

Development To Unite Us: Autonomy and Multicultural Coexistence in Chiapas and Guatemala

June Nash

Distinguished Professor Emerita, Graduate Center, The City University of New York

ABSTRACT. Development was the buzz word in United States policy when I began my first field work as a student in Cantel, Guatemala, in 1953. The people of that much beleaguered country were still enjoying the “springtime of democracy” brought by the 1944 revolution that introduced land reform and education to the western highlands indigenous towns. I witnessed the U.S. instigated coup of 1954 that toppled the government of Arbenz and installed the puppet government of Colonel Castillo Armas. Thousands of union leaders and political activists were imprisoned or exiled, cattle owners released their herds into the lands taken over by peasants, a reinvigorated and militarized agro-industrial elite installed in power claimed to bring prosperity and trade in the coming years. I went on to work in Chiapas in 1957 where the Mexican government was just beginning to introduce National Indigenist Institute programs for the integration of highland Mayas into the nation. These experiences shaped my understanding of what development from above meant in two countries that spanned the Mayan territory. In this article I sum up the results of development in each country, one culminating in genocide and the other in ethnocide of the indigenous populations. The opening up of trade and enterprise in both countries has spawned megaprojects to facilitate free trade agreements with the U.S. and Canada. These neoliberal policies accelerate the export of resources that now include human labour power. I contrast this development with local initiatives now proposed by Mayas on both sides of the border.

Keywords: development compared, Maya, Mexico, Guatemala, militarization, neoliberal trade, alternative, local autonomy

Introduction

Development models in the dominant global economies are failing to address the errors of past disasters or generate new sustainable programs. The development credos of the 1960s calling for an opening up of trade and privatization of resources succeeded in burdening the countries with debt that culminated in the devastating reconstruction programs levied on debtor countries by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

The current trends in development theory admit to past errors but often call upon world leaders to pick up the White Man’s Burden as they feign compassion for those who are impoverished by past development schemes.¹

Alternatives are emerging in the periphery of global production and trade to counter the growing environmental and social destruction brought about by five decades of neoliberal trade policies. Mobilizations to reject International Monetary Fund conditions for debt restructuring by factory workers seeking self management over the production process in Argentina, protests against foreign corporations’ control of water in Bolivia, rejection of “terminator seeds” (genetically altered seeds that cannot self reproduce) by Andean farmers, road blocks to protest

1980s, calls for a global giveaway of capital to end poverty (Sachs 2005). William Easterly (2006) warns us about the traps in taking up the White Man’s Burden of NGO assistance and fair trade palliatives while blaming poverty on the corruption and incompetence of native leaders. Neither they nor other leading economists offer clear alternatives to western models of development.

1 Jeffrey Sachs, who spearheaded the IMF immolation of the Bolivian economy in the debt crisis of the

the Central American Free Trade Act in Guatemala, claims made by colonizers to dividends from water and oil resources in the Lacandón rainforest of Chiapas—all attest to the protest in the periphery against the control of the global economy exercised by financial industrial centres. Mayas of Guatemala and of the southernmost state of Chiapas in Mexico are in the forefront of this cultural resurgence among local populations as they promote collective development strategies to overcome global control systems that threaten their environment. As semi-subsistence cultivators and artisans, Mayas are aware of environmental devastation caused by neoliberal trade policies. In Mexico the passage of the Free Trade Act (Tratado de Libre Comercio or North American Free Trade Agreement NAFTA) triggered the January 1, 1994 Zapatista uprising that now practices autonomy in daily confrontations with an occupying army in the Lacandón rainforest. In Guatemala, Mayas throughout the western highland and the Petén are opposing the enactment of the Central American Free Trade Act (CAFTA). Working with international organizations to develop production and marketing policies that preserve their lands and promote collective enterprises, Mayas on both sides of the border have developed a critique of the divisive impact of government development policies based on co-optation by centralized control hierarchies. They have not yet bridged the frontier that divides them, but they look to a shared past as they invent future policies stressing autonomy and self control of productive enterprises, eschewing state development schemes that served to divide them.

In 2005 I returned to Cantel, Guatemala, where I had undertaken field research some fifty years before. In the dilapidated town offices that had somehow survived the 36 years of civil war and attack on indigenous populations I met the director of the Municipal Development Commission, a young woman wearing the regional tie dyed skirt and embroidered blouse typical of the Quetzaltenango region. She told us about the town's attempts to overcome decades of imposed "development" after the 1954 U. S. instigated coup upset a democratically elected government. A tapestry on the wall behind her desk that she had woven with the message "*Desarrollo para unir todos*

nosotros!" (Development to unite all of us!) suggested the way she and the other young officials intended to overcome the cooptive policies of past governments. Her very presence in the town hall where only men had presided during my fieldwork in 1953-54 suggested the change in direction promised by the newly elected President Berger.

Even before I interviewed the young municipal officers I was aware of the mounting environmental deterioration in a town that was host to the Cantel cotton fabric plant. The Samalá River where the Spanish conqueror Alvarado had fought the last battle with the Quiches in 1524 was no longer the rippling blue waterway that I had crossed each day on a hammock bridge to interview and census the factory population during my field stay in 1953 and 1954. Now the stench from biological and chemical refuse flushed into the river permeated the air even before I descended from the town centre to the factory community five hundred feet below.

Yet plans for restoring the environment were in progress in Cantel. Ramón Rixquicaché Satey, an ecologist working in the municipality of Cantel, said that the Quetzaltenango regional office had already received trees to reforest 1560 hectares of woodland that would be under the control of the pueblos in the region. Health clinics with a small but dedicated staff attended patients in the centre and visited hamlets where not even emergency services were available in 1953.

Each year I revisit the central highlands of Chiapas where I carried out research in a Tz'eltal-speaking village in the 1950s and 60s. Amatenango del Valle was one of the more favoured highland villages since it had won back communal lands seized by large landholders during the liberal period. Each household was allotted two hectares of land and the rights to communal pasture when the Agrarian Reform took effect. The household budget was tightly balanced throughout the growing season, but with women's pottery production bringing in needed cash until crop time the small plot cultivators were able to subsist and carry out the annual ceremonial cycle without debt throughout the year.

This relative autonomy changed in following decades when Green Revolution techniques with

petrochemical fertilizers and pesticides were introduced by government agents. Population growth along with exhaustion of land fertility reduced the subsistence capacity. In recent years, the grandchildren of the men and women I knew in the 1960s are often migrating to the cities or to the United States. Thousands of indigenous people migrated to the Lacandón rain forest in the 1970s with the hope of gaining title to the lands they colonized. When this hope was crushed in 1992 by Salinas Gortari's "reform" of article 27 of the Constitution, ending further *ejido* (communal land grants) and opening communal lands for sale, the settlers organized the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) that burst into international view on New Year's day of 1994.

These sites are the anchors to the regions in which I shall compare the impact of state policies on Mayas on each side of the Guatemalan-Mexican border. Transformations in the relations between indigenous populations and the state are occurring throughout the hemisphere, with two indigenous presidents elected in South America and the governments of Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil and Nicaragua amending their constitutions to include indigenous rights contained in United Nations covenants. Since the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Ecology Summit, indigenous people have been recognized in national and international arenas as custodians of the environments and innovators in development policies for the future. Yet this public recognition at an international conference has not been translated into practices within or between nations. Comparison of Mayan peoples in two nations that are differentially positioned in the global economy may help us assess the prospects for achieving sustainable development policies that take indigenous peoples concerns for collective enterprises into account.

