Several peaceful expulsions have taken place from Paraiso and Nueva Palestina for failure to pay the cooperatives or apostasy, i.e., recantation of one's Protestant conversion. The established political structure was evidenced by the arrests of several thieves in the colony of expulsed Chamulas of La Hormiga, on August 10, 1991. A citizen's arrest while occasionally warranted would not leave the perpetrators heads shaved, nor require several weeks of negotiations in Tuxla Gutierrez for their release into the hands of civil authorities. This pattern is similar to the Chamulan form of governing within an autonomous political enclave, imposing justice upon anyone who enters its geographic boundaries. These thieves were not inhabitants of the colony from which they were robbing but were from the village of Chamula and still the municipal and state authorities chose to deal with the issue as an indigenous affair ignoring the boundary between village and urban districts.

The expelled have organized from political and ecumenical perspectives in their struggle for land, religious freedom and basic municipal services, such as, potable water, sewerage, electricity and schools. The Misery Belt in general, and the colony of La Hormiga in particular, are frequently sites of confrontations and kidnappings of the caciques or others from the village of Chamula. The official traditionalists have refused to comply with state and federal rulings to stop further expulsions and at times threaten the *evangélicos* or order attacks upon the colony that have ranged from theft and destruction of property to the rape of a young girl, as a means of robbing her father of her virginity. While the socio-political backdrop is tense many converts will tell you how they now 'live in peace' and then continue to express nostalgia for corn fields, sheep and a small adobe house left behind in Chamula interspersed with ejaculations to *Cajval*, Jesus Cristo (Jesus Christ, the Saviour).

Rural-Urban (Re)structuring 'a la Chamula'

Measuring structural change within any community is difficult and attempting an rural-urban comparison is even more of a challenge. This article approaches both through a look at the household level. Moving beyond a socio-economic concept of a shared cooking pot or the pooling of incomes and following Creed (1992), the household 4 is envisioned here as the 'social space' where decisions are worked out, that is, proposals presented, negotiated, modified, accepted and rejected. It is precisely at the household level that decisions are made to reduce ceremonial funds, to 'convert', to change political parties and even challenge the cacicazgo. Adopting this unit of analysis in a male dominant culture allows one to recognize the dynamics of gender in the decision - making process, as well as the cultural lags or the ideological distances between the community and its members or between ideologies and praxis. Within the framework of event analysis this article focuses on 1) the acquisition of potable water and 2) imprisonment as a form of social control. The juxtaposition of the experiences of two households serves as a method of assessing the ways that the Chamulas are restructuring communities in rural and urban settings.

The Rural Household

The Ruiz Guitarra family consists of José, his wife María, their eight children and one daughter-in-law. José's father was landless and migrated to the hamlet of Laguna de Petej nearly thirty years ago with his three sons. Maria is from a neighbouring hamlet and although she has an inheritance of nearly an acre, the soil is very difficult to farm and less than a quarter of the field is sown. José considers himself an agriculturalist who follows tradition, a *batz'i k'op* (Tzotzil for a real man; in Spanish *un hombre verdadero,* or what José calls a good person). He is proud to tell you that he has served in the cargo system three times as a *mache* (monkey) and is on the cargo waiting list for *mayordomo* (steward). In actuality, José is a nominal farmer, present only the first day of sowing corn so as to fulfil the ritual blessings and secure the benevolence of the ancestors towards his crops. José leaves the care of the *milpa* (corn field) to his wife and six daughters, securing occasional labour from his two sons on Sundays. José is a wage labourer and because of his full time position as gardener and caretaker, he can afford to participate in Chamula's expensive cargo system. While José is busy in the city of San Cristóbal "making money" (Collier 1993) his wife Maria offers incense and prayers to the angel for rain, to the gods for

health, to the ancestors for peace in the hamlet, and she even remembers to pay respects to *Me' tak'in* (the mother of money).

The hamlet of Laguna de Petej did not get potable water until February 1995. The majority of people interviewed agree that the most significant impetus in granting their request for water was the Zapatista rebellion. Not that many Chamulas would overtly say they were followers of sub-commander Marcos, but they recognize the similarities between the demands presented by the EZLN and their own necessities. According to José the masked Indians made the state and the PRI representatives afraid to postpone their request for potable water. Since Petej is one of the smaller hamlets of Chamula, only 130 households, their petition was joined to four other hamlets, Cruz Quemada, Milpotea, Minas and Chimiltenan. The five Committees for Potable Water accompanied by their respective hamlet Principals or respected elders requested drinking water from their Municipal President last year. Their petition became even more pressing as the village officials discovered that those expelled had already received potable water. The President passed his request onto the governor at Tuxla Gutierrez and waited. Before long the National Commission of Water and the Secretary of Urban Development and Communication requested bids for potable water contracts to be submitted through SAPAM (Running Water and Municipal Drains System). Once the contract was approved work began in early December 1994.

Each head of household, man or widow, and each adult male was taxed $20.00 MN and required to give or pay for ten days of communal labour towards the construction of the different water tanks and the placement of the pipes and faucet. The project that was accepted fell within the guidelines for rural potable water systems, that is, a faucet every five families or so, with water pipes suspended 18 inches above ground. There were many heated discussions during the local juntas related to the placement of the faucets that highlights the fiction of a homogeneous community based upon proximity and common ancestors. My host family, Ruiz Guitarra, was very much involved in these discussions and they still feel that the decisions were not made fairly.

José had spoken to the hamlet's Principal about getting a faucet for the foothill where his household, his two sons and his two brothers, with whom he is not on speaking terms, now live. José counted five heads of households and never doubted the

Principal would grant his request. Maria was a little more sceptical. Over the course of two weeks she insisted each evening, respectfully waiting until after José had eaten, that he should make his request to the current head of the Committee for Potable Water, just in case the Principal did not mention José's petition. Maria was very concerned because their current source water was a well that was down a valley and over 90 minutes away. She was all too familiar with rushing to get water amidst caring for young children and several sheep, never mind carrying wet clothes back up to the hamlet. She wanted a faucet close by and was willing to risk annoying José to get it.

José met with Juan López Calixto about the location of the faucet and was assured that if there were five heads of households on that hill then the faucet would be placed there. This may have been López Calixto's initial intention but somewhere between ordering the materials and their arrival several women contested the location of the faucet. Suddenly access to water politicized a household chore. Women became militant about it and although as women they were not admitted into any of the committee meetings, they made sure that their husbands and sons represented their viewpoints and lobbied for the faucet.

José's nephew's wife, Rosa did not want to climb up to his house for water since she was no longer on speaking terms with anyone there. José tried to be diplomatic and explained that Rosa was jealous of them for some reason and frequently caused problems between his older brother and himself. According to Maria, José's nephew's wife (she will not even mention her name) is an evil, lazy person, and a liar. Rosa may or may not be many things, but she was highly motivated and creative about getting a water faucet. Raúl, the nephew in question, invited López Calixto to dinner one evening and following his wife's suggestion, passed him some money, $150.00 MN (about a weeks wages in construction terms), to assure that the faucets would be located near their house. López Calixto agreed and set about distributing the faucets by marking an "x" on the blue prints every five or more households. This became known through José's compadre (godfather) Manuel Guzman Pérez who overheard López Calixto telling his brother where the spigots would be placed and how much money he was able to glean out of interested parties competing for the same location. Once Guzmán Pérez informed José, formal accusations were made.

José went to the cabecera municipal offices in the ceremonial centre of Chamula and accused his nephew of bribing an official. López Calixto was accused of accepting bribes and dividing the faucets in the hamlet according to the money he received. All three men, José, Raúl and López Calixto were put into the village jail while the authorities investigated José's complaint. After three hours they were informed that due the distance of their hamlet a formal investigation would be conducted and once completed they would be notified of the decision. Fifteen days later it was decided that López Calixto and Raúl had wronged José. Both were fined $150.00 MN payable to the municipality. Even though José was relieved that the whole affair was over, for his wife the struggle for water continued.

During February most of the construction work was completed and both of José's sons made friends with the engineer from Tuxla who oversaw the work. The engineer was sympathetic to their desire to have a faucet and showed Sebastian the younger son how the overflow valve could be adjusted slightly to provide them with enough water each evening. The month passed quietly and plans were being made to buy a water tank for the family's daily needs. Yet beneath the veneer of serenity another social crisis was brewing. Rosa had been rebuked by her husband for dragging him into this water affair which he considered a woman's affair *(cosas de mujer)* anyway. José's brother, her father-in-law, also shouted at her for being a meddling woman. Rosa apparently wanted revenge.

One morning Rosa manoeuvred her sheep into López Calixto's yard and asked his wife Petrona whether she thought the water from the tank had less force at night and if it was permissible to sell water from the tank to another hamlet for a profit. Petrona has a social history with Maria because occasionally her son would want to go to town with Sebastian and she would always get blamed for whatever happened, whether she let them go or not. Petrona is a second wife and these women have an even lower status in Chamula than other women (Rosenbaum 1993). Rosa offered to be a witness to the water sales if necessary, but Petrona felt that would not be required since her husband was already upset with José for dragging him to jail in January. As Rosa removed her small herd of sheep Veronica, one of Maria's comadres, commented to herself that nothing good could possibly come of this strange encounter she had just

witnessed. A few days later at five am a pickup truck came to José's house to take him to jail. The charges were selling water and tampering with the village water supply.

It is a terrible thing to hear family members cry as a loved one in dragged out of bed by the village police and driven away out of sight. Still more disturbing is the fact that the entire family must then walk over an hour to the municipal offices and await the verdict. If sentenced to more than a few hours in jail they would have to keep vigil to provide their prisoner with food and water. José's sons had been tampering with the water supply by regulating the water pressure and José was found guilty of this charge; the accusation about the sale of water was dismissed. His sentence was to have a curing ceremony to rid himself of the effects of envy upon his household and to drop all requests for a water faucet while López Calixto was put in charge of the committee. The shaman at the healing ceremony killed two chickens, consumed six litres of posh (sugar cane liquor) and four bottles of Pepsi, and burned 184 candles. Two weeks later the same curer was back to relieve Maria of her headaches that accumulated from the water faucet affair. The following week her youngest daughter, a 3 year old, was also cured because her mother had inadvertently passed her illness through breast milk.

It is interesting that a rural water system was selected for installation. Yet several men argued "that's the way our women are accustomed to socializing." Or as Manuel López Mendez expressed it, "Women in Chamula share news and enjoy each others company down at the wells." José stated "the people would never cover the cost, yet I would pay for my own if they let me." When I interviewed the women several of them acted surprised about the possibility of each household having a faucet, although the idea was more than acceptable to them. Marta said that "it would be nice not to have neighbours staring at whatever one is doing all day long. Too much gossip to feel at ease." Pascuala was upset since the faucet she'll now have to use is in one of her rival's backyard. She said that "things would not change in Chamula until men carried their own water jugs." Yet according to a statement from the Indigenous Women's Forum things are beginning to change for some village women:

> 'We want our customs and traditions to be respected, those that the community sees as good for women, men and children. We were always taught to stay behind, not to protest, to be quiet, to

put up with things, not to complain, not to participate. But now we do not want to remain behind...." (Ojarasca 1994:35-6:27).

The official dedication and blessing ceremony took place on April 19th and cost each household or adult male $20.00 NM. José was invited to carry a censer during the vigil of blessing the water pipes. About 2000 people attended and were fed after the blessing of the water ways. Municipal and state authorities attended as well as some of the engineers. José and his family admit that the ceremony was very nice and are proud that they could attend. They also feel good that the waterways are now blessed because cholera is always a risk as the warm weather approaches. Both José and Maria plan to request permission to install a water faucet at their own expense. José will present their petition in late August since there will be a new official after August 8th. They calculate it will cost about $500.00 MN or three times the bribe Raúl gave to López Calixto. Neither Maria nor Rosa have used the faucet since it was installed. Their children collect water to save the women running into one another. The children don't seem to mind carrying 20 gallon jugs of water 60 yards up hill, but "that's my job anyway" as Marta puts it.

The Urban Household

Maria is the matriarch of the extended Pérez Gomez family complex that covers four plots of land and crosses over two colonies. She challenges Monolithic presentations of Chamula male dominance and represents a growing trend in household structure in the Misery Belt: the single female headed household. Maria is a 48 year old widow who, as a Mayan midwife, has delivered more than 280 babies. She prides herself on the fact that none of the babies or their mothers died in childbirth. Yet Maria's heart is saddened these days because although she may assist the women giving birth, she is helpless at saving the babies from dysentery and malnutrition. Her oldest daughter lost her last two babies within the first two weeks of birth from high fevers. These babies usually do not appear in the statistics because most indigenous children are not registered at such an early age. No one but Maria's immediate family knew the babies had been born, much less died, except for their pastor who prayed over the small white coffins.

Maria lives near the Calle Central in the colony of expelled Chamulas of La Hormiga, on the outskirts of San Cristobal. Peace of soul and mind first brought Maria up to La Hormiga and although the climb is treacherous and vigorous she has no plans to move to the hamlet of Milpoleta, Chamula.

Maria's conversion account is based upon a health related problem that village shamans could not cure. Maria suffered from severe abdominal cramps on and off for five years. It was not until a proselytizer from the Presbyterian church gave her some medicine that she found the 'true Christ'. Maria spent three years learning more about her new faith and then was willing to convert. It was shortly after her conversion that someone denounced her and her family as *evangélicos*. They were rounded up with a large number of others and put in jail for a day. Afterwards they were told to leave La Hormiga immediately or pay the price with blood. Fifteen years later she still attends the National Presbyterian Foundation Temple in Nueva Esperanza, even though there is another Presbyterian Temple at the bottom of La Hormiga. Maria judges it a good thing not to have everything as it was in Chamula. Maria owns her piece of land as do her four daughters and one of her sons. The youngest boy is only 12 and still lives at home with her.

Juana, the oldest of Maria's six children, is a single mother of five. Juana buys and resells artisan products in the city during the afternoon and evening hours. Although Juana has had three different husbands she prefers being alone to being abused or mistreated and refuses to support a lazy or alcoholic husband. Juana is learning to be a midwife and struggles to speak Spanish with tourists. Her wide and bright smile makes her very attractive and welcoming. It is through the relationships that she builds with international tourists that she manages to feed her children and make the cooperative payments in the colony. Just because most of the residents in Hormiga profess to being Protestant converts it does not infer that jealousy and envy have been eradicated from the colony. They are only all too present as several studies attest (Garza 1992; Fernandez Liria 1992). And even when Juana became the object of false accusations of theft related to water pipes but subsequently cleared, her reputation was still sullied.

