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PENA NIETO DECLARED PRESIDENT

BY TOM HANSEN¹

MEXICO SOLIDARITY NETWORK

To no one's surprise, but to the dismay of much of the country, the Federal Electoral Institute ("IFE") unanimously anointed the Institutional Revolutionary Party ("PRI") candidate Enrique Pena Nieto as the next President of Mexico on September 7, 2012 at a press conference. The IFE managed to overlook millions of dollars in vote-buying, illegal campaign spending, and PRI's coordination with Televisa, a multi-media mass media company part of Mexico's television duopoly that controls most programming in the country, which guaranteed a PRI return to power after twelve years of PAN presidencies. Runner-up Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador and the PRD fought a losing battle to overturn yet another corrupt presidential elections. Pena Nieto will don the presidential sash on December 1, 2012 in a formal ceremony that promises to draw massive protests from students and workers.

Pena Nieto's appointed transition team includes mostly stalwarts from his campaign apparatus but also a few surprises. Sensing the demise of her own party, former Mexico City Mayor Rosario Robles of the PRD joins six other women on the forty-

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six member team. The leader of the team is Luis Videgaray, Pena Nieto's closest confidant and an MIT graduate. It is likely that Videgaray is angling for the position of Interior or Finance Minister. In a clear example of political payback, a close friend of the political powerhouse, Roberto Campa, holds a prominent role in the transition. Gordillo may be the most powerful - and among the most corrupt - political figure in Mexico as head of the teacher's union. Also joining the team is Alfredo Castillo, a notorious former Attorney General of Mexico State where he gained infamy for covering up the Atenco police actions that resulted in two murders and at least thirty cases of sexual assault by officers.

DEMOCRACY IN MEXICO?

BY TOM HANSEN

MEXICO SOLIDARITY NETWORK

In 1988, PRIista Carlos Salinas de Gotari stole the presidential election. PRD candidate Cuauhtémoc Cardenas was leading the race when ballot-tallying computers suddenly failed. Two days later, both the computers and the vote count were repaired, putting Salinas ahead. An irate and mobilized public looked to Cardenas, a former PRI politician himself and son of a popular 1930s era PRI President, for leadership. Always the consummate insider, Cardenas refused to call for demonstrations and instead funneled popular energy into building the current PRD. As a result, Salinas assumed the Presidency with little additional fuss, and subsequently proceeded to become arguably the most hated figure in Mexico over the past half century.

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Three election cycles later, the presidential election was yet again stolen. This time the PAN and a compliant Federal Electoral Institute (“IFE”), along with the machinations of former PRI party president and “leader for life” of the teacher’s union, Elba Esther Gordillo (the political class is loyal only to power and money), imposed Felipe Calderon over PRD candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador. Rather than repeating the Cardenas strategy, AMLO called for street closures and demonstrations organized by the PRD’s political and institutional apparatus in Mexico City. The party controlled city politics in Mexico City, making it easy for AMLO to carefully stage-manage the demonstrations for his own benefit. It was a show of corporativist organizing at its best, including bussed-in, paid demonstrators enjoying free food, massive tents constructed by city workers, and comfortable lounge chairs. Calderon assumed the Presidency, and Lopez Obrador began a six-year campaign culminating in another stolen election.

In 2012, the PRI is planning a return to power with the help of a compliant IFE and a sitting PAN President who does not want to rock the institutional boat. PRI candidate Enrique Pena Nieto may set new standards for hubris. The PRD, in an unusual alliance with the PAN, accuses the PRI of campaign expenditures that may exceed legal limits by twelvefold, buying votes with pre-paid gift cards from Soriana chain stores, laundering tens of millions of pesos, campaign financing from government coffers in states controlled by PRI governors, and rigged vote-counting, to name only the most egregious sins. The PRD is calling for a new election, while the PAN is counting only on fines for the PRI that may weaken the party politically.