Development Trends South of the Border

Mayas in both countries have experienced three major trends in development economics since the decade after World War II. In the 1950s and 1960s, development efforts focused on indigenous areas in order to "modernize" and integrate them into dominant economies. Schools, potable water, sewage

facilities, and credit sources were the visible signs of attempts to draw indigenous people into the market system. By the mid-1960s, "Green Revolution" technology advocated by the Rockefeller Institution was being introduced as a solution to land shortages and rising populations. Irrigation and petrochemical fertilizers with the introduction of cash crops drew peasants into a growing dependency on global financial and market centres. Export oriented growth enriched local elites, impoverished indigenous and poor peasants, and promoted military repression.

These capital-intensive development programs fostered the indebtedness of Latin American nations that reached a crisis in the mid-1980s when the economies of Brazil, Bolivia, and Mexico were on the edge of bankruptcy. A new trend in development economics emerged as development agencies and the institutional supports provided by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank promoted restructuring programs that shifted the burden of debt from investors to low income producers and service suppliers in the developing economies. Bolivia became a testing ground for crippling reconstruction policies set by the International Monetary Fund in 1986, and nations that carried a large debt such as Argentina, Brazil and Mexico were soon forced to privatize national industries and cut welfare policies that changed their relations with civil society. For the first time in history there was a reversal in the flow of capital from the Third World to metropolitan centres, as countries paid back debts in dollars at a time when the IMF had debased the value of their currencies in world markets. Indebtedness had become a new imperial tool to control the economic agenda of nations.

It was in this hostile environment that indigenous social movements mobilized in the decade of the 1990s as they tried to defend their lands, resources, and ways of life. In their search for collective rather than individual enrichment, they became protagonists of alternative development programs, promoting claims for cultural recognition that became defined in the United Nations ILO Convention 169 in 1989. Mobilizations of indigenous peoples throughout the hemisphere for the Celebration of 500 Years of Resistance entered into the 1992 Rio de Janeiro con-

ference on ecology and environment. There the Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests with the help of non-governmental organizations adopted a charter that supports the right to autonomy of indigenous peoples in those areas where they constitute a majority.

Proponents of sustainable development policies assert that autonomy can only be achieved in the context of collective participation of distinct cultures within the nation states in which they are situated. Many have pointed out that top-down development programs have alienated indigenous people from their lifeways and environment, often destroying household subsistence practices that ensure the survival of families and life itself.² I will bring this critique into perspectives raised by programs that indigenous women and men generate, often with the assistance of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Paradoxically the degree of success in confronting the destructive consequences of neoliberal globalization in each setting depends on indigenous peoples' ties with transnational civil society and the communications networks put in place by processes of globalization.

Development, Neoliberalism, and EZLN Alternative in Mexico

Indigenous supporters of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) in Mexico present their struggle as one for life and against death. The phrase encodes the negative experiences of five decades of development that attempted to break the collective spirit embodied in their tradition. In the intervening decades from my first field stay in Amatenango del Valle in the late 1950s and 1960s, highland pueblos in Chiapas adopted some of the benefits of development that they had shunned earlier. The young indigenous officials who were the first graduates of boarding schools established during Lázaro Cárdenas presidency (1934-40) were able to reach agreements with traditional elders and government engineers that modified plans from the federal district. As a result of the negotiations, the government agreed to cap the spring water which was piped into town, leaving a stream to flow free of the pipes for curers

to bathe their patients. As the population grew in the 1960s, farmers began to use chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Cooperatives introduced by the National Indigenous Institute (INI) became a means for raising capital. The first one organized by indigenous people enabled them to buy a truck and market pottery made by women independent of the *ladino* truck drivers in neighbouring towns. When women organized a cooperative to market the pottery that men had always sold, officials of the town hired a man who killed the leader. When I returned on a brief visit I asked the mayor why she was killed—not knowing that I was speaking to the intellectual author who had authorized the killing—and he replied that she was upsetting the household organization of production. It seemed a mimicry of the functionalist analysis we once relied on in field research.

By the 1980s highland indigenous people began to resist the assault on the domestic economy caused by development policies. They joined *campesino* groups that had broken away from the National Confederation of Campesinos (CNC) a corporatist group controlled by the government. Their disillusionment with the long term effect of chemical additives on their lands added to the high risks in growing cash crops for global markets rose during the debt crisis of the 1980s. When the Salinas government (1988-1994) aggravated the crisis for small farmers by introducing neoliberal policies of privatization of communal lands in the “reform” of the agrarian reform in 1992, and by opening up the national market with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, small plot producers moved from resistance to protest against the government (Collier with Quaratiello 1994, Harvey 1994, Nash 2001). The triple threat of the loss of communal lands, the competition of imported U.S. subsidized crops sold at prices below the cost of production, and the loss of government assistance in the production and marketing of commercial crops such as coffee and sugar precipitated the uprising.

In the Lacandón rainforest where over 200,000 indigenous and *mestizo* (mixed blood or acculturated) migrants from highland villages and coastal plantations had migrated in the 1970s and 1980s, settlers were feeling even greater pain from these same prob-

2 Christine Kovic and I have summarized this critique in an article (Nash and Kovic 1996).

lems. They became active participants in *campesino* or small plot cultivator organizations that had split from the National Confederation of Campesinos, such as the Rural Association of Collective Interest (ARIC), and the Independent Center of Agricultural Workers and Campesinos (CIOAC). In the encounter between these increasingly politicized *campesinos* and guerrillas who were training and politicizing settlers for a decade prior to the uprising, the EZLN was born. The insurgents, an estimated two thousand women and men, masked and poorly armed, chose the advent of the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement on New Year's day 1994 to signal the reason for their struggle. They engaged in twelve days of armed conflict with 37,000 federal troops sent in by President Salinas de Gortari. He responded to the urging of civil society groups mobilizing in Mexico City not to stage a massacre by signing a truce with the insurgents.

In their initial statement of ten basic demands distributed in a leaflet that first New Year's morning—roofs over our heads, food, education, medical services, justice, title to the lands we cultivate, the right to vote, independence, peace and justice—the EZLN had not yet formulated the underlying roots of their uprising. This became the desire for autonomy in cultural expressions, governance, and the management of economic development programs. Forty percent of the active participants in the EZLN are women, and they often constitute the majority of the thousands of supporters in Catholic Base Communities.³ Shortly after the EZLN uprising, the State Council of Indigenous and Campesino Workers (CEOIC) organized to protest fraudulent elections in indigenous towns and to demand titles to land. Throughout 1994, *campesino* and indigenous groups converged repeatedly in San Cristóbal and the departmental capital of Tuxtla Gutierrez, calling for settlement of their land claims and relief from paramilitary assaults promoted by cattle ranchers. As

the movement gained support in Chiapas it lighted a spark among indigenous people of Guerrero, Oaxaca, and other states with large indigenous populations, as the demand for autonomy became the basic principle in their development programs.

Zapatistas focused their attack on neoliberal policies pursued by the Mexican government in the past twenty years. In her welcoming speech to the 1996 Intercontinental Encounter Against Neoliberalism and for Humanity held in Oventic, EZLN commander Ana Maria announced that, "As for the power, known worldwide as *neoliberalism*, we do not count, we do not produce, we do not buy, we do not sell. We are useless in the accounts of big capital" (Nash 2001:224). Ana Maria captures the inner reality of being part of "simple reproduction" of non-capitalist society coexisting with "expanded reproduction" that was central to Rosa Luxemburg's critique of capitalism in the early twentieth century (Luxemburg 1971).