As the contributions for water and sewerage are collected the members of the committee place the amounts into a bank

account for safe keeping. The treasurer of the committee then withdraws the amount required for payments on the dates due. Matéo Pérez Hernández attests that when he returned home one evening in late December 1994 prepared to make the cash payment for the last shipment of sewer pipes, the $12,000.00 MN (which at that time was equivalent to nearly $3,000 US dollars) was in his pouch. During the night someone entered his house and stole the money. The next morning he filed a report before the colony's police and, without a warrant, violent searches were conducted of a list of suspects which was improvised as the men left Pérez Hernández's house. Any sudden change in life-style or home improvement was evidence enough for them. Unfortunately for Juana she had just finished having a cement cell-block house constructed. At approximately six am Juana was dragged from her home loudly protesting her innocence, as her young children cried with fear. Before her eyes everything she owned was thrown down and stomped in the thick mud typical of La Hormiga. Juana, her infant Cecilia, Pascuala a three year old and Juan her 11 year old deaf son were soon in La Hormiga's jail attached to the elementary school 'Ignacio Allende.'

Four hours later Juana's brother, who was on the Potable Water Committee, tried to reason with the colony's representative that his sister was innocent. The gendered response was "a single woman can never get enough money to build a cement house unless she is a *pak'inte* (witch)." Maria's influence reaches into many different households and yet any attempt that she made to intercede for her daughter only revealed the depths of jealousy engulfing Juana. Some women even accused Juana of prostitution with foreigners, of leaving a very good husband to have an affair with a rich tourist, and even stealing the money to pay her construction bill because her foreign lover was out of town. Juana demanded proof of the accusations and the committee said they would produce it. That very afternoon a group of five men were sent to Oxchuc to confer with a seer who, for the modest fee of $50.00 MN, confirmed that the money was stolen by someone named either Maria or Juana. Anyone familiar with Chiapas knows that Maria and Juana are common names for indigenous women. The night began and ended with Juana behind bars and her family bringing her and her children food and water.

As the second day began Juana was comforted by her Presbyterian pastor and assured of the prayers of everyone in the Temple at Nueva Esperanza. She decided to ask her American friend, Thomas, for proof that he had given US$ 1,000 to build a cement house together with furniture when he left for the US. Maria then contacted Thomas in the US via another American in San Cristòbal and in three days Juana received a fax testifying to the orgins of her money. Armed with the fax she requested a trial and demanded that they accuse her legally before the city's municipal authorities. The police agreed to charge her hoping to put her away for a long time.

The *zócalo* or main plaza was a welcomed site for Juana because it is where she sells artisan products to tourists. They entered the building in a hurry, each party confident that the law would be on their side. Yet once the matter was laid out before the Sergeant on duty at the Police Station, the tide changed in Juana's favour. Juana had a signed document as proof of where her money had come from, while the accusers presented only the 'witch theory' and the seer's pronouncement. The sergeant dismissed these as nothing more than superstition. Although Juana was released she still feels the shame of having been accused of being a witch. However, from several interviews and informal conversations with woman in La Hormiga, Juana is still admired, even if from a distance, for "evicting her second husband who was an alcoholic and her last who was just plain lazy." As Pascuala puts it "I owe her a lot really, because if it weren't for Juana's outspoken nature I for one would never have dreamed of leaving my husband. He used to beat me if the meal was not ready on time and life was just miserable. I first met Juana in the *zócalo* and through her advice and example, I know that I can live alone." As we will see below, women in the colonies are more visible in the social (re)structuring than their counterparts in Chamula. This does not necessarily mean that they are treated more equally. For Juana, her case is still not resolved and for this reason I keep a copy of Thomas's fax in a safe place for her. As for the stolen money, it was never recovered, the sewer pipe order was delayed a month and everyone had to pay an additional $20.00 NM to cover the loss. The sewer pipe work is still in progress.

For more than six years the Chamulas from the expelled communities of La Hormiga, San Juan Bosque and Getsemane negotiated through their Committees for Portable Water with their PRI representatives, members and pastors of the National Presbyterian Church before municipal and state officials for a water system. Still no real solution became apparent until the Committees met directly with the Principal of the hamlet ofTasa de Agua, Chamula. The hamlet of Tasa de Agua is very small and poor. The ceremonial funds became a burden that the majority could not pay for Carnival and many people chose to leave the village when the change of leadership occurred in order to avoid a cargo office. Tasa de Agua had a commodity - water - that could solve their financial problems and so an agreement was made for the colonies to pay cargo taxes in exchange for water. It was necessary to find a water source from behind the hill of Hormiga because it was not cost-efficient to pump water up from the city. Still the water pipes would need to pass over private property and this was difficult to arrange. The colonies left this part up to the PRI and proceeded with the formal municipal requests.

The actual communal work load for this project was two weeks per land owner, male or female. The same number of persons paid $20.00 MN as a cooperation towards the materials. Because so many women pay for their own utilities and cooperatives they attend the committees that concern their interests, whether men agree or not. Once it was determined that $20.00 MN was roughly the cost of a faucet, a group of women who are sub-renting quarters and eighths of different plots requested their separate faucets. Several men tried to reject their petition and yet the women at that particular meeting protested. Juana saw the need to mobilise the women and took upon herself the task of notifying all the street vendors in the *zócalo.* Then she convinced her mother, to attend the next session with them. Juana admits that she was motivated by personal interests. She felt that if she ever had to sub-rent to someone in the future, she did not want to hassle over access to a water faucet. The accusation incident had not occurred at this time and Juana spoke freely at the committee about the rights of renters in the city to potable water. However, it was Maria who convinced the majority of the people that the faucets were a health requirement and

not a token the colony could give to some and withhold from others. After the vote anyone that wanted a faucet and could pay the $20.00 MN could get one.

Over the past six years everyone in the three colonies has contributed towards the cost of the cargo system in Tasa de Agua. Although it is expressed in terms of a cultural event that everyone watches –the fireworks– the $20.00 MN is payment for water rights. This contribution tax will probably continue indefinitely, or their fellow Chamulas may decide to cut off their water supply. On the other hand, the fact that they are assisting financially with the renamed Chamula 'cultural events' has enabled many would-be maches to surface in the Protestant enclaves. Differentiating religion from culture allows Protestants to participate without guilt in Carnival, the feasts of San Juan, San Matéo and the Day of the Dead. The enormous amount of *maches* (office bearer) present at Carnival 1995 both in San Juan Chamula and in front of the Cathedral in San Cristóbal, defending Bishop Samuel Ruiz, certainly pushes the limits of 'tradition' almost as much as it blurs the boundaries between rural and urban settings and the definitions of acceptable religious rituals.

Following the construction of the water tank, placement of the underground pipes and individual water faucets for each contributor, an inauguration party and blessing ceremony was carried out on April 19, 1994. Over 12,000 people attended the two day fiesta accompanied by music, scripture readings and some preaching by the Presbyterian pastor, Salvador López López of Nueva Esperanza, and a huge barbecue. It took four cows, pounds of tortillas, rice, and cabbage, not to mention cases of soft drinks, Pepsi, Rey and Coca Cola, to satisfy everyone present. It was one of the finest feasts anyone in the colonies had ever attended and some assured me that this was the first time people from a Chamula hamlet had officially attended a celebration with them. All the women are happy because now they can just open up a faucet rather than having to climb down and back up Hormiga for water. The dual secret that occasions joy to all in La Hormiga, Getsemane and San Juan Bosque is knowing that the water comes from Chamula and that it is not from the municipal water supply but it is free. Although I consider the cargo contributions to Tasa de Agua indirectly a water surcharge none of the people I interviewed shared my point of view.

Conclusion

Life in the colonies is changing to ensure that women have some rights and to include their input at the committee meetings. Land ownership and the payment of cooperatives based upon this ownership seems to be the basis for most of the urban women's rights, although the PRI's frenzy to seek out voters, men or women, certainly bears more weight in the city than in the village. In rural Petej, despite owning nearly an acre of land, Maria was not included in the faucet dispute directly. Men and widows are the only two categories for contribution payments and widows have their sons to represent them while other women have their husbands. This need not always have negative repercussions on women because in Rosa's case indirect influence, whether through her husband or through another disgruntled neighbour's husband, did get her the faucet she wanted.

The more subtle restructuring is based on an individual's discomfort at having the socio-political and religious leadership concentrated in any one group of individuals. People from La Hormiga attend the Temple in Nueva Esperanza, they sell artisan products in the *zócalo* or are wage labourers in the city. They vote for political representatives that fight for their needs, wait in line at the clinic when they have an acute illness, collect free tortillas in Nueva Palestina with their voter's registration cards at the expense of the PRI, select neighbourhood committees from among those they trust and seek out colony members who are either Protestant 'brothers' or *batz'i vinik* to solve the problems that don't fit into any of the above categories. The expelled Camulas expelled have learned to decentralize the social structure (see Rus 1994 for a detailed historical account), perhaps an extreme reaction, but for them it is an effective one. La Hormiga is an example of a fictive closed corporate community as envisioned by the expelled Chamulas, it serves their needs and functions to keep a safe distance from the city (re)creating a sense of autonomy and sense of indigenous identity.

Recalling the jailed experiences of José and Juana, neither felt that their human rights were violated, nor did they necessarily want the formal means of social control changed. At first José felt disappointed that a Principal accepted a bribe but later he explained that it was his inability to get Maria a faucet which caused her spirit to give her headaches. José had internalized

the issue and even questioned his own ability to negotiate effectively in the future. Whereas in Juana's case despite the horrible experience of being in jail with her children for three days, the fact that there is a 24 hour police force and will put someone away quickly is a source of reassurance to her. Less than two years ago Juana was followed by a drunk up the path to her home. At that point she was without a husband. She explained "I needed to know that if I report a drunk someone would take care of it. I could not sleep if I had to worry about a possible break-in during the night. It is difficult enough for me to go down into the *zócalo* everyday asking people to buy things so that I and my children can eat. I feel safe in Hormiga because the rules are still basically the same as in Chamula. I don't want any more changes than the ones that have been forced upon me." Juana has helped create a safe space for herself that buffers the cultural shock of urban migration. Both José and Juana know the rules, which has a calming effect by removing the randomness of calamities.

The redefinition of Carnival as a 'cultural event' in contrast to fundamental Protestantism's appraisal of a 'pagan rite' is perhaps the most challenging of all the changes in La Hormiga. To go back to your native village and seek a cargo for the cultural prestige that may be gained when you were expelled from it usually in a violent manner is contradictory on various levels. It shows at the village level that money will buy just about anything and that perhaps many of the expelled only changed religious affiliation without ever converting. And following the decentralization process as explored above into the rituals of Carnival allows for variety in participation, that is, as a tourist, as a true Chamula observer, as a cultural participant or just a Chamula or ladino (non-indigenous person) who goes to sell products wherever the crowd is that day. Many are changing their binary view because the options of pro and con are too restrictive and are not representative of reality. Others are beginning to realize that without tolerance we can not have a multicultural state. As Arias (1994:398) concludes "they are Indians who find refuge in fiestas, rituals, customs and traditions that were inherited from the ancestors; no less Indian are they who in their search to find some meaning to their existence have turned their eyes to the teachings of Protestantism...'

Finally, if one looks at the geography of the hill on which the colonies of Hormiga, Getsemane and San Juan Bosque are located, things become a little clearer. Chamula lies at the other side of the hill and whether orchestrated consciously or not, these colonies are more than just a settlement of expelled Chamulas, more than even a diaspora. Perhaps before long the process of restructuring at dual sites will reach a point of compatibility. When this occurs the colonies will be annexed to the village destroying any linear sense of territorial boundaries that date back to the encounter with the Spanish. The cycle of land retrenchments will turn upside down right before our eyes.

Notes

1. This growing wealthier group has not become crystallized since the majority of Chamulas continue to identify themselves as agriculturalists. At the ideological level any concept of class formation is denied yet in reality heterogeneity does exist.
2. Following Bastien's (1993) recent critique of transplanting religious labels loaded with European significance both "Catholic" and "Protestant" are problematic in this article.
3. Trago or alcohol within the Chamulan municipality is almost exclusively restricted to posh. This drink is employed in ceremonies both of the fiesta and curing types, not to count the endless social events where participation in drinking is socially required of the individual. The caciques have then monopoly on the sale of posh, which a home made brew of fermented corn and sugar ,a specialty of Romerillo. Within the Mayan tradition liquor is a gift of the gods (Nash 1976:192), and due to the warming effect it is easily associated with the chamulan oral tradition of hot and cold food categories. Posh, corn, sun and hot are linked together (Gossen 1974:311).
4. The household is not seen as the unit but the focus of analysis. The household is a social space where various social forces are brought together through the interaction of the individuals defining that space and how these interactions reciprocally influence the wider forces of change. Following Creed (1992:25ff) the household then provides a window on the nature of local and national interaction allowing us to capture elusive synthesis of people actively shaping their own destiny while responding to larger political and economic constraints.

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A DAY IN ZENAIDA'S HOUSE

MARÍA EUGENIA SANTANA E.

Flying high over the Chiapas rainforest you can pick out the clusters of indigenous houses which are almost lost in the majestic countryside which surrounds them. You can see the slow running blue and turquoise rivers as if they were part of a huge model. From the air it seems as if the forest is sleeping placidly... but it is not. In these small villages men and women are suffering; they despair of ever managing to survive in a country which has turned its back on them.

For years this 'peaceful ' forest has been incubating an armed movement and at dawn on the 1st of January 1994 it shattered the silence of the night crying 'ENOUGH!'

After the decline of the great Mayan civilisation of the Lacandon, this region fell into a long sleep from which it only began to awake some four or five decades ago when groups of indigenous peoples and campesinos began to colonise it. They applied to the federal government for land to cultivate and feed their families; they came not only from Chiapas but also from other states within Mexico where the lands their forefathers had cultivated could no longer support them and their children. The government gave them usufruct rights to land in the southern area of the rainforest, in the municipality of Las Margaritas near the border with Guatemala.

At the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s the rainforest of Las Margaritas began to be colonised by groups of different origins. They established communities which spoke mutually unintelligible languages, the one next to the other. But they all shared the same struggle and the same aspiration: to start a new life together with their families, learning to survive in surroundings hitherto unfamiliar to them because many came from the highlands or the warm valleys. They learned that the rainforest could be both a generous mother and a fierce savage which they had to domesticate. These peoples of different cul-

tures learned to live together according to principles of mutual respect. Later this respect developed into bonds of kinship but bonds which over time would be weakened by the political parties.