Luxemburg's prediction in the early twentieth century (1913, translated 1951) that it would require military force to break the independence of people from what she called the "natural economy" was played out in the Lacandón throughout Zedillo's presidency (1994-2000). Although the Zapatistas had not violated the terms of the ceasefire agreed upon shortly after the uprising, Zedillo invaded the Lacandón settlements on February 9, 1995. After a week of terrorizing the Zapatista supporters, destroying their houses, killing animals, and spraying pesticides on their crops, they added at least 20,000 more troops to the 40,000 deployed by Salinas, setting up barracks near settlements where militants of the EZLN were concentrated. The harassment of Lacandón villages by federal troops and paramilitaries intensified in June 1998 with the process of "remunicipalization" that Zedillo initiated in order to redefine municipal boundaries favouring those who were loyal to the PRI. The Zapatistas called for abstention by members of the base communities in the fall elections, resulting in a clear majority for the PRI in 82 of the 102 municipalities. This led to continued conflict in villages that found themselves represented by PRI mayors.

Because of the failure to implement the San Andrés Agreement, the Zapatistas withdrew from

3 Catholic Base Communities are those hamlets and villages that follow the "Word of God" Catholicism espoused by Bishop Samuel Ruiz. See Christine Kovic's study (2005) of an urban exile community in San Cristóbal de Las Casas where indigenous deacons lead congregations.

further negotiations with the government, attempting to put into practice the autonomy they sought. Among the most significant cultural initiatives relating to this is the practice of egalitarian gender relations in the home and in the community. Women who had participated in the armed uprising issued their own bill of rights shortly after the uprising, calling for the right to marry the man of their choice, to have the number of children they could take care of, and the right to choose from what was loosely termed tradition the customs that they valued. This changed gender relation has the power of upsetting the hierarchical order in the public realm institutionalized by the ruling PRI granting male priority in voting, in agrarian reform grants, and in credit. The women called for an end to the cooptation by *caciques*—elite males claiming authority as the arbiters of tradition—who had ensured the PRI hegemony of indigenous communities.

Zapatista communities try to put these claims for egalitarian relations into practice. In their national appearances, the Zapatistas always maintain an equal number of men and women. We observed this as the caravan congregated in the cathedral plaza in February 2001 and found it affirmed in the hearings in the federal congress in March, 2001. Men will often pick up a crying child or stir a cooking pot, but it is not the sustained help offered by women as they participate in coffee cultivation and picking beans.⁴ The Zapatistas seek ways of overcoming any cult of personality, by featuring new speakers, both women and of men. These are the conditions that they want to cultivate in development enterprises, just as they are trying to put them into practice in their daily lives. Excluded from local as well as national politics, women often became the most committed champions of the Zapatista call for gender equality.

This challenge to male authority in the home as well as in communities, however, has generated further conflict. Although I have seen evidence of men taking on some of the domestic burdens women were traditionally expected to bear, I have heard and read of abuse of women as they assume new political roles. One woman who intended to go to a commu-

4 See Earle and Simonelli (2005) for ethnographic descriptions of life in a Zapatista village.

nity meeting was killed by her enraged husband. Wife and child abuse is becoming more frequent as villages that once banned alcohol are permitting its use. Untold numbers of women suffer rape by soldiers still quartered near villages, and some are blamed by compatriots for their own misfortune.⁵ In the context of the counterinsurgency warfare in Chiapas, women's dependency and vulnerability to violence increased, culminating in the 1997 Acteal massacre. Trained by federal forces and armed by the PRI mayor of Chenalhó, neighbours and relatives attacked Word of God Catholics who had exiled themselves in the remote hamlet of Acteal killing 45, mainly women and children.

Increases in abuse of women are on the rise in the state of Chiapas generally. Zedillo's program to give stipends to women as heads of families, called Progreso, was an instrument of subordination of women to the heads of family, who often took the money for *posh*, home distilled liquor. This in turn caused an increase in abuse of women so that girls and their mothers were beaten and dispossessed. I have seen long lines of women, often attended by their men, waiting at the banks in San Cristóbal de Las Casas for the money to be dispensed in the bimonthly allotments. The government required that women who received the stipend take contraceptives, and sterilized those with more than three children, sometimes without advising them, when they sought medical attention in government clinics. Olivera and Vazquez (2004) maintain that these dependency relations fostered by government programs can only be overcome by transformations in the socialization processes and educational system.

Yet women have been the most persistent in challenging the presence of the army which has invaded their living spaces in the Lacandón. Olivera (2004) quotes a woman of Unión Progreso when eight youths were delivered dead after they had resisted soldiers entering the community in 1998:

We women who give life cannot pardon any more the crimes of the government troops against us dur-

5 See Rojas (1995) and Earl and Simonelli (2005) for accounts of women's protests against the military and attempts by women to counter domestic abuse.

ing the more than five hundred years. They must remove those who have killed our children. They think that we are going to be afraid and stop fighting!”⁶

The reconciliation process initiated by the coalition government of Pablo Salazar who took office as Governor of Chiapas in January 2001, led to new power alliances. In March 2001 the Zapatistas organized a caravan from the southern states to go to the Federal District and promote the ratification in Congress of the San Andrés Agreement. Despite overwhelming support from Mexican civil society, negotiations between the Zapatistas and the government broke down when the Federal Congress voted for a substitute New Indian Law that limited autonomy to the level of the township in the spring of 2001. This was a rejection of regional representation and governance in areas with a majority of indigenous people. In the wake of this defeat, autonomous villages in the Lacandón and highland municipalities are developing their own programs in education and health at the local level, in effect practicing the autonomy they failed to achieve in constitutional changes.

The economic base of Mayas in the Lacandón and highland Chiapas villages, premised on small plot cultivation of corn, cattle herding, and coffee, can scarcely guarantee subsistence, let alone generate enough cash to stabilize subsistence production. Government programs to expand the cultivation of commercial crops have often increased the vulnerability of the settlers: of the 200 million dollars invested in Chiapas coffee, only 100 million dollars was earned in the 2002-2003 period (Villafuerte Solis 2003). Yet Zapatista cooperatives, often including entire villages in the production of organic coffee and honey, have gained an export market with the assistance of NGOs.

These developments within Zapatista villages are on a collision course with the development policies of the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), the ruling party's development program. During his

first year in office in 2001 Vicente Fox launched a major hemispheric development scheme, called Plan Puebla Panama projecting a new vision of Mexico's place in the hemisphere by directing attention to the southern border with its Central American neighbors and away from the increasingly hostile northern border. Unlike earlier development programs, Fox's Plan Pueblo Panama (President's Office 2001) begins with a disarming analysis of the dangers of the growing inequality between rich and poor and the importance of addressing the human needs of people in the macro-region of southern Mexico and Central America. Specifically it claims to promote development in indigenous communities of the southern states of Mexico in the fight against poverty (Presidential Office 2001:3). Assets listed are the abundant labour supply available at “competitive costs in the global level,” a privileged geographic position, political democracy and commercial agreements already in place. It waxes eloquently about the abundant natural resources, tourist attractions, and “biological richness” available.

The Plan touches on all the buzz words of the new development perspectives: the objectives of human and social advancement, the participation of society in planning, structural change to promote equality, productive careers and investments, sustainable growth, and environmental responsibility, occasionally slipping into retro terms like “institutional modernization.” Using the rhetoric learned from the critique of past development by NGOs the Plan insists that the government will consult the pueblo while failing to address the mechanisms for implementing the San Andrés Accords as an institutional base for achieving a changed relation with the state. Praising the “wealth of traditions” and “rich multiculturalism” that will contribute to a lucrative tourist industry, the Plan fails to show how it will incorporate the bearers of that cultural tradition. Little is said of the conflicts that must be solved for this to be realized.

Each year since the Plan was announced, these conflicts have proliferated. Among the flashpoints are the areas where most government planning is concentrated, particularly the Montes Azules bio-reserve. An elder of Esperanza, one of the Montes

6 “Las mujeres que damos la vida, no podemos perdonar más los crímenes que los gobiernos federal y estatal troops have committed against us for más de 500 años a nosotros las indígenas—Qué sacaron con haber matado a nuestros hijos... Piensan que vamos a tener miedo y vamos a dejar de luchar?”

Azules villages that was relocated after 18 or 19 years of being bases of support for the EZLN, reveals the divisiveness promoted by government intervention (*La Jornada*, February 14, 2005:16):

In Esperanza we were pure Zapatistas, but in 1996 a group sold themselves with the government and became PRIistas. In that moment they began forceful hostilities, to the extent that they burned our houses and, avoiding confrontation, we went to a place next to the community La Pimienta, where we have been for two years.⁷

The government excuses their forced uprooting of long established villages, such as La Esperanza, colonized since 1982, on the basis that the Indians are resisting their attempts to protect the environment. Yet shortly after expelling the Indians, the Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMERNAT), the government agency concerned with conservation, approved the sale of Seminis, a bioprospecting research facility located nearby in Yax Nah, to Monsanto, the giant biotechnology firm with headquarters in Saint Louis, Missouri. Monsanto, which has often been charged with violating environmental laws in the U.S. (Nash and Kirsch 1988), will enjoy a favoured position in promoting biogenetic resources with its purchase of Seminis which already has extensive greenhouses next to the reserve that may provide new genetic resources for commercial exploitation. Because of the continuing conflicts with *campesinos* who had been uprooted from the bioserve two days before the sale on February 14, 2005, the government increased the allocation to SEMERNAT by 400 million pesos (about 40 million dollars) for “security forces to protect natural resources in this area.” The government dispersed another 200 million pesos for “sustainable tourism” projects, at the same time allocating only 27 million pesos for social welfare projects for women and chil-

7 “En Esperanza éramos puros zapatistas, pero en 1996 un grupo se vendió con el gobierno y se hicieron priístas. En esos momentos empezaron las agresiones fuertes, al grado de que quemaron nuestras casas y, evitando el enfrentamiento, salimos del lugar rumbo a la comunidad La Pimienta, donde estuvimos otros dos años (*La Jornada* February 14, 2006:6)

dren of the area (*La Jornada* February 16, 2005:15).

The Plan denies the central concerns of the indigenous movement, which are posited as endogenous development for the advance of human subjects who are agents of their own enterprises. The ultimate objectives as revealed in deeds that contradict the expressed concerns of the government are the promotion of direct foreign investment in enterprises exploiting the rich resources of the region including oil, hydroelectric power, “biodiversity” of fauna and flora—including its multicultural population as tourist attractions.⁸ The planners intend to facilitate trade and commerce to distant markets of North America, Europe, and Central America, devoting pages to the improvement of roads, communication and port facilities, encompassing the highway, rail and canal developments already undertaken through the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. The budget calls for 3.5 billion dollars for 3,750 miles of highway, or 84 percent of the total funds committed. Yet nothing is said of the institutional means to draw indigenous people into the planning process nor to provide them with the education and training needed to prepare them to participate in the enterprises.⁹

In the last year of the Fox presidency, the Plan provided a reinvigorated formula for the concentration of wealth. Leaders of the PAN and their allies in Mexico City are yielding strategic sectors of its economy to foreign investors in production, whether

8 On his campaign trail to indigenous pueblos throughout Mexico, Marcos heard complaints of the loss of fish, lands and other sources of employment with the construction of hydroelectric dams. El Cajun dam, constructed in the Fox presidency, caused the displacement of an entire community in Nayarit (*La Jornada* March 29, 2006:20). In Tuxpan, Jalisco Marcos heard that Nahuas lost access to water (*La Jornada* 24 March, 2006:20). In Querétaro, Otomies objected to the intrusion of a Telemex antenna on a sacred mountain, Pina de Zamorano (*La Jornada* 12 March, 2006:10).

9 Clearly the government has given the go-ahead to Carlos Slim, one of the richest men in the world, who has received the concession to construct, operate, conserve, and maintain the highway between Tepic-Villa Unión for a period of 30 years, despite strong indigenous objections to highway construction through their lands. The government will invest 612 million pesos with the expectation that the private sector will invest 2 for every 1 peso (El Financiero March 2, 2005).

extraction of oil and lumber or assembly production, with a trickle down going to local elites. The Fox government has installed more *maquiladoras*, or export-oriented assembly plants, than the neoliberal PRI governments that preceded it: Comitán, the gateway municipality on the eastern perimeter of the Lacandón has become an emporium for foreign owned *maquiladoras*, with San Cristóbal de Las Casas following. The clothing manufacturing plant there is subsidized by government “training scholarships” to indigenous women for the dead-end, low skill jobs they provide. The installation of a tourist train called Expreso Maya, the construction of a tourist highway, the modernization of Puerto Madero and reconstruction of a new airport in the state capital will promote a capital intensive tourism benefiting foreign investors rather than the Mayan population for which the project cunningly called Riviera Maya is named (Villafuerte 2003).

Speaking for the Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena (EZLN-CCRI 2005), the General Command of the EZLN tried to break the stalemate by issuing the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandón. Testifying that “we see merchandise in the markets, but we do not see the exploitation of those that make goods,” the EZLN Commanders (EZLN-CCRI 2005) echo Marx’s notion of commodity fetishism—the reduction of all social relations to the relations between things. Neoliberal capitalism differs from earlier phases, they note, because while earlier capitalists were content exploiting workers in their own countries, now capitalists dominate workers on a world scale. They conclude the June 2005 declaration with a call to expand their resistance movements in other nations with high percentages of indigenous people, at the same time initiating a red alert warning all who support them in the peace and human rights NGOs not to come because of the danger they might face.¹⁰ Their expectation of future

violence stems from their prediction of their own demise for standing in the way of rampant capitalism. Simultaneously, they announced the closing of the offices of the *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* (Meetings of Good Government) set up in the four key command centres or *Caracoles* (snails, term for the regional councils in the Lacandón).