Here in this forest untouched by time, the new colonisers began to construct their lives: they built their houses with their own hands using the materials the forest provided; they cleared land to cultivate maize and beans; they produced lambs and sewed their own clothes; they had children and they made headway. Without any help from anyone else, they began their struggle for survival.

And so the years passed, and the years turned into decades. All the while the government took no notice of their needs: the need for roads, schools, health centres, running water and electricity – there was nothing for the indigenous peoples of the rainforest. A school was of little use to them if they were not sent a teacher; similarly, they had little benefit from a new dispensary if there were no medicines or doctors; and, it was not worth producing a good coffee harvest if the government only paid for it a year later.

It is impossible to list all the injustices which have been hatched in this - paradoxically - beautiful Chiapas rainforest; injustices which kill thousands of campesinos each year; injustices which have been slowly simmering and boiled over in the armed uprising which surprised Chiapas, Mexico and the world on the 1st of January 1994.

The rainforest woke up; it shook with the bombs fired from the air by the Federal Army. The forest lived through the horrors of war. . .

'It was just not possible to go on living like that. We may die, but at any rate it is better to die fighting for change so that our children can live a better life than we have done!' Many men and women of the forest are thinking this way. And the uprising has the support of many women; women tired of being oppressed by a society which brands them with the triple stigma of being poor, being indigenous and being women. These are women who love their children as much as, or more than, wives of the political impresarios do but who do not have, as they do, medicines to cure diarrhoea or ease the pain of their six-month-old baby, who do not have, like those other women, varied and tempting food with which to please their husbands.

It is true that many women supported the armed uprising because they were sick and tired of their people being treated as inferior; but it is also true that many women were not aware of this oppression because they spent all their lives emersed in daily chores which did not give them the time to think of anything other than how to get through the day: making the meals, caring for the children, washing clothes... Some women have been able to come together in the social struggle but unfortunately this is a luxury that the majority cannot afford. Their time is taken up with what is most urgent; and there is no time left for what is necessary.

Zenaida is one of these women, one of thousands in the forest who get up each morning worried about how they will get through the day. As for the next day... well, God willing!

A Day in Zenaida's House

The cock has already crowed three times but it is still dark. Nearby the thatched roof house with its plank walls some dry rhythmic blows can be heard. It is Zenaida cutting firewood for cooking breakfast. Inside the house a child has been left crying, demanding the warmth which disappeared when its mother got up. He doesn't know why he cannot continue suckling and no one explains to him. But his mother knows why: she is worried that the new child 'on the way' will not have enough nourishment to survive. Zenaida can hear her little son crying as she cuts the firewood but he gradually stops and falls asleep again.

Afterwards Zenaida goes into the kitchen. She carefully takes some pieces of still half-lit wood from the fire where she cooks. She bends over and blows a few times to clear the ash from the wood to light the fire for the new day and sets a pan of water and the pot of beans to cook. Then, in a corner of the kitchen, she begins to grind the maize until she notices that the water is already boiling and makes the coffee. This done, she takes some of the maize, grinds it again in the grindstone and makes a ball with the palm of her hand which she rolls out on a board until it takes the shape of a tortilla; she places it on the griddle and while it cooks she prepares another tortilla.. and then another and another and on and on every day of the year, every year of her life...

At this time in the winter the forest it is cold and when the children wake they head straight for the kitchen to warm themselves by the fire. Zenaida's eldest daughter comes in with her youngest brother wrapped in a shawl which smells strongly of urine. Barely awake, the children ask for their coffee: Laurita who is seven, Beto aged five, Chember aged three and Manuelito who has just had his first birthday.

Their father gets up, drinks some water from the jug and washes his hands and face. He goes to the kitchen and pulls a bench towards the fire. His wife serves him coffee in a small pewter bowl and pushes some tortillas and a plantain baked in the fire over to him. He and the children eat in silence. Meanwhile, Zenaida, wraps some tortillas in a cloth, fries an egg with a lot of salt and places it between the tortillas; she takes a ball of dough and places it inside a pewter bowl together with the tortillas. All this she packs in the haversack for her husband to take with him to the fields. He finishes his breakfast, thanks his wife and gets up.

-If I finish the felling and there's no wind blowing, he says, -I'll burn the *acahual* today; so I'll maybe be back late. If my compadre comes to look for me, tell him to wait for me here.

–Fine, see you later.

Zenaida sits down to have breakfast with the children. Manuelito cries and she cradles him to her so he can suckle. Meanwhile, she drinks some coffee which makes her feel nauseous and reminds her of her pregnancy. She eats a plantain, gets up and, slipping the baby over her shoulder in its shawl, washes the breakfast dishes with water and ashes and then leaves the kitchen. Outside the children are playing.

-Laurita –says her mother– I'm going to the river to do the washing, look after the children. Oh, and don't forget to put water on the beans.

Zenaida gathers up the dirty washing, takes a large jug and leaves the house. After a twenty minute journey downhill she reaches the river. Her sister-in-law is already there with a child on her back, washing.

-How is the water?

-Cold as usual. If only this river was warm like the one at La Revancha!

-Well, don't grumble. We'd be worse off in San Lorenzo where there isn't a river at all.

The women spend two hours bent over a bucket washing clothes then Zenaida straightens up to rest her back. She looks at the sun and is alarmed to see how late it is. Quickly she picks up the water jug and fills it upstream. She squeezes out the washing, gathers it together and fixes the jug to a *mecapal*, heaves it onto her back, says goodbye and goes off at a run.

When she arrives at the house, she finds the children eating tortillas.

-Mama, we're hungry!

Zenaida goes into the kitchen, tests the beans to see if they are soft and serves them up for the children, laying the plates on the ground around the fire. Using the tortillas as spoons, the children eat in silence, ask for coffee and then go on eating. All the while their mother continues making tortillas.

-Mama –said Laurita– the baby had diarrhoea three times. I think he is ill again.

-Well, finish your lunch and I will take him to your comadre, Elba, and see what she can give him.

Doña Elba, the elderly midwife, knows a lot about herbs and medicines. Everyone in Flor del Rio recognises her knowledge and trusts her. After carefully examining the baby she goes out to cut some herbs which are growing inside a fence behind the kitchen.

-Boil these shoots up with water –the old woman tells Zenaida– and add a piece of burnt tortilla, and also give him some of the stock from the beans and don't stop giving him breast milk.

-Thank you comadre –says Zenaida– putting out her hand to offer a couple of eggs by way of thanks.

With worry etched across her face, Zenaida makes her way downhill from Doña Elba's small house.

After all this, it is already two o'clock in the afternoon. Zenaida gets back to the house, gives the hens some water in an old sardine tin and goes to the kitchen to make some lemonade for the children who say they are thirsty. Afterwards, she sweeps the kitchen and goes to throw the rubbish in a pit in the middle of the coffee fields which are situated beside the house. Then she washes the pots which are still lying dirty from breakfast time.

Zenaida looks at the sun and realises that she will just have time to make the tortillas before her husband returns home. She

washes her hands and tells her daughter to make a trip for water. Laurita goes off at a run taking the water jug and savouring the minutes of freedom which this task allows her. Along the path she meets the first of the children on their way home from school and they play together awhile. Then she leaves the boys playing football and joins a group of girls who are also going for water.

Meanwhile, at the house, the smallest children begin to cry with hunger. Zenaida notices that the baby's faeces have turned to water and that he also feels hot. She changes the cloth which she uses as a nappy and noticing how weak he looks begins to worry about what will happen if the tea does not help.

It is getting late. Zenaida washes her hands again and gives the children some plantains to stave off their hunger a little longer. Fortunately Laurita finished grinding the nixtamal while her mother was out so Zenaida only has to add a little water to the mixture and begin the rhythmic kneading on the tortilla board.

When the smell of the first tortillas reaches the children they come running into the kitchen and ask for something to eat. Zenaida serves them their beans. Meanwhile the baby in the sling on Zenaida's back is thirsty and begins to cry so she moves him around to her breast. There the baby sucks anxiously paying no heed to the considerable activity of the body to which he clings.

The sun begins to sink and with it, fortunately, the heat. Laurita returns from the river with the jug of water and her mother scolds her for having taken so long. Laurita tells her mother that the men are already on their way home from the fields and soon after Enrique arrives at the kitchen.

Zenaida is worried to see him home because she has still not finished making the tortillas. She greets him with a glance and gives him water so that he can wash his hands and mouth which he does there and then in the kitchen letting the water splash over the earth floor and then sits down beside his children.

-I am starving –he says– the sun was very hot today.

-I'll just be a minute. I've just got to warm the soup– responds his wife.

-What, is supper not ready yet? But you know that I'm home at this time every day. Why is it not ready?

She explains to him that Manuelito is unwell again and she had to look after him as well as the others. But this doesn't satisfy Enrique who thinks he is the only one who has been working that day. Then he puts his eldest son to one side - he had been sitting on his legs - and leaves the kitchen, clearly annoyed.

A few minutes later Zenaida goes out to call him and he comes and sits in silence eating the pasta soup, beans and tortillas. He praise the pasta as a way of showing his reconciliation but she says nothing. She feels humiliated and knows that her work is never rewarded with a 'thank you'; and besides she is tired, hungry and very thirsty. She is worn out with the baby breastfeeding and the baby in her womb. Despite all this no one will serve her her food. Her mother is the only person who would look after her and she lives too far away... She bites her lip and swallows back the tears.

When Enrique has finished, Zenaida serves herself and sits down to eat.

-Didn't my compadre come? –he asks.

-No.

-Well then, I'll go and find him. I'll be back soon.

-Take the torch because it is already getting dark.

Zenaida is left eating alone as usual when suddenly a stench tells her that her son has had another bowl movement. Then the children come into the kitchen crying; they have been fighting. They are tired she thinks. She calls Laurita to change the baby and after finishing eating washes the dishes and goes to the bin for some corn cobs to husk. She throws them into a basket and takes it to sit outside on a bench.

-Beto, bring another basket so you can help me with the husking– she calls to her eldest son who immediately does as he is told.

The hens gather around them as they husk the cobs of maize and Zenaida throws them a few kernels on the ground. The hens fight for the food and the children watch them fascinated.

Doña Elba finds them there when she arrives to ask after Manuelito who has fallen sleeping in his sister's arms. The old lady sits down to husk maize together with Zenaida who tells her how very worried she is. The two women work quickly. The empty cobs build up into a small pile. The children continue

playing and the women chat. With her little brother in her arms, Laurita rocks in the hammock on the veranda.

-If he continues like this, said Doña Elba, it will be best to go and see if the doctor in El Eden is there and get a prescription.

-And then who will feed the children? No comadre, I can't. It is better if you cure him yourslf. -Well then, let's see how he is in the morning... And you, how have you been? You don't look well, you look very pale and drawn. You ought to eat better, eat eggs, they'll make you better.

-The hens hardly lay at all, comadre!...

Night begins to fall. Doña Elba leaves when Enrique comes back home and asks for coffee. The family go into the kitchen and Zenaida makes coffee and bakes plantains in the fire. They ask for tortillas and she heats up some which were left over from the meal. Zenaida mentions to her husband that perhaps she will have to go to El Eden the next day.

-OK, but don't go alone– he recommends

-And who is going to come with me when everyone has their work to do. I don't know who I can leave the children with. If my mother was here...

-Don't start that again!

While the family drinks coffee, Zenaida washes the maize kernels which she had husked and puts them in a smoke-blackened pot to cook. The petrol lamp which lights up the kitchen splutters because the petrol is almost finished. Seeing it splutter, Zenaida gets worried and says to her husband:

-Give me some money to buy more petrol tomorrow, if not we will be going around in the dark.

Zenaida reorganises the wood on the fire and then goes out onto the veranda to fetch some branches which she has been drying out. She returns to the kitchen and finds that the children have fallen asleep over the table. So she wakens Laurita and Beto and sends them to the bedroom, the only room in the house apart from the kitchen. Zenaida settles her two sons in the bed, then she pulls out the reed mat on the earth floor for Laurita to sleep and covers them all with old blankets. Finally she pulls out the largest mat for her husband and makes room next to him for Manuelito.

They are all asleep. Zenaida goes back to the kitchen to wait for the nixtamal to cook for making tortillas the next day. She

sits there watching the flickering light in the lamp and thinks about her sick son and what she is going to do. She shivers at the memory of her first son who died through dehydration from diarrhoea.

She sits thinking awhile about who knows what until the nixtamal is cooked. Then with a great effort she lifts the pot off the heat, thinking how each day it weighs more but, in fact, it is her unborn child which weighs most on her.

Protected by the shadows of the night, Zenaida goes into the coffee field to find a place to do 'her necessaries' and tired, without thinking of anything else she goes to find a place on the mat beside her husband. At last, to get to sleep, she said. But she is wrong. He is lying awake waiting for her and seeks her out in the darkness.

-When will this day be over? Zenaida is left thinking sadly...

Some Notes on Promotion Work with Indigenous Women from the Chiapas Rainforest

First of all, the biggest obstacle to promotion work with women in this region, as in many other regions, is the women's almost total lack of self-worth as a result of the paternalistic and servile ideology which unfortunately still pervades the indigenous culture. As Mercedes Olivera says:

> From an early age they are taught to obey and serve which severely hinders them taking any initiative. Their oppression, which is perfectly adjusted to their cultural system of values, appears to them to be a 'natural' part of daily life and as immovable as the misery in which they live...

Therefore, all work carried out with these women should be oriented towards raising their self-esteem as a first step towards overcoming the marginalisation in which they live and which is often encouraged by the women themselves who, as members of this culture, assimilate and reproduce it.

One way of achieving this objective is to really value women's knowledge so that they themselves begin to value it. The women have an intimate knowledge of the rainforest environment in which they live; they know medicinal plants, edible plants (which they gather), and they know not only how to fish

but to cook the shell fish and fish from the rivers of the rainforest and the hunted meat which the men bring in. The women are capable of preparing exquisite stews with the few ingredients which they have to hand. But perhaps most admirable of all is the way in which these women are able to bring up a family in such a hostile environment.

Indigenous women have been able to reproduce over centuries of generations without the resources which we urban women have: without any public services (light, water, gas, etc), without comfortable houses, without doctors or medicines, without knowing how to read and write... In fact, one could say that they are 'unsung heroines' because, in spite of their feats, no one recognises them. We city women can begin by doing this.

Nevertheless, it is not only necessary to recognise indigenous women's material labour and its crystallisation in the upbringing of children, we must also recognise and value their cosmovision, their way of conceiving the world, of relating to their fellow creatures and respecting 'Mother Earth'.