Along with this attempt to fortify its ranks, with the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandón (EZLN-CCRI June 2005) the Clandestine Indigenous Revolutionary Committee urged a reinforcement of political alliances through the Frente Zapatista de Liberación Nacional to link together support groups throughout the nation and beyond. Following up on their attempts to reach out to supporters among indigenous people in other states to the north in 1997 with the march to Mexico City, the 1999 Consultation with the Mexican pueblo in the form of a questionnaire, and the March of Indigenous Dignity in 2001 (Nash 2001), the EZLN built up its support bases with civil society, coordinating the *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* through the *Caracoles*—or snails, sites of governing body. According to the Sixth Declaration (EZLN-CCRI 2005:6) it is time to make another step forward by joining indigenous forces with workers, *campesinos*, students, teachers, and professionals of the city and rural areas, artists, and housewives.

or let’s say, in all countries, to carry out their grand sales or let’s say, their grand exploitations. And then they will not respect anything and they will penetrate wherever they want. Or let’s say they will conquer other countries. Therefore we Zapatistas say that neoliberal globalization is a war of conquest of the whole world, a world war, a war that capitalism wages to dominate worldwide. And this conquest is sometimes with armies that invade a country and conquer it by force. But sometimes it is with the economy, or let’s say, the great capitalists put their money in another country and lends the money, but on the conditions that the borrowers obey what they say. They also penetrate with their ideas, or let’s call it with the capitalist culture that is the culture of commodities. Then once capitalism makes a conquest, it does what it wishes, or let’s say that it destroys and changes what it does not like and eliminates whatever is in the way. People like us, those who do not produce nor buy nor sell the merchandise of modernity, those who rebel against that order. (Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena, Comandancia General del EZLN, June 2005).

¹⁰ The text, which I translate here, reads as follows: “Therefore, in neoliberal globalization, the big capitalists that live in powerful countries, like the United States, want the whole world to become like one large enterprise where products are produced and like one great market. A world market, a market to buy and sell all there is in the world and to hide all the exploitation of all the world. Then the globalized capitalists will penetrate on all sides,

This drive by the General Command of the EZLN to reinforce and extend civilian support groups took its most forceful position with the campaign of Delegado Zero (former sub-comandante Marcos in his guise as agent of the reinvigorated Frente Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (FZLN). In the election year 2006 Delegado Zero began his non-campaign along with the three main contenders of the PRD, PAN, and PRI, in the form of a dialogue with indigenous *campesinos*, workers (including sex workers) and the poor throughout Mexico. Eschewing encounters with the agents of the government or political parties, Delegado Zero began his tour in the ruins of Chichenitza and travelled principally to regions with major indigenous populations. The electoral process allowed the new face of Zapatism personified by Delegado Zero, the EZLN's non-candidate Subcomandante Marcos, to gain adherents throughout the nation and abroad but failed to build political alliances.

The critique of the program of the EZLN is ongoing. Those who emphasize the persistent structural problems, such as Roger Bartra (2001) disclaim the potential for transformation inscribed in the San Andrés Agreement and the practice of autonomy in Zapatista villages. Echoing the same arguments that he presented in the 1980s when he denied the potential for sustainable small plot cultivation and proclaimed the inexorable transformation to *des-campesinistas*, or proletarianization, Bartra claims that the championing of rights based on indigenous identity is reactionary and that autonomy leads to the stagnation economically found on U.S. Indian reservations. He envisions that the results will be exclusion from political parties and the new institutions that contain the seeds of change. Others like Pablo Gonzalez Cassanova, a sociologist and former rector of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), reassert the vitality of an autonomous indigenous movement. He participated as a negotiator in the National Commission of Intermediation (CONAI) that formulated the San Andrés Agreement, which he calls a unique alternative to global neoliberalism. Both intellectuals represent large segments of civil society, and it is among participants of the massive mobilizations

they organized throughout the decade of provocation, intimidation, and imprisonment that the outcome may depend.

Delegado Zero's encounters with indigenous peoples and supporters in his campaign have aired common issues uniting indigenous peoples, conservationists, wage workers who have felt increasing attacks on their subsistence security. But the rejection by the CCRI of any negotiation with the major political parties may undercut the possibility of needed alliances. These alliances have enabled indigenous movements of South America to gain supporters among non-indigenous and workers movements for a nationalist popularity agenda, as in Bolivia, and in nations such as Ecuador and Colombia where indigenous people are a minority.

Felipe Calderón has shown no more interest in fulfilling the San Andrés Peace Accord in the Lacandón than his predecessor. In his first four months of office, Calderón has utilized the same strategy of declaring indigenous held territories as environmental reserves, followed by granting concessions to private construction companies to build tourist hotels. Six pueblos in the Montes Azules reserve in the Lacandón have been declared illegal at a time when these settlers were seeking to regularize their occupation of promised lands (*La Jornada* April 4, 2007:26). The volcanic mountain peak of Huitepec, venerated as a sacred site by Chamulans for the deep springs that have provided the municipality with water for hundreds of years, is now under siege following its designation as a bioserve. During Fox's presidency, the federal government granted rights to Coca Cola to exploit water from these springs with no fees granted to the municipality. His successor has now declared the mountain peak with its strategic resources a bioserve. The federal government is supporting paramilitary troops that threaten to evict Chamula cultivators and sheepherders. In March 2007 the Center for Human Rights Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas called for volunteers to support the indigenous people who were increasingly harassed by members of the newly formed Organization for the Defense of Indigenous and Campesino Rights (Organización para la Defensa de los Derechos

Indígenas y campesinas OPDDIC).¹¹ In April, 2007, I visited the campsites of volunteers from all over the world who had come in response to an alert from the EZLN. *Maderas del Pueblo*, an ecological NGO, had joined the settlers to defend their rights to the land and water, protecting the trees from paramilitaries who cut them down and then blamed the native settlers for destruction of the bioserve.

The confrontations emerging out of the stalemate in Chiapas are a result of the government's failure to regularize titles for the promised land in the Lacandón and to implement the San Andrés Agreement signed by Zedillo over a decade ago. The EZLN is now launching a worldwide campaign in defense of indigenous territories, announced on March 26, 2007 (*La Jornada* March 26, 2007:13). I joined the group of Zapatistas in San Cristobal on March 25 when Marcos announced that "another world would be possible only over the dead body of capitalism." He joined Rafael Alegria, coordinator of the Global Campaign for Agrarian Reform of the International Campesino Path (*Via Campesina Internacional*) calling for an international campaign for the defense of the environment and the indigenous resources that are being invaded (*La Jornada*, March 26, 2007:12, 13; Cuarto Poder, March 26, 2007: 38). The meeting in San Cristobal's new centre for civil society reunions, Tierra Adentro, marks a new stage in the indigenous movement as they declared a world campaign to protect the environment against predatory capitalist invasion.

These attacks on Zapatista communities and those who support them are overt expressions of systemic assaults on the subsistence base of communities,

11 Carlos Fazio (*La Jornada* 26 March, 2007) relates the new paramilitars such as OPDDIC and the Unión Regional Campesina Indígena (URCI) to the infamous groups called Los Chinchulines, Paz y Justicia and others patronized by state governor Patrocinio González Garrido and interim governors during Zedillo's military campaigns throughout the 1990s. He attributes the ability of the military to gain recruits from among *campesinos* in Calderón's first year as president to the growing impoverishment of the *campesinos* administration. In Chiapas these groups are invading lands taken by the EZLN from former governor of Chiapas Castellanos during the uprising, and other large landholders during the first campaign.

both indigenous and *mestizo*. Privatization of basic resources, such as water, through granting of permits for exploitation of deep ground water supplies, and of resources that once financed much of the government's fiscal expenditure, such as private contracts for the exploration and extraction of oil reserves, has accelerated with the Calderón administration. The latest tactic to engage producers in commercial development enterprises is the credit plan for producers promoted by the federal government's National Mutual Fund of Producers of Corn and Beans (Fonda Nacional Mutualista de Productores de maiz y frijol). The government is now acting as an agent for private banks to float loans to small producers with ten hectares or less to enhance production with chemical inputs. Interest rates of 2 to 8 percent monthly, or 96 percent per year, will be charged. The program will, according to Enrique Castillo Sanchez, President of the Association of Banks of Mexico, demonstrate the commitment of the banks "to support productive sectors" (*Diario de Yucatan* June 12, 2007). With such exorbitant interest rates, the plan could spell the end of land reform.

Guatemalan Development and the Military Industrial Complex

The deeply imbedded roots of racism in Guatemalan colonial history are nourished by the persistent fears of a majority indigenous population rising to overcome the oppressive rule of a narrow elite (Carmack 1983). The revolution brought about in Guatemala by the democratic election of Juan José Arévalo in 1944 provided a decade of democratic experimentation in indigenous relations with the state. The advances made in land reform and greater local autonomy were cut short in a U.S. engineered coup in July 1954. Following the coup foreign missionaries flooded the area (Calder 2004: 95) as Guatemala became an arena for fighting the cold war against communism, with ever-increasing repression of agricultural and industrial unions (Smith 1990, Jonas 1991). Protestant evangelizing and Catholic Action groups contested the power of traditionalists who held offices in the civil religious hierarchy, providing ideological formulations for a war between ethnic groups, political parties, and

social classes. At the same time Catholic Action fostered advanced education for Mayas in areas where the government limited indigenous schools to elementary levels (Calder 2004: 103). This promoted a process of consciousness-raising among an increasingly educated indigenous base, especially in those communities where Maryknoll priests were active.

In the early 1970s, landless cultivators of the western highlands of Guatemala migrated to the Ixcán jungle areas south of the Ixil mountains in the northern part of El Quiché and just south of the Lacandón rainforest.¹² Practicing a communal form of life, they cultivated land to which they were promised title. Like the colonies of the Lacandón, settlements in the Quiché and Alta Verapaz rainforests were invaded by oil explorers and government troops. This happened first in Guatemala in the mid 1970s when oil companies—Getty Oil, Texaco, Amoco and Shenadoah Oil—extended their drilling into the Ixil area where colonizers had settled far from the locus of guerrillas. Called the “Zone of the Generals,” it was the site where General Lucas and other army generals were grabbing land where transnational oil explorers had discovered oil (Jonas 1991:128). The attack on Panzos settlers in 1978 was the first of a series of massacres committed by the army in broad daylight, when an estimated 100 to 200 victims were killed, perhaps to inspire fear and withdrawal (Sanford 2003:83).

As the conflict intensified in the 1980s, the army and paramilitary forces backed up the oil companies against the settlers when they tried to defend their lands (Sinclair 1995:85 et seq.). Some joined the Committee of Campesino Unity (CUC), a broadly based community action organization of *indigenes* and *mestizos*. Others joined the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP), especially after the 1982 Rio Negro massacre when the Guatemalan Army killed over half the villagers because they opposed the damming of a river for an international hydroelectric company (Alecio 1985:26).

12 Victoria Sanford (2003) did her fieldwork in this area where exhumations for the Commission for Historical Clarification regarding seventy-seven massacres carried out by Guatemala Army occurred between March 1981 and March 1983.

Beatriz Manz (2004) chronicles the origins and development of one of these communities in the Ixcán rainforest, Santa Maria Tzejá, during three decades from the 1970s when the settlers arrived until the massacres of 1980s and her return for the peace process in the 1990s, during which she was in contact with and participated in their lives. When the army stepped up the massacres in 1982 and 1983 the people began to flee into exile across the border in Chiapas. There they were helped by the Catholic Base Communities in the diocese of Bishop Samuel Ruiz, who helped them gain United Nations status as refugees. Those who remained organized cooperatives linked in a loose network called Communities of Populations in Resistance (CPRs) (Manz 2004:126; Sinclair 1995:75). According to Manz’s account (2004:129) most of the people in the CPRs were Mayas, and they, along with a few *ladinos*, moved in and out of the Mexican army and the Guerrilla Army of the Poor. As Sanford (2003:131 et seq.) notes, in the harsh realities of everyday living under threat, these communities were often lacking in humane and dignified treatment of exiles fleeing from the army.

Following the 1980-83 phase of massive massacres and institutionalized terror, the forced concentration of Mayan survivors in army-controlled work camps they called “model villages” introduced a new phase of militarization in the guise of development. Through a “pacification program” that masked the army’s drive to exert military control over the population, over a million males between 16 to 60 years were forced to serve unpaid in “civilian defense patrols.” Indigenous youths were forced to join these patrols in search of dissidents, and their complicity out of fear for their own lives reinforced the militarization of society.

Through their “model villages,” a program in which the army resettled thousands of people in alien territories, the military perfected their control over the indigenous population. Fear and intimidation cultivated by the presence of military force enabled the army to infuse all institutions of the villages. Citing the intellectual authors of the program, Schirmer (1998: 59) states the army planned “a cultural transformation of an *Indigena* not tied to cultural tradition.” In her interviews with present and retired army officers, she shows the link between “Beans and Bullets”

(30% beans and 70% bullets) development policies fashioned by Guatemalan generals, often trained in U.S. centres of military formation, and with the help of USAID and counterinsurgency experts trained in Vietnam (Schirmer 1998:33-38).¹³ Given the impoverishment of the villages which since their settlement have lacked schools or other public services, there were few intervening agencies for the army to compete with. The population was divided by the introduction of new settlers hungry for land in 1983, and they were left to fight for their claims with settlers (Manz 2004:155 et seq.) Thus the development program instituted by the army created a dependent population fighting amongst themselves for land and ready to work for low wages in export oriented industries (Smith 1988). Smith (1990:33) concluded that, "The long term effect of economic restructuring in the highlands will be the creation of a large reserve of unemployed who, for both security and development reasons, will have to be controlled by an ever-expanding state apparatus."

The economic restructuring brought about by the army has weakened the social and political autonomy of indigenous communities throughout the western highlands beyond the militarized zone. With little land to cultivate and markets for artisan production diminished by the war, the basic economy of the region was disrupted, forcing the population into dependency on army supplies. Military bases in 20 of the 22 departments of the country and garrisons in almost every town were the major economic force. Each year the army recruited eight thousand new soldiers from indigenous communities for two-year stints, and in addition commandeered the labour of men and women building roads, provisioning soldiers, and caring for their laundry and other tasks without compensation (Smith 1990).

Beatriz Manz (2004: 156 et seq.) found a weary and dispirited population in Ixcán when she returned to her field station in the 1980s. Divided linguistically and coming from distinct areas of the country

and their refugee camps in Mexico, the displaced population lived with suspicion and dread of their own neighbours. With the return of the exiles from Guatemala beginning in January 1993, the former colonizers were again forced into intense conflict with new residents for the land and villages (Manz 1988, 2004, especially chapter 5; Sanford 2003).

Yet these attempts by the military to destroy the spatial and symbolic boundaries in the church, community, and home through state terror have failed to eradicate the identity maintained by indigenous people to these sanctuaries (Green 1998:9). The net effect of these "signature events," as Carey (2005) calls the Patzia massacre in the Department of Quetzaltenango, was for indigenous people to reject the hegemony of a racially biased state.

Guatemala's development plan of export oriented industrialization imposed in the 1990s did not help unemployment, especially of males, since most of the very low wage jobs went to women. Women who remained in their villages combined craft production with other services for tourists (Ehlers 1989).