When campesina women are able to recognise the central role which they have played in the reproduction of their people, they will begin to value themselves; and when they reflect on their own central role in the reproduction of their domestic group, their self-respect will increase. And once they have recognised this they will be well on their way...

The women will then begin to feel more sure of themselves and be encouraged to speak out in public, to participate in decisions concerning their community, to risk going beyond the boundaries of their 'small world' and to take control of activities which benefit the community. They will begin to grow wings and be capable of anything.

Nevertheless, we should not simplify the situation and make it appear as if it is very straight-forward. There are other obstacles in the way of promotion work with indigenous women.

Perhaps one of the biggest obstacles is the divisions that exist between women themselves, many of which are encouraged by their husbands or their husbands' families to ensure that they do not spend much time away from the house 'gossiping'. In this way, collective work could be a means of increasing friendships between women and overcoming preconceived ideas about each other. A project based in communal interests could also promote

unity, for example, in production projects to provide a wage income, health projects, etc. depending on the needs of the group.

Another obstacle in the way of women's promotion is the lack of spare time. It is difficult for women who have so much work to attend meetings. Therefore, improving the standard of living is a very important precondition for overcoming women's marginalisation. Campesino men also urgently need to become involved in domestic labour and to appreciate the fact that their wives need to meet other women, and encourage them to facilitate this development instead of putting obstacles in their way as frequently happens.

Meeting together is important for women and we must recognise and promote it.

Notes

1. Olivera, Mercedes, 'Mujeres acasilladas en las fincas de Chiapas'; *Cuadernos Agrarios*, Mexico, 1979.
2. I would like to thank the women of Flor del Río very much for accepting me into their community to live together with them. Without their support it would have been impossible to write this article.

"CON SOLO UN CORAZON": THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, INDIGENOUS IDENTITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHIAPAS.

CHRISTINE MARIE KOVIC

The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 recognizes that all human beings are born with equal and inalienable rights and fundamental freedoms, and provides for "a common standard achievement (of human rights) for all peoples and nations." However, rights do not have any meaning if people are not aware of their rights in order to demand that they be respected. This is particularly true for the indigenous peoples of Chiapas, many of whom do not know how to read or write, do not speak Spanish, and have little or no knowledge of the legal system. For generations the indigenous peoples of Chiapas have suffered at the hands of large land owners, police and merchants, unaware that they had the right to be paid the minimum wage or not be beaten by government officials.

In the Diocese of San Cristóbal de Las Casas in Chiapas, the Catholic church has worked for over 20 years to promote the rights of indigenous peoples. This has had a very powerful effect on indigenous peoples, changing consciousness and creating space for indigenous organization. However, for the State and Federal government, the work of these Diocese presents a threat to the socio-economic order that has been maintained in Chiapas for generations. Paradoxically, while indigenous peoples become more aware of their rights and demand that they be respected, the Mexican government has responded by repressing indigenous peoples, particularly those active with the church.

This article discusses the importance of the Diocese's work as evident in an indigenous, Catholic community; it briefly reviews the history of the Diocese's role in assisting the ethnic groups of Chiapas to unite; and describes the repression exercised by the

State and large landowners against the church. The work of the Diocese has contributed to the 'explosion of corporate communities' in creating the space for the ethnic groups to come together and realize their common goals and by challenging the established mestizo-indigenous relations which mark the oppression of indigenous peoples.

I worked in the community of San Pedro, a community of Catholics who were violently exiled from their native indigenous community of Chamula by entrenched local leaders. San Pedro is situated on the outskirts of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, and the members have strong ties to the urban life. Some have tiny parcels of land where they cultivate corn and beans, however all are dependent on wage labour in order to buy necessities. They work in the city, selling produce or artisan products in streets and/or the market, or as day labourers and in other low-wage occupations. Nonetheless, the community very strongly maintains its identity as an indigenous community. All speak Tzotzil, the majority do not speak more than a few phrases of Spanish, the women wear their traditional dress, care for sheep and continue to weave skirts and ponchos of wool; and people walk to Chamula to participate in religious festivals.

In San Pedro, I found that the work of the Diocese of San Cristóbal had strongly affected people's consciousness. The idea from the church which most impressed members of the community is that of equality; people emphasize that "We are all equal, men and women, rich and poor, indigenous and mestizos." The idea of equality between indigenous peoples and mestizos is particularly important within the context of the institutionalized racism and exploitation suffered by the indigenous peoples of Chiapas over the last 500 years.

For people in the community, the concept of equality has had two major effects on their lives: first, it creates a sense of self-esteem and self-worth, raising consciousness that indigenous peoples need not suffer abuses at the hands of mestizos. Second, it shows the importance of uniting with others, particularly with indigenous communities, in order to work to attain equality. These changes are evident in other areas of the Diocese as well. As Pablo Naldony, a priest in Salto de Agua explains:

> 'In the Dioceses of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, because of the situation and the diocese's history, we have taken a stand for the poor – not excluding the rich, but inviting them to make a radical change and to be for and with the poor in the society. We've been literally going out to the people, walking with the people, being in their villages, eating the food they give us. Instead of encouraging people to accept suffering in this life in hope of a better life after death, we are saying that the reign of God starts now'.

In San Pedro, I found that people have strong ties outside the community, primarily through their contacts with the Catholic church. As June Nash asserts in 'The Explosion of Communities in Chiapas' (this volume), indigenous communities can no longer be seen as homogenous, isolated and egalitarian. These ties with communities of origin and among indigenous communities, rather than threatening the existence of the intact indigenous community in fact strengthen their identity as an indigenous group. While talking with members of the community, I learned that they have important ties to other communities. For example, two male catechists regularly visit the indigenous municipality of Chenalho to assist in prayer, often sacrificing basic needs to find the money to pay for transportation because they feel that it is important to assist other communities. In return, people from Chenalho have come to the church in San Pedro to attend religious ceremonies.

Several members of the community regularly attend mass or services at the church of Caridad, a church in San Cristóbal which has been a centre for indigenous Catholics for years. Currently, indigenous catechists hold a religious ceremony in Tzotzil every Sunday. This church is a critical meeting place for Tzotzil catechists of the area. Each Sunday the church is packed with indigenous Catholics, primarily from Chamula and Zinacantan, but from other Highland communities as well. People from San Antonio regularly walk to the church of Caridad to celebrate with other Catholics. Their connection to this church brings news of what campesinos in the region and the state are doing.

One Sunday several catechists from San Pedro took up a collection of corn and beans from their community to bring to Caridad where they would be distributed to the poor communities in the rainforest currently suffering from a strong military presence. Again, in spite of the fact that people in San Pedro hardly have enough food to survive, they felt that it was impor-

tant to help their *hermanos* (brothers) who were in a difficult situation. It is also through the connection to Caridad that people learn of important events, such as pilgrimages, and organize to participate. Members of San Pedro learned of the pilgrimage in support of Bishop Samuel Ruiz García planned for March of 1995 and shared the information with all members of the community who organized to participate. The pilgrimage incorporated thousands of indigenous people from many localities in a united demonstration of support for the Bishop of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Samuel Ruiz García, whose parochial work with indigenous peoples inspires fear among those ladinos who support the old hierarchy of dominance.

Over the past 20 years, the Diocese of San Cristóbal has played an important role in facilitating ties between indigenous communities. A historical event contributing to a collective indigenous consciousness and facilitating ties between indigenous people of different ethnic groups was the First Indigenous Congress which took place in San Cristóbal de Las Casas from the 12th to 15th of October of 1974. Initially, the event was to be coordinated by the governor of Chiapas, Dr. Manuel Velasco Suarez. He asked for help from Bishop Samuel Ruiz García seeing the need for assistance in organizing the event. Because of the presence of religious workers in communities throughout the area, the church was the logical place to look to for logistical assistance. The Bishop agreed to help coordinate the event under the condition that it would not be a touristic or folkloric event, but rather that the indigenous peoples would be permitted to give their testimony in public after living in silence for so many years.

The process of preparing for the Congress was as important as the congress itself. Preparations began in August 1973, and between October 1973 and September 1974 local, regional and municipal meetings were held in indigenous communities to discuss the Congress. Initially, people met to 'know our reality,' that is, to discuss the situation of indigenous communities. Each of the four major ethnic groups of the Diocese – Tzeltales, Tzotziles, Choles and Tojobales – prepared their presentation on the themes of the congress: land, commerce, education and health. In the course of these meetings, leadership initiatives were presented and representatives were democratically selected to attend the Congress. As Morales Bermudez points out, the social conditions of the early 1970s favoured the beginning of an organizational process. At this time, there were no institutional political structures representing indigenous peoples in the State; the lack of land had raised questions about the equity of its distribution; the day labourers who worked on plantations were challenging their oppression and taking over land; and people were calling for an end to commercial exploitation (Morales Bermudez 1991: 248).

The Congress was attended by 1,230 indigenous delegates from the state of Chiapas: 587 Tzeltales, 330 Tzotziles, 152 Tojolabales and 161 Choles. They represented 327 communities with a combined population of 250,000 people. The importance of this Congress cannot be underemphasized: it was the first opportunity in 500 years for the four ethnic groups to unite and reflect on their situation in public spaces that had been dominated by ladinos. During the Congress, agreements were reached on each of the four themes discussed. Although politics were not addressed as a separate topic, it was an apparent overtone in the discussions of all four themes.

The issue of land distribution was of special importance given the existence of ranches and plantations; in the early 1970s over 30 per cent of the agricultural workers in the state were *peones acasillados* who worked for extremely low wages *(sueldos de hambre)* and were continually exploited by the landowners. The critical agreement reached on the issue of land was that *"la tierra es de quien la trabaja"* (the land belongs to those who work it). It was also agreed that "the communal lands which were taken from our fathers be returned to us" (Agreements, Indigenous Congress of 1974).

The indigenous participants of the Congress recognized that they shared similar problems, that for example, the issue of land was similar in the regions of all four ethnic groups. The realization of their common problems and the need for unity is evident in the agreements reached in the Congress. For example, in their first agreement on land: "We all want to resolve the problems of land, but we are divided, each one on his own. Because of this we do not have strength. We are looking for the organization of each group in order to have strength because unity gives us strength. The slogan of the Congress, 'Equality in Justice,' re-

flects the principal agreement reached: only through the unity of the indigenous peoples could liberation be attained.

The importance of the event in uniting indigenous peoples from various communities and the initiation of larger organization outside the community cannot be overemphasized. The Congress itself was important in establishing logistic and symbolic ties between the four ethnic groups. Indigenous representatives- *'hombres de buena palabra'* (men of good word) or those who are consistent in what they say and what they do- were elected to take the proposals of the Congress to their brothers in the communities. A man from the community of San Pedro who attended the conference said that what most impressed him was the presence of so many indigenous people from all over the Diocese. Now, twenty years later, he fondly remembers the huge number of Tzotziles, Tzeltales, Choles and Tojolabales who united at the Congress to share ideas, reach agreements, and even dance and play traditional music. The Congress provided the space for the formation of independent campesino organizations; earlier, the National Campesino Federation (CNC), a group affiliated with the PRI, had been the dominant organization in the state.

Another critical event that united indigenous peoples from the four ethnic groups was the arrest al Father Joel Padron, the parish priest of Simojovel del Allende since 1979. Father Joel Padron was arrested by two state judicial police on September 18, 1991. He was taken to the jail in Tuxtla Gutierrez, the state capital, where he was accused of possessing illegal arms, robbery, damage to property, inciting peasants to take land, and conspiracy, among other crimes. The crimes of which Father Padron was accused were clearly fabricated. The governor's decision to arrest him was a direct attack against campesino organization. Since the 1970s campesinos who worked on coffee estates in the region of Simojovel began organizing, and demanded better working conditions and access to land; Simojovel was a strategic choice for the mobilization as it represented one of the first regions to take on this struggle against the estates. The arrest of Father Padron was also an attack against the Diocese of San Cristóbal. In 1989 Bishop Samuel Ruiz García had established the Centre for Human Rights 'Fray Bartolome de Las Casas' which denounced the huge number of

human rights abuses committed by the government. Four days before the arrest, Bishop Samuel Ruiz García held a press conference in which he denounced the serious human rights abuses committed by state and federal officials in Chiapas.

On October 18, 1991 around 600 campesinos from Simojovel began a march to Tuxtla Gutierrez in protest of the detention of Father Padron. During the march, campesinos from other communities joined in, and a total of 11,000 campesinos united in Tuxtla Gutierrez on October 21. Simultaneously actions of protest were realized in other indigenous communities in the Diocese of San Cristóbal. Father Padron was released from jail on November 6 of this same year.

This march was another critical moment in the organizing of the ethnic groups of Chiapas. As in the Congress of 1974, the ethnic groups saw that they shared similar problems and goals and that in their unity they were more powerful. As a result of this march a group of campesinos decided to organize and formed the Pueblo Creyente (people who believe). The members of this group have no set political affiliation and selected the name Pueblo Creyente to include all Christians, Protestants as well as Catholics. Members of the Pueblo Creyente note that the divisions in rural communities cause weakness; their goals, just as the Indigenous Congress of 1974, are to create unity and justice.

Just a year after the march in protest of the detention of Father Padron, on the 500th Anniversary of Christopher Columbus' arrival in Latin America – October 12, 1992 – over 10,000 indigenous people from throughout the state of Chiapas marched into the city of San Cristóbal. The march began in the plaza of the San Francisco church at the monument to Fray Bartolome de Las Casas, remembered as the Dominican priest who defended the rights of indigenous peoples against the interests of the Spanish, and moved to the plaza of Santo Domingo where the statue of Diego de Mazariegos, the Spanish conqueror who founded the city of San Cristóbal, was dismantled in an important symbolic event.

The march of October 1992 was followed by massive pilgrimages in November 1993, October 1994 and March 1995. The 1993 and 1995 pilgrimages were organized by members of Pueblo Creyente and over 20,000 indigenous peoples from throughout the Diocese of San Cristóbal participated in each event. The pilgrim-

age of 1993 was organized in support of Bishop Samuel Ruiz García when there was the threat of separating him from the Diocese. In 1995, the pilgrimage similarly supported the work of the Bishop in San Cristóbal under increasing attacks from the government, large landowners and merchants.

All of these marches and pilgrimages have been important in demonstrating the power of the indigenous communities to the communities themselves and to the dominant mestizo society. As the streets of the city of San Cristóbal fill with indigenous peoples, peacefully demonstrating, the mestizos of the city fear revolt, while the indigenous realize the power in their numbers. As one man who participated in the pilgrimage of 1995 said to me, "When we arrived at the plaza of the cathedral there were a million people from all over the state of Chiapas, everyone in their traditional dress so that you knew where they were from."