Women who were widowed in the 36 years of civil war became the most organized segment of the population in demanding remunerative employment, a population that was targeted by government and international organizations. The government sponsored Program of Assistance to Widows and Orphans of the Highlands (PAVYH) and the national Organization of Guatemala Widows (CONAVIGUA), along with the Catholic sisters organization assisted rural indigenous women widowed by the violence. The small-scale projects sponsored by these organizations, such as raising chickens and making soap, netted low returns for the enormous input of labour, but did promote collective activities that politicized the women (Green 1998: 103-105).

A shift in world trade during this same period led to a decline in outsourcing to newly developing countries of southeast Asia and a reconsideration of priorities with trade in Central America and the Caribbean. When unionization in Mexico began to threaten the high returns to capital investment they had enjoyed during the 1970s and 1980s (Fernandez-Kelly 1983), *maquiladoras*, or export oriented assembly plants, transferred their operations

13 The U.S. Military Humanitarian and Civic Assistance projects in Central America became an important support for troops attacking indigenous villages driven by the ideology of combating communism during the cold war of the 1980s. See Jonas (2005).

into Central America and the Caribbean in the 1980s and 1990s. Some of these same *maquiladoras* opened in Guatemala in 1991 when the country anticipated the peace process. Given the desperate situation of the country and the corruption in high offices, Guatemala accepted contracts with *maquilas* that offered the lowest wages and the least security and potential for growth in the entire Caribbean and Central America. (AVANCSO 1994a:28). Korean-owned firms dominated the cohort that entered Guatemala, and their presence is still remembered for the cruelty of their labour practices. The *maquila* that came briefly to operate in San Francisco el Alto was driven out by the same conditions that, as Carol Smith noted (1988), promoted the continuity of hand-operated bed looms in the production of the tie-dyed skirts worn by most indigenous women to this day: low operating costs, ample labour supply in family operated firms, as well as a home market for the product. The *maquiladora* operators never found a national market for their mass-produced goods that could stabilize production when quotas to the U.S. were filled.

The peace process that began with the negotiations between the Guatemalan army and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca in 1991 culminating in the Peace Accords of 1996 introduced many new international agencies in a country that was still polarized by the 36 years of civil wars. Attempts to reconstruct the country and provide a base for sustainable development were countered by the Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial, and Financial Associations (CACIF), who rejected efforts to impose taxation and legitimate governmental intervention by ensuring social justice (Jonas 2000, Ch. 7). The IMF, Bank for Interamerican Development, World Bank, and a host of NGOs brought agendas that often ignored the interests of the peasants and workers who had survived the genocidal wars.

In countering the worst effect of these exogenous operations, the Guatemalan government devised a megaproject, Desarrollo para Integración de Comunidades Rurales (Development for the Integration of Rural Communities), presumably aimed at assisting 77 municipalities in the poorest part of Guatemala using private capital for their top-

down development plans (AVANCSO 1994b). This project, like Plan Pueblo Panama, clearly follows a neoliberal outlook emphasizing privatization of assets and individual gain as the spur and carrot for a game that exceeds peasant collective enterprises that set modest goals for assured gains. But as Fischer and Benson (2005) discovered in their study of farmers who venture into export crop commercializing fostered by the plan, indigenous farmers are not without hope. Although the export business has left farmers shortchanged, earning low margins for high-risk crops, many continue to take on the challenge even after successive years of loss (Fischer and Benson 2005). The persistence of what seems to be irrational economic behaviour is, they argue, the ability of unrestrained capitalism to tap into desire to gain cash returns. Given the unfavourable returns for conventional crops, it is not unlike the turn to gambling worldwide. I would hypothesize that, as ordinary economic ventures fail to yield even the expected low returns, a casino mentality develops that taps into the unrealistic dreams of luck that defies the odds.

After a quarter of a century of army control in alliance with compliant elected presidents, economic activity in rural areas and in industry declined to pre-1980 levels, and under-employment reached 63 percent (AVANCSO 1994a:33-35). Guatemalan society is counted among the three poorest countries of the hemisphere, its economy shattered by the parasitical force of the army and its people reduced to theft, internecine violence, and despair (Schirmer 1998: 262 et seq.). Guatemala's peace agreement signed in December 1996 came at a time when there were few resources left for the army to plunder and even the propertied classes of Guatemala were beginning to object to the taxation and the continued reliance on violence. Attempts by civil society to get the army back to the barracks and restore the institutions of government are undermined by lack of fiscal resources. Unemployment remains high long after the peace agreements, and Guatemalan *campesinos* were paid so low that they risked imprisonment migrating illegally to work in Mexico or to the United States.

The decades of civil war in which Guatemalan Mayas were entangled as combatants or victims served

the purpose of elites in promoting economic growth without social progress. The economy multiplied 4.5 times in GNP between 1950 and 1980 without reducing the poverty of the country or responding to the minimal needs of the people (AVANCSO 1994a:25). Much of this growth was due to the fact that formerly subsistence activities were forced into the market, where economic transactions get counted. During these years, U.S. AID went into the purchase of armaments and security measures rather than productive growth in national industries. U.S. AID also promoted the growth of high-tech private enterprises, especially in textile production, with training of mechanics and promotion of markets. Yet this kind of development promoted growth without increased employment and curbed the possibilities for development in succeeding decades. Cantel's decline in employment in 2005 exemplifies the counterproductive policies pursued by industries investing in high technology. This meant an ever-increasing wealth gap with the social consequences of unemployment, impoverishment and criminality, adding to the burden of debt for future generations.

The emergent civil society that coalesced during the peace initiatives in the 1990s objects to the sham of elected governments put in place after the violence subsided. During our visit to the industrialized department of Quetzaltenango shortly after the inauguration of President Berger in March, 2005, we heard the anguished stories of health workers and environmentalists hired to bring order in communities still devastated by the war and its aftermath, often working in agencies that were poorly funded. Disenchanted by the government's appropriation of the imagery of the rule of law and of the procedures of electoral democracy, they realize that the human rights of Guatemalans are still violated with impunity.

Yet protest and resistance are not ended; daily newspaper accounts of indigenous people opposing the gold mining operation in San Miguel Ixtahuacan and Sipakapa indicate that the military model has not succeeded in obliterating cultural commitment to alternative paths. On our return at the Guatemalan-Mexican border we were stopped for over an hour by a protest demonstration of *campesinos* against the

Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) then being considered in Congress in 2005. Although the movement is organized primarily by *ladinos* linked to political parties, the issues affecting indigenous cultivators concerned with genetic engineering of crops and foreign ownership of resources may ignite the kind of resistance that Mayas on the Mexican side of the border engage in.

Development to Unite All of Us

Mayas both in Guatemala and Mexico look to their past as they construct plans for the future. Mayas of both countries still maintain a cosmogony combining pre-conquest powers with saints and spirits from the Christian religion that holds humans responsible for the balance in the universe. This has profound consequences for their preference for collective projects in development and for their daily behaviour. During the 1990s as Guatemalan Mayas entered into peace negotiations with their government, they focused increasingly on issues of indigenous land claims, evoking Ruwach'ulew (The Earth/the World), or Quate' Ruwach'ulew (Our Mother the Earth) in what Kay Warren calls "an indigenous ecological discourse in overlapping ways to interconnect Maya cosmology, agricultural rituals, strategies for socioeconomic change, land issues, and rights struggles" (Warren 1998:65). And if Maximón figures, which some say represent Judas, or the Anti-Christ, appear to be more ubiquitous than more benign figures of Christianity, he represents both the toughness, meanness, and flexibility to confront the enormous challenges faced by Mayas in a country still dominated by their oppressors.

Chiapas Mayas still invoke pre-conquest cosmic powers as they try to achieve a balance with nature. Zapatistas often contrast this reverence for nature in opposition to neoliberal policies of death, as during the Intercontinental Convention for Life and Against Neoliberalism in late July and early August 1996. When many fires blew out of control during the planting season in March, 1998, Tzeltal-speaking Zapatista supporters in the highland pueblo of Amatenango wondered if the loss of forest lands in the Lacandón was due to an upset in the balance between the Tatik Sol (Father Sun) and the

Me'tikchich U (Grandmother Moon) caused by the raping and pillage carried out by the army and paramilitary troops in full view of these cosmic deities. In the Lacandón rain forest, the more politicized Tojolobal residents of towns hard-hit by the fires asserted that they were lit by the army as a means of clearing the forest cover to improve their visibility in free fire zones.

This contested knowledge drawn from the past and related to present conditions is captured by the emergent leaders in both countries. When the Zapatistas became the first indigenous people to speak in the Mexican Congress in 2001, Commander Tacho's message was a prophetic address to the nation:

We fled far to defend ourselves from the great oppressor in order not to be exterminated unjustly. Given their intelligence and knowledge, our first grandparents thought that they would find refuge in the farthest mountains where they could promote their resistance and where they could survive with their own forms of government politically, socially, economically and culturally, so that our roots would not be ended, so that our mother land would never die, nor our mother moon, nor our father sun. And so our roots could never be torn out and die, these deep roots that survive in the deepest heart of these lands that take on the color that we are, the color of earth. (EZLN-CCRI March 17, 2001).

What is consistent in Mayan attention to a sacred past while moving into an uncertain future is that the past itself lives on and sprouts new growth with each death and regeneration.¹⁴

Victor Montejo, an intellectual, cultural, and political leader in the Guatemalan indigenous movement who recognizes the great diversity of Mayan identity representations, cites the words of a Mayan elder as his guiding principle in development: "Don't

14 Carlsen (1997:65-66) evokes the poetic imagery of Mayan conceptions of circular time revealed in their contemporary expressions in Santiago Atitlan, a town that has survived the beastial attacks of an army out of control. The persistence of the Jaloj-K'exoj World Tree throughout the conquest and post-conquest period sustains the strength of Atitecos in the present to achieve regeneration.

forget the teachings of the ancestors. In their paths we will find hope for the future" (Montejo 2002:143). He insists that Mayan identity be historically based and continually recreated as they write and re-write their own histories.

Conclusion

The resurgence of ethnic identification challenges assumptions about the inevitability of cultural homogenization and the loss of local control.¹⁵ They have done this in distinct ways that conform to different levels of indigenous autonomy in each country. In Mexico, following the Revolution of 1910 and its belated realization in Chiapas in 1930s, the Party of the Institutional Revolution (PRI) pursued policies designed to integrate highland pueblos in a national project premised on *mestizo* identity. Debilitating as these *indigenista* policies were to autonomous development, they provided a context for mobilization with class-based organizations. Although Guatemalan intellectuals such as Antonio Goubaud Carrera expressed the need for indigenist participation in a pluri-cultural nation during the democratic period prior to the 1954, (Adams 2005) this was never institutionalized in programs that attempted to integrate Mayas in the national or political economy. Genocidal attacks on Mayan villages in the 1970s to 1980s caused most indigenous people to distance themselves from a racist government.

Mexico grew as a nation after its Revolution of 1910-17, retaining greater independence of its northern neighbours than Guatemala. This allowed a space for the nation to promote integration of *mestizos* and acculturated indigenous peoples in the policies of indigenism. While these policies had ethnocidal outcomes in Mexico, the government promoted integrationist programs of education, health services and agricultural outreach that enabled Mayas to gain a position in the commercial economy. These advances were interrupted in the 1970s, and particularly after the PRI abandoned its nationalist policies for development during Salinas' neoliberal presidency. The trend in Chiapas toward military repression following

15 These assumptions have been refuted by Carmack 1983, Fischer and Brown 1996, Nash 1995, 2001; Warren 1998 among others.

the Zapatista uprising casts the shadow of genocidal strategies that were once contained in Guatemala across the border. In his new role as Delegado Zero, Subcomandante Marcos expresses increasing pessimism about negotiated change in his campaign speeches. In his call for a national movement, he told his audience of Huastecas in Vera Cruz, "Either we change everything or there will be nothing left to change" (*La Jornada* February 2, 2006:14).

Guatemalan Mayas fared worse after the U.S.-instigated coup in 1954 when the Arbenz program of transforming the economy from dependent capitalism to national, independent capitalism was interrupted and a genocidal attack on indigenous people became state policy. The military control of highland Guatemalan villages prevailed after the overt attacks subsided, with indigenous people forced to patrol their villagers and summarily imprison any dissenters. Further distortion of the domestic economy occurred when elected governments opened the door to *maquiladoras* without conditions to protect the rights of workers. Schemes to market cash crops grown by indigenous farmers provide little margin for profit while increasing the risks of production. The flagging economy has promoted a casino mentality in producers willing to engage in high-risk ventures since they cannot count on subsistence margins even with traditional crops.

Given the ethnocidal and genocidal course pursued by unconditional neoliberal policies that allow private foreign capital to pursue profit at any cost, it is clear that alternative development policies are needed. As custodians of their territories, indigenous peoples have proven their knowledge and skill in their continuous residence in environments that are havens for a rich diversity of faunal and floral organisms. This knowledge, and the genetic diversity that women and men have preserved in their own survival and in the environment, are being exploited by drug companies, geologists and agronomists for private profit.

The alternative goals of the indigenous people with whom I have worked in Mexico and Guatemala have shown that Mayas are demonstrating not only a viable but also a necessary alternative path in the face of global encirclement. Despite the violence, indigenous organizations are reinforcing their ranks, as they demonstrated in 2005 in the celebration of October 12 as a Day of Indigenous Resistance. Organized by the Congress of the Latin American Coalition of Rural Organizations, the organization promises to become "a permanent mobilization against the rulings of the World Trade Organization and all the instruments of economic domination imposed by the United States and the European Union. (Indymedia 2005)."

Opposition to indigenous claims, and even to their survival as distinctive populations in this world, is rising along with their signal successes in reaching a global audience. A military front masked as an anti-drug war in Colombia, the Lacandón rain forest, and other "trouble spots;" paramilitary operations posing as revolutionaries as they intimidate and murder indigenous leaders of confederations in Mexico, Colombia and Central American countries; and armies of unemployed youths sprung out of indigenous cultures that can no longer contain their ambitions for a future in their world, all contribute to the growing incidence of violence in the hemisphere.

Using common cultural reference points such as "We are made of corn, but also of water," Mayas on both sides of the Mexico-Guatemalan border are mobilizing transnational opposition to the megaprojects affecting the Usumacinta River in 2006 (Kalny 2006). With the weakening of U.S. hegemony, and the democratic elections of socialist and left-wing heads of state in the Southern Cone, there may be a turning point in the hemisphere that we can only perceive as smoke on the mirror.

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