The concept that indigenous and ladinos are equal is a threat to the social an economic status quo of the state of Chiapas and to established indigenous/ladino relations in which indigenous peoples still live as second class citizens. As Mexico becomes increasingly integrated in the global economy, the southernmost state of Chiapas remains an anachronism of the Porfiriato. Huge tracts of land are still held by coffee plantations and cattle ranchers while age-old conflicts over land holdings have never been resolved; 55 per cent of the country's hydroelectric energy is produced in the state while over 30 per cent of the houses in the state lack electricity; it is the first state in the country in the production of coffee, second in cattle and third in corn but has one of the highest levels of malnutrition in the nation. In 1993, 15,000 indigenous people and campesinos died of poverty and illness. In short, the state's abundant natural resources are concentrated in the hands of a few ladinos while the indigenous peoples and campesinos live in extreme poverty.

When indigenous people began organizing and demanding rights to land, to democracy, and an end to corruption, the state and large landowners responded with repression. Just days after the Indigenous Congress of 1974, a campesino was lynched by a landowner for the 'crime' of demanding to be paid the minimum wage. Since the Diocese of San Cristóbal has been seen as an important force in raising indigenous consciousness on rights, the state has attacked the church directly.

One of the strongest attacks on the work of the Diocese of San Cristóbal de Las Casas occurred on February 19, 1995 when a group of 300 people, including municipal and local officials, attacked the building of the diocesan Curia for an hour and half. The attackers were demanding that the Bishop leave the city of San Cristóbal. Sticks, stones and eggs were thrown at the building, people attempted to burn down the front door, and several people, including an 88 year-old woman formed a peace belt to protect the church were injured. During the aggression members of the police force were observing from the roof of the nearby municipal presidency, but did nothing to prevent the violence. The '*autenticos coletos*', a group of merchants in the city of San Cristóbal who claim descent from the original colonizers, have actively protested the work of the Diocese; the racism in this attack was clearly evident. In 1994, this group contested a proposed reform to the Constitution of Chiapas which would promote the respect and admiration of indigenous peoples. The autenticos coletos claimed that this reform discriminated against the rest of the population.

In February 1995, other attacks were launched against priests and lay workers in the Diocese. Father Javier Ruiz was interrogated by Federal Judicial Police while giving mass in Teopisca. Father Victor Anguiano was verbally attacked and threatened by a group of landowners in La Trinitaria, and most significantly, Jorge Santiago Santiago, an advisor to Bishop Samuel Ruiz, was arrested and accused of sedition, conspiracy, rebellion and terrorism. As in the arrest of Father Padron, these accusations were fabricated and Jorge Santiago Santiago was released on April 14 for lack of evidence of the crimes. Indigenous people and campesinos who work with the church have also been the target of recent attacks. Between February 10 and March 10, 1995, the Centre for Human Rights 'Fray Bartolome de Las Casas' documented 8 cases of torture. In seven of the cases members of the Federal Army were responsible and in one case, police were responsible. Documented cases of torture indicate that the cases were not arbitrary, but part of a regularized practice to intimidate campesinos, especially those who belong to independent organizations (Centro de Derechos Humanos 'Fray Bartolome de Las Casas' 1995). In at least half of the cases reported, the indigenous victims of torture were involved with

the Catholic church, either as catechists, aspiring Deacons, or prayer leaders. In January 1994, Catholic catechists were also targeted in human rights abuses committed by the Federal Army and municipal leaders. Perhaps the strong attack against the Diocese is an indication of the strength of the work of the Diocese itself, the church's work in uniting ethnic groups and teaching equality and justice threaten the established social order.

As religious workers in the Diocese of San Cristóbal assist in the work of establishing peace in Chiapas, they point out that peace does not only mean the absence of violence, but fundamental change in the social situation of the state. "People must be committed to constructing new relations between people, based on justice and true solidarity" (Document of Pastoral Agents of San Cristóbal 1994). In the community of San Pedro, a catechist proclaimed "we must work with one heart. Everyone must be united and in that we have strength." Influenced by the pastoral work of the Diocese, the indigenous people in San Pedro recognize that they are equal to other members of society forging a consciousness that enables them to work with others.

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JOURNEY TO THE HEART OF THE RAINFOREST

MARIE-ODILE MARION

Poverty

Municipality of Ocosingo, February 1994.

We left Ocosingo before dawn. The morning was fresh and humid, still quiet and serene in spite of everything. We crossed the abandoned and sleepy park and passed by the market which lay strangely calm and took the road south out of town and towards the green open countryside which bordered the rainforest. For more than three hours the road wound its way between beautiful grasslands; endless cattle ranches slipped by on either side with their small ranches dotted about randomly beside the fields. There was no rainforest in sight, and no villages either with their corn fields or coffee plots; the road was deserted with no sign of lorries or trucks, mule drivers or traders, cattle ranchers or peasants. We felt as if we were in a no-man's land and were it not for some bored flocks, we could have been the last creatures left alive after some inexplicable ecological disaster.

We noted in amazement how the countryside had been irreversibly deforested and converted into thousands of hectares of private fields when, suddenly, around a bend we bumped into a small group of people. We felt almost relieved to find these youths in their dark clothes and coloured scarfs and to know that the region was still inhabited and we were not the sole survivors of a nightmare.

They were a handful of Tzeltal boys and we could sense they were uneasy when they asked us what we were looking for. After hearing the reason for our journey they let us pass without any further ado but there is no doubt that we intrigued them and they decided to send two of their company with us as guides so that we could get to our destination without further delay.

The sun was high when we reached the community. The square was deserted but when we stopped the car outside the

only local store, men and youths, children and adolescents came running and the square filled with people as if something totally unexpected was about to happen. We immediately explained the reason for our visit and they immediately understood our purpose. In a few minutes the authorities had organised an extraordinary meeting; the whole town was there and we all went into the meeting hall in the commissariat while the youths stayed outside absorbed in reading the newspapers which we had brought in the car.

For several hours, the Tzeltales told us about themselves: about the 527 hectares of land on which 115 families lived and of the impossibility of increasing this area of land because they were surrounded and being strangled by endless cattle ranches. They explained how – after struggling for three yearswith the authorities – their case had been thrown out and why they could not reestablish themselves economically. They told us about the coffee they could not sell and the loan which they could not repay the Yajalon Rural Bank: "Every day that passes since we lost the case the interest grows and we can't stop it. We will lose everything, even the cows we own communally. The government annulled the property owner's tax so why won't they give us the chance to sell our coffee and pay what we owe to the bank? They will listen to you, tell the government to give us more time to pay because if not, we will be left even poorer still and sadder too because we will lose everything including our animals".

Later they showed us the electricity installation, an incomplete skeleton in the middle of the town. They explained how much they had paid and worked in vain to light up their town and how for a year now they had been waiting for PRONASOL to fulfil its side of the bargain. They explained that now none of them believe in promises, that they are tired of asking for responses to their petitions, of searching for a solution, of running after those responsible for programmes which in the end did not exist. They showed us the only shop in the town which lay half empty, and described the long trips they had to make to get provisions. They told us over and over again until they were tired how their children had no land and no work and now no longer any hope of ever having any. We listened in silence to the meticulous translations they provided of the statements made by members of the community. They talked in Tzeltal without acrimony or anger: serious, precise, measured,

each one giving a litany of their shortages, an interminable list of needs.

We promised to talk for them, to testify to their situation and then they bade us goodbye. A military plane circled the sky as we left the town and all eyes turned to this daily aerial visit; then the members of the community returned to their day to day affairs, full of worry, apprehension, suspicion and fear.

Repression

Municipality of Altamirano, March 1994.

After crossing mountains and valleys and driving along pot-holed roads we reached Altamirano. We only had to stop for an instant in the centre of the small town to know that this had been, and still was, the geopolitical heart of the Chiapas campesino conflict. Its decapitated municipal building, which had been disfigured at the beginning of the conflict, had been elegantly restored and gaudily painted. The omnipotent presence of the army on every street corner had turned Altamirano into a town in crisis, a people under siege. Half of the population of Altamirano are cattle ranchers and commercial traders. The other half – according to the people themselves – are 'pure Zapatistas'. Both sectors of the population live in an environment of aggression and mutual distrust, under the control of the national guard.

After curfew soldiers and artillery tanks invade the town, drive around the park and establish control. Altamirano becomes a military camp and fear lurks behind the dark windows. Time stops until dawn when, to a drum roll, the soldiers noisily exercise through the streets, forcing people to wake up.

We quickly left this military scene to take refuge again in the Tzeltal communities. After a strict military inspection we were able to head west towards the rainforest. The village we were looking for was not very far away and in less than an hour we arrived at our destination, a small Tzeltal community which had suffered repeated incidents over the previous months and lived in constant fear of again becoming victims of military incursion. While mothers cried and prayed for their dead in the church, the men gathered together in the village square and told us their story .

They talked of the conflict in which they had found themselves embroiled for some months and of the support they

received from the ex-president of the municipality of Altamirano, who had been stripped of his authority 'for wanting to help the campesinos'. "He was good, he was a good president, he always helped us and that's why the cattle ranchers had him removed". They remembered the first military incursion in 1978; the petition for land they made in 1986 which remained unanswered; the orders for the apprehension of villagers which multiplied from that time on; the return of the army in May 1993 looking for 'guerillas involved in drug- trafficking'; and the new incursion of soldiers on the 6th of January 1994 which led to the death of three members of the community, the memory of which haunts them all.

And then, naturally, the discussion moved towards the crux of the problem: the lack of land and water, the loss of space for their collective reproduction, the drastic and relentless increase in the number of cattle ranches surrounding the village, robbing them of any possibility for development.

For hours they described in rich detail the many ranches and their marvellous productive potential: the enormous ranches of Buenavista, San Martin and Salinas as well as the San Antonio ranch, all of which belong to the Kanters; La Pimienta which belongs to Jorge Constantino and Yaxolob ranch belonging to Alfredo Albores; the San Jose ranch and its more than 3,000 hectares belonging to Rodolfo Castellanos (but divided into three under different names), and Santa Ana, El Porvenir, San Juan del Rio, el Amular, Yaxonil, the Guadalupe ranch and El Paraiso, La Nueva Vista, El Ojo de Agua, not forgetting the ranches of San Marcos and the El Tulipan property of Jose Vastellanos, cousin of the ex-governor of Chiapas. They showed us their barren lands where their hilly plots were situated and they took us to see the cattle ranches, comfortably placed in the Tzaconeja valley, liberally irrigated with river water, while they have nothing more than a network of pipes bringing water from a nearby spring.

They listed the lands which they knew were registered illegally as private property but which had been titled on top of prior forestry concessions on national land, as in the case of El Porvenir (belonging to Federico Alonso) and San Antonio (belonging to Gustavo Kanter). They told us of the many attempts they had made to have their land extended and the 300 hectares

of infertile rocky land they had been granted. They explained how the ranches were divided up to look like smaller properties while in fact the cattle all belonged to one owner and carried the same brandmark. They talked of the small ranches (260 hectares), the larger ranches (800-1,000 hectares) and the big properties comprising more than 2,000 hectares situated in the best lands in the valley, replete with cattle and coffee plantations.

Night took us by surprise, as did the rain, and we were invited to stay a few hours longer in this community where the people were thirsty for justice and peace, a community thirsty for land and the opportunity to live decently.

Misfortune

Municipality of Chanal, April 1994

Avoiding Altamirano with its military occupation and hot-headed cattle ranchers, we turned back towards the west by the rainforest track which links the municipalities of Altamirano, Chanal and La Margaritas. The communities we passed were extremely poor and appeared to lack infrastructure of any sort. It seemed to us that to continue in this direction we would soon reach the deepest levels of penury and misfortune.

The sun was still low when we stopped in a small village which lay huddled around a modest school, flanked by an equally modest church built of rough planks. The place seemed to be deserted and in the grip of poverty and weeds. Some wooden huts surrounded the school and these diminutive dwellings seemed to us like links in a chain of human misery which were bound together around the school as if in collective defiance of the their austere existence.

The women were the first to approach followed by tattered barefoot children who surrounded us, curious and intrigued by our presence. We tried to talk to them in spite of the linguistic barrier because the majority of them only spoke Tzeltal. Soon we came to understand that their village was a 'colony' belonging to the municipality of Chanal, comprising 35 families who had chosen to live on a few hectares of mountainous land on which "they couldn't even manage to harvest two bundles of maize from each field". However, in spite of the pressures, they had refused to abandon their village and take refuge in the main

town where, since the beginning of the conflict, they had found it difficult to get food; when they tried to bring in goods from town the Altamirano officials confiscated them. So now they stayed in their village and waited for help which never arrived, eating tortillas and drinking maize soup. The children's state of malnutrition was proof in itself of the truth of their words.

Once they realised what we wanted the men came forward and invited us into the church to talk in more comfort and security. The men from two neighbouring villages (which lay some two or three hours away) also came and we learned that the conditions in this community were shared by all the other rainforest communities in the municipality of Chanal: scarcity of water and medical attention, complete lack of basic goods, an inefficient education service (one Tzotzil teacher who was unable to communicate in Tzeltal with the communities), lack of any transport service and, above all, a shortage of cultivable lands and proper opportunities for paid work.

Here too the campesinos denounced their intolerable and precarious economic and social conditions, listing with impressionable precision the large and medium sized ranches which surrounded them, giving the exact size of their cattle herds, the names of the owners and the dates and particular ways in which the ranches had been divided up. They pointed out ranches such as El Mirador to which, although abandoned and non-productive, they still had no access for sowing maize. They talked of El Libertad, Gracias a Dios and La Mendoza ranches, the beautiful properties of the Albores, Yanez, Urbina and Ochoa families. They described the opulent Yalchiptic farm with its 500 hectares of rich pasture and its 165 head of cattle, noting that between them they did not even have 300 hectares or a single cow.

One after the other they recounted how they had to work on the nearby cattle ranches from five in the morning until four in the afternoon for a daily wage of four pesos. They rounded up cattle, scythed meadows, erected fencing and branded cattle. When a cow died out in the grazing lands the patron sent them to butcher the animal and forced them to take the meat home - whether or not it was already partly decomposed - so that it could be deducted from their weekly wage.

They told us how the foremen beat them if they did not carry out all their tasks and were not concerned that their wages were

insufficient to buy even the minimum needed to feed their families.

They told us about the cholera which had struck the village claiming two victims because their petitions to the authorities to channel water from the springs were ignored. They listed the children who had died from diarrhoea, fever and hunger.

We listened incredulous, filled with gloom and foreboding.

The men and women who gathered together in the small plank church painted a desolate picture of their communal existence. There was no need to ask for proof, to confirm the denunciations, enquire about antecedents. It was totally unnecessary to look further afield for the source of their desperation, the motives for the rebellion. The young men and the youths openly displayed indications of their loyalty to the Zapatista rebellion, some still bore marks from blows they had received while incarcerated in Cerro Hueco prison. They did not need words to demonstrate their commitment, or grand statements to legitimate their position.

They asked nothing of us, but responded measuredly and precisely to the questions we asked, giving the motivations for their uprising without hesitation: their lack of means of production to ensure a decent life and their total abandon by unconcerned members of Mexican society.

They bade us farewell with the same serene cordiality with which they had received use some hours before.

On the way back we noticed the abandoned check points, the tree trunks laid to one side of a muddy clearing, the remains of a recent and still present conflict. And we remembered the words of a young Tzeltal who a few minutes before saying goodbye had warned: "This is not the time for complaining, it is time for getting things done, and done well, so that we can all live contentedly and have peace on our lands and in our villages. Tell your companions so that they will listen to us and so that they understand."

We want to make sure we pass on their message.

Women In the Struggle

Municipality of La Margaritas, August 1994

After two days travelling up and down ravines and across rivers we arrived at the banks of Lake Miramar. This beautiful rainforest lake extends lazily along one side of the river Jatate, and is surrounded by Chole, Tzeltal and Tojolabal villages. The majority of the population sympathises with the Zapatista movement and because of the military blockade around the conflict zone, they have had to make significant changes to their social and economic organisation so that they can survive in spite of the penury, isolation and constant threats of repression which weigh heavily on the communities in this region.

Since the 1970s, the waves of migration into this area have increased because of a syndrome of pauperization which has intensified the deterioration of the indigenous campesinos' standards of living. Forced to take refuge in these far flung lands, thousands of indigenous families tried to reconstruct precarious models of social organisation. They reaccommodated the norms and institutions which structured their former existence so that they could reproduce their traditional forms of interaction. But the tremendous decrease in their standard of living, the numerous difficulties they faced in trying to settle in a different environment with new forms of technology and economy and an ever increasing list infrastructural deficiencies forced them to make considerable changes to the complementarity and intra-community solidarity which formed the basis of their family structures. The women and children in particular have had to transform their activities at the same time as increasing their burden of responsibilities.

The women were forced to make long journeys in search of basic commodities because of their distance from markets or to take over from their husbands while they assumed the responsibility of buying the necessary foodstuffs for the nuclear family. With a decrease in school hours or the absence of schools altogether,the children became involved agricultural and forestry work or even occasionally worked at nearby ranches for a miserable wage which went no way to even beginning to resolve the state of endemic penury which characterises the great majority of indigenous families in the rainforest region.

Because of the continuing change in their role and the way in which their participation in communal life broadened and diversified, the women also became more involved in decision making and coordinating official, political and agrarian affairs, areas traditionally men's responsibility.

In the most traditional communities the women had never participated in the ejidal or communal assemblies but instead left all political, legal and even religious prerogatives to the men - according to the position which each man held in the local official hierarchy. However, in the rainforest areas where the migrants fled, the young women began a slow and inexorable launch into public life, progressively assuming the right to present their political opinions because of having assumed responsibility for a multiplicity of tasks and jobs in the communal economy. Their participation began discretely and quietly but as it became much more ardent and energetic they began to change the roles and social patterns which defined the status of each sex in the global reproduction of their society.

This new strategic organisation among the Mayan peoples of the Chiapas rainforest who took part in the rebellion emphasises the political, economic and military role of indigenous women in the definition of new forms of collective interaction which allow them to ensure the cohesion and success of their model of society. But these new forms of female participation in the development of critical action, which are found in all the communities involved in the struggle, do not signify a dramatic transformation of traditional models and their conception of the family. In the Tojolabal communities in the beautiful valley of San Quintín in the conflict zone, only the young women continue to have close involvement in military activities. Although they are all at liberty to participate in public affairs, only the youngest, that is those without children, accompany the men on training courses. But to ensure the women's participation, as well as that of their brothers, fathers and husbands, the rest of the community has to make their intergroup solidarity even tighter and take on the work of those involved in the insurgency.

After mature and responsible consideration, the women decided that they would sustain the mobilisation process by considerably increasing their work load at both the family and community levels. It is not necessary to be armed to feel part of

society's struggle; the tens of thousands of Mayan women demonstrate the validity of a new social project in which all the individuals who were involved in its construction maintain their conviction. Without women's active, constant and committed participation in this gigantic effort to restore regional and national political order, the Mayan peoples of Chiapas' insurgency movement would probably not have even got started.

Exodus

Municipality of Ocosingo, November 1994.
On Friday, 18th November, at three in the morning, more than three hundred people from the ejido of San Caralampio took to the road in flight. They could not take any belongings or food and had to carry the children and the sick in order to manage the ten hour walk which separated them from Plan de Ayutla, the village to which they were fleeing.

The Tzeltales of Plan de Ayutla and the neighbouring community of Nueva Palestina were astonished by the arrival of this multitude but managed to accommodate the refugees in churches and other public buildings, while the sick and injured were immediately evacuated to the regional hospital in Palenque.

The 334 Tzeltales who suddenly shattered the peace in this village reminded us all that the war and its cargo of hatred, rancour, threats and fears continues to darken the rainforest's horizon. The men, women and children who arrived still terrorised by their recent eviction did not completely understand what had happened to them; they just continued answering our questions: "They took everything from us and all we were left with were our patios".

It was not easy to reconstruct the series of events which had forced these frightened campesinos to make their eventual exodus: they appeared to be fleeing from the memory of these last days and could not explain their sudden flight through the rainforest. But, little by little, before the host community's authorities, they began their long litany of problems: increasing pressure from the armed forces on a people reluctant to swell their ranks, confiscation of basic foodstuffs, complete lack of medicines and medical attention, the expulsion of the school teacher by a local Zapatista commando and the removal of

anyone who could be suspected of having any connection with the Ocosingo municipal authorities. Finally they related the decisive incident – their collective flight at dawn on the 18th, surrounded by Zapatista soldiers who fired over their heads signalling that they should capitulate; the hurried crossing of the river Perlas in dugout canoes and the loss of animals which were carried away by the current. They remembered when the old man fell, the baby which was born three months prematurely and the search for a path to the distant village where they knew they would find people from their own ethnic group. Finally they related their arrival in Plan de Ayutla, the ejido closest to San Caralampio to the east and some ten hours walk by mountain track.

We listened to the men's story perplexed, feeling a strange disquiet as if we would rather not know what had happened. Then, with the worry of how to find food and shelter, which were the most pressing needs for these hundreds of displaced people, our fear grew that the Zapatista rebellion, after promoting itself through just and legitimate measures, would lose its way through fatal errors. By acting in this way the Zapatistas appeared to be justifying the plunder and humiliation of the poorest and most defenceless Indians of Chiapas, the very people who they tried to represent and whose voice we thought we heard in their earlier manifestos.

If respect for plurality and the right to autonomy are inalienable conditions for a democratic, multiethnic country then we must question the very contradictory measures being taken by the same Zapatistas who defend these statements. By evicting those who think differently from them and imposing a state of terror in the area under their political control, the soldiers of the Zapatista army themselves stand for all that we have denounced as intolerable in a despotic cacique system. The model which we must promote and inscribe in our constitution with the help of the EZLN has nothing to do with these compulsive measures of eviction and plunder.

Sacred Land

Municipality of Ocosingo, February 1995.
After a few minutes the sun slid behind the curtain of trees and the half light slowly shaded the forest. Sitting around a bonfire,

the Tzeltales and I observed each other, both equally intrigued. For more than 50 years the Tomas Sanchez' family had lived in this small forested valley. In spite of their total isolation, they are not antisocial and in the flickering light of the fire their faces acquired more vivacity as the conversation grew between us. Domingo, the youngest son, translated his father's story into Spanish and through the magic of his words and the force of his reminiscences we were transported for a few moments to his past.

Tomas was less than twelve years old when his father, Pedro Sanchez, was press-ganged in the street and marched together with several others from his family to an unknown part of the rainforest. Pedro's wife, who had stayed behind on their ranch in Monte Libano, never knew where her husband or her children had been taken and died shortly afterwards from lonliness and starvation. For ten, perhaps fifteen years Tomas resisted the ill treatment, punishments, diseases, hunger and beatings. But over these miserable years he watched his father, his brothers and his uncles die and he buried them one by one. He described how each day cattle herders, lumberers and other slaves working in the forest collapsed, blinded by fevers or exhaustion, bitten by snakes, beaten raw by the foremen as they slashed their skin to shreds in punishment for physical weakness before rubbing salt into their wounds as a type of home-made remedy. He recalled the distant, almost mythical day when the letter from the General (Cardenas) arrived which ended his torment.

Perplexed, the survivors retraced their steps along the long-forgotten paths trying to find an escape route towards the north and Ocosingo. After ten days' walk, Tomas arrived at the town with no idea what the future had in store. He had no family, land or village, only this history of terror which he carried inside and a terrible inability to live in a world which long before had condemned him to his fate.

He met Petrona in a nearby village. She had no past either. Her parents had died in exile in the forested hills and she had survived only by a miracle, rescued from her fate by some pitying muleteer. Since a child she new nothing of her original village or even her name. And so Tomas adopted her, gave her a propitious name and took her as his wife to share their common fortune as survivors of the inferno. They had nowhere to shelter but Tomas remembered the document which had arrived weeks

before and had restored his liberty: these hills where he had suffered would in the future be the lands where he would find refuge. So he decided to return to the rainforest which was the only universe he knew and where he had managed to survive.

On the outskirts of San Pedro, on the land where his father had died of exhaustion and where all the other members of his now extinct family rested, Tomas cleared a ranch and called it San Pedro in memory of his father, in honour of the dead. He struggled from day to day to make this accursed land a place of peace, dignity and happiness. He watered the fields and coffee plants with his sweat to bring life to the soil which was now sacred to him.

If you stop one night at some forest ranch and take the trouble to listen to the memories of its inhabitants, then you will realise that there are still thousands of Tomas Sanchez' in the convulsing state of Chiapas and tens of thousands of their children who can relate into infinite terrible stories of the past which should never be revived but which will never be laid to rest.

Hostage Taking

The heart of the Lacandon forest, March 1995.

Artemio never knew how well off he was until he was faced with losing everything. Before then he had lived without any great concern as to whether he was rich or poor, surrounded by his parents and siblings on the family ranch called 'Campo Cedre' encircled by the forest. Together with his seven brothers, Artemio had grown up in the heart of the rainforest and his first friends and companions had been the parrots, deer and sarahuatos which lived in the forest around his house. These children had no football pitch, toys or holidays. From an early age they learned to carry out numerous tasks: cut wood, sow coffee, clear the patio and fish in the river, weave palms to reinforce the thatch of a roof and set traps to catch armadillo for eating. Living more than ten hours from the nearest village, with no medical attention save after a whole day's walk through the forest, they had learned to be cautious and stoic, measured in their desires and pretensions, happy with a destiny which gave them nothing more than the right to live in peace.

But this very peace was snatched away from them as if such a modest life was too much to ask.

Sometimes they received visits from another Lacandon family in the River Tzendales region. The children then forgot their language differences and shared their games and childhood exploits for hours on end, cementing a friendship which would be needed in the course of time.

But the Lacandon families were relocated to the Lacanja valley. And in a short while all the rainforest area was offered to the Lacandon Group so that it could be turned into a Biosphere Reserve which systematically plundered the forest under the institutional responsibility of COFOLASA (Lacandon Forestry Company, S.A.). While all the indigenous inhabitants who lived in this forest area were relocated outside the Reserve, Artemio, his parents and siblings remained unaffected by the upheavals which this decision provoked and they continued living peaceably on their ranch at the end of the world.

But misfortune soon struck the family. In spite of demonstrating the long history of their occupation, the legitimacy of their titles to this national land, the validity of their protection, the legality of their settlement and their familial way of life, Artemio and his family became victims of endless intimidatory and humiliating measures. They were slandered and denounced to the federal, state and municipal (civil and military) authorities for the punishable offence of using protected resources. They were subject to blackmail, physical threats and moral hostage-taking.

One Lacandon authority, with strong traditional support from the public federal sector and also from a consultant in agrarian dislocation procedures, had decided some time previously to run Artemio and his family off the small ranch which they had occupied since the beginning of the century. To date, the laws and legal system have protected Artemio as well as the strength of feeling of all those who have confronted us with this very unusual story. But for years, Artemio and his family have not been able to get any accommodation at night in the neighbouring Lacandon village because anyone who tries to take them in is immediately given a 300N$ fine. For years they have been forbidden to come to the community clinic and their agricultural produce (beans) or forest products (palms) are

confiscated. They have had many visits from the Mexican army (on the strength of allegations of drug-trafficking or terrorism) and from forestry inspectors (for supposedly plundering tropical species).

Like all his Tzeltal companions, Artemio hopes that the peace process will be wide-ranging, real and definitive and that it will apply to all the unprotected, humiliated, marginalised sectors of the forest, the state and the country.

Insurrection

Mexico City, April 1995

Mexican society was rudely awakened from its lethargy on the 1st of January 1994 and disconcerted to discover that hundreds of thousands of Indians within its borders were living the most precarious of existences in inconceivably miserable conditions. Moreover, these people had suddenly rebelled against a future which was becoming even more insecure, more intolerable by the day.

The Mayan peoples of the rainforest had discovered the weight of their misery and had carefully assessed the depth of the chasm which yawned between the Mexico which wanted to be rich and the other Mexico - their Mexico - in which there was no end to the penury, marginalisation and shortages, the lack of opportunity, justice and above all the absence of hope.

Misery is not the result of a series of deficiencies which accompany material poverty. Misery begins when hope ends. In spite of their numerous and serious problems, the indigenous peoples refuse to be miserable and cherish the hope and desire for a dignified life. This is why they took up arms and trusted in their courage.

There is no doubt that the violent armed conflict which shook Mexico is the expression of the Mayan peoples' refusal to be submerged by a history which is not theirs: a history of economic and financial boom, of international alliances and investments, of technological and industrial modernisation. They have let it be known in their own way that they want to tell their version of events, that the page in the history book which awaits them is not the history to which they aspire. So they have recovered control of their own destiny to ensure they do not

disappear in the anonymity of misery. From one day to the next, they became the spokespeople for millions of Mexican campesinos who also silently suffer radical changes which they clearly do not want.

More than a cry of alarm, the indigenous insurrection movement was a cry of hope. Although victims of social discrimination and economic ruination and the lack of opportunities for taking a dignified part in regional socio-economic development, the Mayan peoples have not renounced their own social development. Their resistance – albeit armed – is a rejection of economic and social misery and is constructed on the basis of their indestructible multi-ethnic community.

REPORT OF A PEOPLE UNDER OCCUPATION

HERMAN BELLINGHAUSEN

Prado Pacayal, 2nd March 1955

Fortunately most of the houses were left intact. But over and above the buildings themselves, however, everything had been destroyed. From first light the inhabitants of Prado began to make their way down from their hiding place in the hills to find that they had nothing left except for what they had taken with them when they fled. "A child died. Just like that. A one year old toddler. Died of cold," a man explained.

An old woman stepped into her kitchen after her son and could not believe what she found. "Dear God, dear God," she cried. "God, Jesus Christ, how awful, awful. Everything gone!"

She knit her brow and sank down as if she had collapsed against the doorpost. She looked around her in alarm at the ripped, torn and burnt clothing, the shattered reed mats, the broken pots, her belongings destroyed, the fireplace demolished, the empty machete sheaths, the bed and table reduced to firewood. She cried quietly, motionlessly, shut away in a soliloquy in Tzeltal.

In each and every house in this village, one of the largest in the region, the destruction was the same. Or worse. Some houses were without walls, others had completely disappeared.

A man stopped at a deserted property and pointed at the ground on which he was standing. "My house was here," he said unable to believe it. He pointed to the spot where only 20 days before his bed had stood, the place where he had kept his tools and where the oven had been. All had been reduced to ashes and the ashes scattered.

How had they selected which houses to burn? Was it according to the same criteria they had used for marking the doors? On the doors of many of the houses there were what appeared to be numbers - A-11-8, A-11-43 - marked in chalk. For some reason this particularly worried the people. One could not avoid thinking of the Jewish houses marked out in the Warsaw ghetto. Those whose doors were marked did not dare open them. (Curiously, all the doors had been systematically tied shut with rope after they had been ransacked.)

I didn't understand this fear until the same old woman who was crying came running towards me talking in very agitated Tzeltal and I realised that she wanted to show me something. I followed her through the yards of the other houses, and she talked all the while. Her eldest daughter had just opened up her room and was searching around inside with a long pole. In all that her daughter said as she poked around with a pole I understood the word 'bomb'. She was afraid that the house was mined. One after the other, the owners opened up their houses with the same fear. As Juan opened up his house he said, "They ransacked everything, they broke the tape-recorder I had, now I don't have one. They took the grinder, my machete, they broke everything and now I don't have anything."

He spread his arms out encompassing all the devastation. Then he made an attempt to play a keyboard. "They have even stopped the music."

Another man showed me his storage barn, a jumble of leaves and empty corn cobs left behind by the pigs which had been let loose. "They took 12 pigs. They have been roaming the hills for about twenty days. They will be dying of hunger. Water? We brought it with us but for a whole day we had none at all. We had to guard it and this lad nearly died," he nodded towards a thin boy of about eight years old with a yellow pallor and beautiful black eyes who smiled timidly, "From vomiting, from sickness".

His mother, a very thin woman, confessed to having twelve children and seemed amused by the number of them.

In Prado the small hydro-electric plant had been taken apart. The hose which fed the water to the village had been cut into tiny pieces. The modestly equipped and tidy clinic was a total mess. Everything, absolutely everything, had been ransacked: the cotton wool, the packets of pills, the phials of medicine, the

examination couch, the stethoscope, the waste disposal unit. This destruction of the clinic was surely a crime against healthy living.

The communal kitchen was now a roomful of ashes. Nearby, across a stream, a hideout for fugitives was in the same state of chaos. Books, magazines, journals, radios and record players were reduced to nothing as well as a huge absurd photo of Omar Torrijos, torn from a calendar.

Only days before, this same room had been visited by a group of journalists who found balaclava helmets, pipes, watches and books with dedications inside. Then came the army which was advancing on San Quintín and the Amador valley.

On the inside of the plank wall of one of the houses you can see some writing branded in big black letters: "We want Marcos dead or alive". It looked as if they had destroyed the place when all they had come for was to post up Marcos' arrest warrant.

That day some 700 inhabitants had begun to return. But not everyone. Some of the children were sick and many had stayed in the hills together with the women and elderly. They would not be able to flee again if they had to.

A group of men asked me to accompany them and one by one they opened up their houses. A subdued sadness filled their eyes which they did not try to hide. They walked like zombies through the destruction. In the profound silence all that could be heard was the buzzing of big black flies and hornets. Here and there came the sound of faint laments, barely audible. A radio was trodden and trampled, a bedroom smashed to hell.

The young men visited each other and exchanged impressions; they showed each other the state of their belongings.

"There's nothing left," said another man and pointed at his ruined barn with no maize left inside. "How are we going to live?" he said repeatedly. The few cassettes which had been in the houses were destroyed and the tapes sounded ghostly in the courtyards, slow and twisted. "Everything is lost, the beans, the clothes. What a bloody mess!" said another man. He took off his hat as if standing before a corpse and with a grieving reverence beat his breast. He then moved slowly away and replaced his hat.

Yet another man, Luis, took me a long way away. We crossed a dry plantain field which rustled in the strong wind under a grey sky. We arrived at his little shack, untied the rope on the door and were

faced with his particular disaster. He went about making his inventory. "We've lost the press for making tortillas, pails, the horse, four sows and a typewriter which was kept here. And there was the school microscope and the teacher's Health Book."

He looked without seeing. In a corner lay two decapitated dolls.

"I did not eat for 15 days and now I still cannot eat and feel very nauseated," said Luis, his face wizened. His loss of appetite forced him to lean against the doorway. He told me that his family had stayed behind in the hills. His six-year old son was sick with chickenpox, his three-year old had stomach problems and his wife had a fever which she could not shake off. He walked over to his kitchen talking: "Up there they killed five hens and threw them away - they didn't eat them they just left them dead." His tone of voice indicated his lack of comprehension of such an act. He also described how five days earlier he had approached the village.

"The soldiers fired at me and I had to hide."

The community had had 600 head of cattle and 200 horses. Apart from the horses they took with them to the hills there were none left. Before the people of Prado Pacayal had returned, some herdsmen had passed through "making the most of the army's presence" as one cattleman had said some days ago, and had spent a few weeks rounding up all the animals no matter to whom they belonged.

The counter-insurgency element is starving the villages. They don't even leave any animals for them to eat. In the entire community there wasn't even one maize grinder left - or any maize to grind. The children wandered around chewing sugar cane and sucking sour limes. Slowly they began to get more lively, playing, running with filthy feet and running noses, daring to smile. Prado Pacayal - the destruction of a poor indigenous people, a very poor people.

3rd March 1995

Prado lies midway between Ocosingo and San Quintín, which are also important army bases today, in one of the areas with the greatest Zapatista presence. It is typical of Tzeltal colonisation, invisible and forgotten, where the difficulties of sheer existence make euphemisms redundant. Just like thousands of people in

other villages, these indigenous people fled to the hills when the military occupied their village with the full force of the emergency law on the 9th and 10th of February. To their already miserable situation was added the loss of food and shelter and they became victims of fear.

The families came down the circuitous trails a few at a time. Most were hurrying on foot, women and children barefoot, the men in short rubber boots. Except for the very youngest, everyone was carrying bundles or children too young to walk.

Some had the good fortune to have taken their mule or horse when they fled and this made the descent less debilitating. They all arrived the same – with absolutely nothing – and corroborated the news of the destruction which had already reached them.

The village smelt bad, dirty and decomposing. Now every house was a midden, which they had never been before. Scattered across the floor of one house was a handful of unusable money, no good even for coin collecting: 20 pesos from 1980 (with an effigy dedicated to 'Mayan culture'), 50 cent pieces with a picture of Cuauhtmoc and pesos bearing the face of Morelos and used to ward off migraines – the remains of a hidden hoard.

Seeing a family of pigs in the shade, gorged on maize and beans which they had eaten while they roamed free during the raid, a photographer commented:

"The bean feast."

And it was true, they were the only ones who were satisfied because neither the dogs which followed their masters or the antisocial and starving cats seemed to have fared well.

The people of Prado, having survived the attack, took possession once again of their yards and patios. The nearby pacayal, which gave the village its name, provided a group of women with some pacayas which are edible. The skeleton of the school, the 'Progress of the Campesino School' built in 1989 remained undamaged but was completely abandoned as if there had never been anything destructible inside.

In the shade of his pulverised kitchen a man kicked a photo of a naked woman torn out of a magazine (the type of photo which, prejudice apart, is not usually found in indigenous houses) and commented in an offended voice, "the soldiers even left in her underwear".

In some parts of the village they piled up the remains of the evidence of the campaign - cardboard boxes, aluminium boxes originating in the US, cartons, tins of juice - enough to give Greenpeace a field day.

Two small trucks which had been abandoned near the church were destroyed. We passed a family, the children on horseback. Of the few belongings which they had taken with them into their 20 day exile they brought back a cloth rose and tulips.

Women cleared up the discarded empty maize cobs in their yards, trying to salvage some which they shelled into a bucket.

On the horizon a huge range of mountains loomed out of the mist. Maria could not leave the hideout because of her fever but her elder and younger sister were already sweeping out the kitchen, rearranging the fireplace and had set a pot of water on the fire to boil. The salt and two cups stood in solitary isolation on the sideboard. The eldest daughter sprinkled the floor with water so that it would become hard and flat as before.

"But now there's nothing," she said referring to all they had lost.

The water faucet, which had only recently been installed with hosepipes, and which they shared with the neighbouring houses, did not produce a drop. Maria's sisters fetched water from the river and cleaned up. They smiled, but only they knew what they were smiling about.

The youths, children and some journalists and photographers congregated around the church and a group of women who had brought a little food and medicines in the name of Conpaz. Later some doctors from Medecin sans Frontiers appeared.

Clara and Juanacho, Aurelio and Luis, the two sisters carrying their little brothers, came running for shelter by the church when a brief but intense downpour of rain started but it was absorbed by the thirsty soil in no time. Another boy, Ricardo, with chickenpox marks on his face, picked up a copy of Yach'il Testamento (the New Testament) at the back of the empty church of Prado Comonal (its Christian name). A year ago twenty or so journalists had attended a moving ceremony here on Good Friday. Today, as always, the people of Prado continue to be survivors, but their conditions have deteriorated.

Save Yourselves Those Who Can

Further on, the road to San Quintín passes by Sultana. Sultana is another important village where a military camp, roads and fortifications appear to be under construction. Military garrisons are proliferating in these rainforest villages.

These are the conditions in which the people are beginning a new stage of dialogue with the government. In this stage the government has publicly reiterated its willingness to find a peaceful political solution to the conflict. One supposes that these people are taking notes to this effect. Meanwhile they are drawing up a unanimous petition: that the army should leave. As there is no television everyone comes to the assembly and it is clear that everyone is in agreement.

Prado Pacayal is not the only village to have had such luck. Nueva Estrella, for example, suffered the same destruction.

Patihuitz, which is usually a cheerful village, seemed sad and only partially inhabited. On the flat ground beside the banks of the river on the outskirts of the village there is a military camp. I remember having heard some months ago of a group of consultants from ARIC (who, when the organisation split up remained on the PRONASOL side) lamenting the loss of Patihuitz. The question now is whether they consider that this is the best way of recovering their former ground.

The village of La Garrucha, like Guadalupe Tepeyac in the lowlands around Las Margaritas, would be deserted if it had not been converted into a military base.

On horseback or from trucks, cattle herders round up hundreds of head of cattle many of which are very badly treated and not all necessarily their property.

At the side of the road, surrounded by small mosquitos, the villages of Patath and San Miguel make a request: 'Respect the population'. San Miguel appears to have wakened up. Again, there is a Red Cross ambulance there, although it is still a restricted area. Evening falls bathed in rain and in the very centre of San Miguel one end of an immense rainbow arched towards the river valley. San Miguel benefits from the effects of a good wash. It is 6pm and the hour of angelus devotions, as the modernists of old say.

In Exile Somewhere in Guadalupe Tepeyac, 7th March 1995

A campesino who had lost everything except his life commented, "We asked for a house and they sent planes, we asked for piping and they sent canons, we asked for doctors and teachers and they sent us soldiers - this isn't going to help us live."

Together with his family and all the families in the village, this man was facing the changes of fortune brought by the struggle. They had been applauded by thousands of Mexicans and admired in many parts of the country and the world. They played hosts to thousands of visitors during 1994 and in preceding years, and like thousands of families in the rainforests and hills of Chiapas, they formed the support base for the controversial Zapatista National Liberation Army.

Today they find themselves robbed of everything, humiliated and insulted. They are living in extreme solitude, almost abandon. A fraternal community situated some days walk from Tepeyac, also Tojolabal and much poorer than they were, was now offering them refuge. Where everyone once had a whole tortilla to eat, now there was only a half.

To lose one's house, toys, agricultural implements, clothes, bedding or hammock is also physically harmful. This is clear from the number of people who have been ill over the past few weeks – practically everyone, including the three women who gave birth in the hills and their babies.

In different times the refugees were Guatemalan and they made us feel sad and serious. Now they are Mexicans.

More than twelve months have passed since the people of Guadalupe first showed themselves to the world when they handed over General Absalon Castellanos Dominguez, after the EZLN had held him hostage for several weeks. Their organisation, dignity of bearing and communal cohesion impressed the global village which was watching. On the 10th February 1995, at 10 am they paid the price.

Farewell to All That

"Helicopters arrived and spread out all around. It almost seemed as if they were on the roofs of the houses" said Arturo, surrounded by ten other men from the community as he related the communal story of their flight.

Manuel, who this time was carrying Chelita in the shawl, had become more infantile and direct: "The helicopter, ooh what a noise it made, it beat the air, and how the hospital shook. As if we would all be flattened." He assured me he was not afraid and added, "All lousy soldiers. And they took photos and photos and photos."

Doña Maria, who had been in her yard at the time had felt an instinctive need to protect her children and grandchildren. "I said, I have lived through a lot and am not going to let them into my son's house. I don't know what will happen. I'll stay here even if they kill me. Those helicopters were close to my house. There was one on each side and I ran in fright. I had one in each ear. But I said, I will stay here. Why should I go."

Orders were given for all the people of Guadalupe Tepeyac to go immediately to the hospital which under the control of the International Red Cross and which still flew the 'General Emilio Zapata-Ché Guevara Campesino Hospital' banner.

"It took an hour for the helicopters and troops to get everyone together," continued Arturo. "Then the soldiers arrived at the door of the hospital and Catarina from the Red Cross told them they could not come in armed. The soldiers came forward with their rifles and TV cameras. Then General Ramon Arrieta entered alone and unarmed. He gave his name. He indicated that he wanted to talk to us, that the President of the Republic had sent him to help us. That we weren't to be afraid, we should to go our houses and no soldier had the right to enter our houses.

"It made us sad to see our village taken over by planes and helicopters. We went and stayed in the hospital. At four or five in the afternoon the same general arrived with armed soldiers and his face painted black. Again he asked us to go back to our houses. We told him that we had seen them already inside the houses and we would not go.

"Then he sent in his armed soldiers and said that the Red Cross had no authority because Catarina was not Mexican. He told her she would have to go and that the hospital was federal property and he had the right to enter. The Red Cross woman stood aside. The solders took down the Red Cross flag and

entered to check it out, making a note of who we were and coming into the rooms to look for people, and making notes. They were annoyed when we said we had seen them in our houses."

In the hut where Arturo was talking, a room 4 by 5 metres where at present nine exiled families slept, Juan interrupted:

"There were about 120 soldiers. And to think, some of them even said they were doctors."

From the description which the campesinos gave, it seemed as if the International Red Cross representative had negotiated with the general to get his authorization for the people to leave the village. The situation must have been tense. The Mexican army had lodged a complaint against the Red Cross for 'meddling' and 'encouraging' the peoples' resistance. In the end the military gave permission for the people of Guadalupe to abandon the village and the lorries that were there, including the passenger lorry which plied the daily route between Guadalupe and Las Margaritas.

"Our children were frightened," recalled Arturo. "We left at around five. The soldiers made gestures with their hands across their throats to ask if they should kill us but I saw the general put his hand up to say no."

Later, and moreover with a smile, Laura told us how they had said to the soldiers that they were going straight to Las Margaritas which was why they had let them go. "But as soon as we had gone a few kilometres from the village we escaped into the forest."

They fled all night in the dark with a few lamps.

"And that's how we got here," said Arturo. "Then afterwards the people began to get ill - the children, women, some eighty elderly people and a mother who had given birth in the hospital. The baby had been born out of fright.

"On the second day (11th February) we camped in the hills. Another three mothers gave birth that night. It was cold. We had nothing to eat. We slept. On the third day we continued walking and arrived at a village. It was a surprise and quite unexpected. They welcomed us but we had to find our own food. They gave us a few of their houses but most people slept under the trees. We were there for almost four days."

A chorus of male voices interrupted Arturo's narrative:

"With nothing."

"They lent us maize and pots" added a boy.

Arturo continued: "We had to move on from this village

because of the cold and because the land was very poor and the people were suffering badly. There was hardly any maize. Again we left at night and walked for a day. We slept in another community. Those who were most exhausted, the sick and some of the old people stayed there while the rest of us reached here the next afternoon."

The village where the Guadalupe Tepeyac families are now taking refuge reaches 40°C and at midday everyone sits panting. The children go to the river to swim twice a day, besides this they have nothing else to do.

"They gave us food outside. Nine families are sleeping in this house and some of the others have up to fifteen. There are also people in the school. They give us maize."

Arturo moved from his description to their demands and spoke with an indignation which was shared in the exclamations of his companions.

"We want the army to withdraw; we have never before had a soldier at our backs to make us work. It is not necessary."

Juan butted in again. "And they rummaged around the houses. There they were, emptying the shops. Rather than helping us they are going to leave us even more messed up." Arturo finished the story:

"The general said that the soldiers were sent by the government to help us but this is no help. They came and sacked the place where we live. Now we should be beginning to clear new gardens. We will be badly off this coming year because we haven't tended the fields. We haven't harvested the coffee. Each family has lost 10 bultos (some 600kg.). We had just begun picking and now most of it is still on the bushes."

Somewhere in the rainforest, two days journey on foot, horseback and mule, the people of Guadalupe ask repeatedly how their village looks now, how does it look with the soldiers there in their houses.

Heribert is Not Well

To get to this northerly refuge you have cross rivers and hills that would make a goat tremble. But the mules understand and slip as little as possible. This is the landscape of plants like guarumos and huge flowers and prize sightings of guayacon (*lignum vitae*) with their yellow crown of flowers which are rare

except for deep in the rainforest. Flocks of parrots and golden orioles chatter and pass the time of day in the great green expanse which doesn't make one envy the military helicopters which from time to time carry out their ominous patrols in twos.

On our way up this sloping path we came across a family. They were refugees from Guadalupe Tepeyac who had left their camp very early to look for a traditional healer. The grandparents and children were on the back of a mule, the mother passed with hurried footsteps and the father carried a baby slung over his shoulder in a shawl. The baby was the reason for the journey. It was dying. Amidst this grand panorama with infinite ceibas and mahogany the child was dehydrated; already parched, dry and malnourished. We all had the premonition that there was little that could be done. The family didn't stop; they were only concerned with finding the place where they had been told they would find the healer. There were not interested in anything else.

How Much is a Lot

The path these people are taking does not lead inevitably to disillusionment. It will take much more than what has happened already to make them yield. Men and women ask anxiously about their houses; they want to know the details of the military occupation - whether the soldiers are sleeping in their beds. They are filled with a suffocating outrage. They feel offended, violated.

Doña Rosita saw us as we arrived and cried. Doña Susana cried too and the children Vera and Hilda but not Eva. She put on a brave face. Heribert is not well, he is under the weather with fever and diarrhoea. He is not the only one. He is sleeping.

The one exception is Chelita. She hasn't fallen ill. She lies half naked on the floor beside her mother, laughing. Her oriental eyes, her dark skin is as smooth as a mirror. It is so hot in the mid-afternoon that no-one leaves the shade. When the photographer from the Process puts on his glasses, Criserio, Adolfo, Sergio, Ramón and Arvey, in fact all the locals gathered around fascinated by their reflection:

"Look, here we are!"

This place is so remote that the children don't know what spectacles are. Some of them have hardly even seen a mirror.

The local children can be distinguished from the visitors because they look neater. Their clothes are very bright and varied. Flor, Celia, Lucy, Marielena have a home and belongings. The local children can be distinguished from the visitors (or refugees) by looking to see if they are wearing a *resortera* around their neck. Those from Guadalupe did not even manage to bring theirs with them.

There is nowhere else in the world today where a plastic bag is worth more. Those that reach here are at a premium (for utensils, food). And then, there are 500 extra people camped out in the school, the communal house and some of the other houses in the community. With no plates, cups or spoons. The good thing is that Chelita still is not walking because in her hurry her mother left her shoes behind.

Manuel, a serious, inward looking boy, walked around very talkative and emotional. He remembered things about his village, such as the days when we had met. As if he knew that I too was thinking of his parakeets, he looked at me brightly:

"My marbles, do you think they are still there?" And with a sweaty nose he listed his lost fortune: "I had 25" His face filled with an timeless enthusiasm. Just like Heribert's little car.

Does anyone know how much is a lot?

The Prisoner

"I was in the coffee field cutting wood when the helicopter arrived. I couldn't get away. I was about half a kilometre from my house and stuck between two helicopters. They kept me there. About eight soldiers captured me, tied me up and took me to the Integrated Family Development building where they were camped. This was about five in the afternoon. I tried to run and cut myself. I cut my leg. I did it myself when I fell with my machete. It was bleeding. Look at my wound (and he pulled his trousers up over his calf).

"They registered me and took the rope off. They asked me if I had a weapon and I told them my weapon was my machete for my work in the fields. They looked at my hands which were not calloused and so they said if I didn't have callouses then I didn't use a machete and that I used weapons. I put a scarf on my wound but they took it off and told me to my face that I was a

Zapatista. They washed my wound again, tied me up and locked me in the toilet. That's where I was for five days with no more treatment. It became infected. I heard that journalists had come but they did not see me. But I was given something to eat.

"The soldiers said that if I didn't confess they would cut my tongue out. 'Where is Marcos?' they asked. I said that I didn't know and they said they were going to put needles under my fingers. There I was, tied up with rope unable to move. They said that if they got the order they could do whatever they wanted with me - even kill me.

"First they accused me of being Guatemalan until they looked at my electoral card and then they stopped bothering me. They told me to go back and look after my house, not to leave the village and did I have a family. I told them I had three children of 6, 5, and 2 years old. They drew up a document and on the Monday took me, still tied up, to my house. It was all smashed up, broken. I put on what clothes I could (these old clothes I am wearing now) and they left me to go to Veracruz. I walked through the hills and reached my family on their way here. Since then they have treated my leg and cured it.

"I want to go back to my house and look after it. But that's impossible. They have destroyed all my things and my animals are no longer there."

The Pioneering Spirit

One of the children's games is spotting the high flying helicopters. "Look, it's touching the mountain, look, it's touched the clouds."

They did not seem to want to be sad. The old woman of 103 from Guadalupe Tepeyac, who was carried by her daughter, made the last stage of the exodus in one piece and even had her hair tied up. From a seat in the shade she looked down the hill at all the generations of her people. She didn't speak but her gaze had a strength in it despite her tired eyes. Her scarf bore witness to the time when she was a pioneer, a colonizer, and she had a matriarchal pirate-like air. She goes back a long way and is seeped in the territory where Manuel's 25 marbles lie. I can imagine this great grandmother endorsing Manuel's certainty for the future: "I only want to know when I can return to my house". Manuel, for his part, is ready to go.

THE AUTHORS

The articles in this volume are the result of recent fieldwork by anthropologists who have been working in Chiapas before and during the uprising of January 1994. We include the work of both senior anthropologists who have worked over three decades in the area and that of their students who are breaking new ground in exploring old field sites.

June Nash began her field work in 1957 in a pottery making village 25 miles from San Christobal de Las Casas. Her thesis based on her early field work, "Social Structure in Amatenango del Valle" was done when the Pan American highway was a muddy tract that terminated in Comitan. In return trips during the 1960s she saw an expansion of trade networks as Indians of the village became involved in the regional cash economy, even purchasing a cooperatively - owned truck, which is summarized in her book *In the eyes of the Ancestors; Belief and Behavior in a Maya Community*. After an absence of over two decades she returned to a scene where potters were appearing on television to demonstrate their skill and where trucks were now commonly owned by members of the community. The trauma experienced in this transformation is described in the book she edited on *Crafts in the World Market, the Impact of Global Exchange of Middle American Artisans*. She was with students in the field shortly after the uprising.

George Collier was one of the first anthropologists of his generation to assess the regional trends affecting members of the corporate communities. His seminal work, *Fields of the Tzotzil* raises questions about the adaptation of indigenous people to their harsh environment, farming the steep slopes and impoverished soils of the highland regions to which they had been pushed in the colonial period. This period still provides answers to the problems signalized by the uprising in the Lacandon rainforest. His recent book *Basta! Land and the Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas*, explores the conditions that led to the uprising with its integration into the global economy without the

indigenous people gaining any benefit from the new enterprises. He demonstrates the transformation of ethnicity from a divisive force among fragmented communities to the basis for unity in their struggle to reassert their rights to land and the resources of the area.

Rosalva Aida Hernandez Castillo has devoted several field periods to the study of Guatemalan Mayans on Mexico's southern frontier. In her chapter in this document she provides us with background for women's mobilization in campesino movements that appeared unprecedented when their voices were finally heard in the uprising. As she shows, the only unusual aspect of their emergence in the present conflict is the inclusion of their own demands as women in public arenas. The specific feminist demands, heard for the first time in a national forum, called for political participation equal to that of men, the right to choose their sexual partner and decide the number of children they would bear. This appeal to universalistic human rights is not without a cultural perspective specific to women, although the women denied the elements within their cultural traditions that limit their roles.

Kathleen Sullivan, a graduate student at the City University of New York Graduate Center has spent two summers and is now devoting a year to field research in the suburbs of San Cristobal de Las Casas occupied by expelled Chamula Indians. She exposes the specious distinction between 'traditionals' vs. protestants made by caciques as they usurp land and political power from those they force into exile. The resurgence of community defined in terms of their distinctive culture in the urban setting shows both the strength and adaptability of Mayas as they react to oppression within their own ethnic group as well as from the dominant ladino culture.

Maria Eugenia Santana E. presents a vision of what it is like for the colonizers who live in the vast territory of the Lacondon rainforest in her article, "Un Dia en la Casa de Zenaida." Maria Eugenia spent over two years in the Oaxaca and Chiapas rainforests carrying out fieldwork combined with applied anthropological projects. Her thesis, based on field work in Oaxaca, focuses on the gendered division of labour as women in the new setting of the jungle colonies seek new ways of meeting the

subsistence needs of their families as well as providing cash for the products they no longer grow or produce. The difficulties they face as *campesinas* (rural cultivators and wage labourers) in a marginalized land forsaken by their government is compounded by the frustration they feel within households lacking the knowledge and means to control their own reproduction as well as production. Women who have joined the Zapatista uprising have given voices to women such as Zenaida.

Christine Kovic is working on her doctorate at the City University of New York on research she carried out while working at the Centro de Derechos Humanos 'Fray Bartolome de Las Casas' in San Christobal de Las Casas. She has published a book on the cases that have been brought to the attention of the Centro during the past few years as the abuses against indigenous people in the state of Chiapas have accumulated. Her research in a district inhabited by expelled Catholic Chamulans provides a basis for thinking about the reconstitution of community in the urban environment.

Marie-Odile Marion is a French anthropologist who is working in the National School of Anthropology in Mexico City. She has carried out field work with the indigenous peoples of the Chiapas Highlands and the Lacandon Rainforest. She has published *Agrarismo* (1988) and *Los Hombres de la Selva: a study of cultural technology in the rainforest environment* (1991) as well as other work. In this volume she presents a report of a trip through Chiapas undertaken since February 1994, which describes the misery and marginalisation of the population and the Zapatista uprising as an attempt to resist the submersion of the Maya people in a history that is not theirs.

Herman Bellinghausen is a writer, poet and chronicler. For many years he was the editor of the journal, Nexos, and at present collaborates with La Jornada, one of the most interesting independent newspapers on the continent. He is director of the journal, Ojarasca. Among his many publications is the *Cronica de multitudes*. In his article in this volume, 'Report of a people under occupation', he describes in an immediate and forceful way, and using the words of the indigenous peoples themselves, the violence which they have experienced daily since the uprising on the 1st of January 1994.

IWGIA document

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