AMLO decided not to repeat the 2006 demonstrations, relying on institutional remedies instead. But this time an irate public is not waiting for leadership from the political class. With little confidence in the IFE, the parties or a clearly biased mainstream media that supported the Pena Nieto candidacy, hundreds of thousands of people are taking to the streets every

week. Accusations of fraud and “no to the imposition of Pena Nieto” enjoy broad resonance, especially in the Capitol, but this time the political class does not carefully manipulate the demonstrations. Students organized as “YoSoy132,” the largest segment of the “no imposition” movement, are explicitly not supporting Lopez Obrador or any other candidate. The PRD outlined a strategy this week that does not include popular demonstrations but rather “educational forums,” a clear distancing from the popular movement. This does not mean AMLO would not love to utilize popular outrage to his own benefit but rather may be an indication that the movement has surpassed a stagnant and out-of-touch political class for whom “democracy” is limited to elections (however clean) every six years. YoSoy132 is joined by progressive unions, popular organizations, campesinos and irate individuals. Last weekend YoSoy132 gathered in Atenco, a largely campesino pueblo on the outskirts of Mexico City that is famous for its opposition to construction of an international airport on community lands. The assembly adopted a calendar of actions, which still awaits formal approval by YoSoy132. The actions include occupation of Televisa, the largest half of Mexico’s television duopoly, and dozens of street demonstrations leading to a blockades of Pena Nieto’s induction as President on December 1. The movement is realistic in one belief: there is little chance the political class will do anything but endorse Pena Nieto, albeit perhaps with some modest fines and a few low level sacrificial lambs. The question is: what follows? So far, the movement has not taken explicit political positions aside from a commitment to non-violence and a resounding NO to Pena Nieto. But what happens if/when he assumes the Presidency? Does the movement broaden and threaten the governability of the country? Or does it slowly fade away in the face of likely repression by the PRI, fatalistically accepting the decisions of the political class? In the midst of a neoliberal-inspired economic crisis that leaves half the population in poverty and a dwindling middle class, perhaps Mexico is prepared to for a resounding NO that extends well beyond

Pena Nieto. A barely functioning bourgeois democracy that leaves corrupt elites in charge of politics and economics may not be enough for the next generation of Mexicans.

THE TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (TTP) IN THE ELECTORAL TRANSITION IN MEXICO

BY: GUSTAVO CASTRO SOTO

OTHER WORLDS, A.C./MEXICAN ACTION NETWORK ON
FREE TRADE (RMALC)

SAN CRISTÓBAL DE LAS CASAS, CHIAPAS, MÉXICO²

<http://www.otrosmundoschiapas.org/>

The Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership Agreement, or the Trans-Pacific Treaty (“TTP”), accelerates the pace of accumulation of wealth in the hands of transnational corporations. The TTP will replace the failed negotiations of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (“FTAA”) and the World Trade Organization (“WTO”).

The TTP is advancing in a very intensive and secret form. Despite its influential impact of citizens, the details about TTP’s

² www.otrosmundoschiapas.org, Otros Mundos, A.C. de Chiapas is a Mexican civil organization legally incorporated and nonprofit. Otros Mundos, A.C. has been conformed into an interdisciplinary collective. It does not pursue or is linked to political interests, businesses, partisan or religious groups. The main funding comes from international cooperative agencies, donations from national and international civil societies, as well as from the same communities and organizations that benefit from the work of Otros Mundos. The institution does not receive and rejects resources from any act, action or group deemed illegal by the laws of Mexico and international laws and norms.

negotiations are relatively unknown. This treaty has the potential to take away governmental sovereignty and increase the risk of militarization, violence and criminalization of social protest.

According to its promoters, the TTP is “a comprehensive regional agreement of new generation that liberalizes trade and investments and addresses new and traditional trade issues and the challenges of the twenty-first century.” For the United States, it is the most ambitious Agreement that has arisen.

Its process began in 2006 when Singapore, New Zealand, Chile and Brunei ratified the treaty. The United States joined in 2008, adding obligations on investments and financial services. At present there are eleven participating countries: Brunei, Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, Vietnam, the United States, Canada, Mexico, Chile, Peru. Costa Rica, Panama, Japan, Thailand and South Korea also wish to join.

Mexico requested its incorporation in June, 2012, days before the presidential elections. Four months after the election, Mexico is accepted as a participant to the treaty and in December of 2012, it participates in the treaty’s 16th round of negotiations.

The National Association of Manufacturers (“NAM”) of the United States raised the following issues: “NAM thinks that, on having added Canada and Mexico in the negotiations, the government of the USA must be guided by a series of fundamental principles.

NAM believes that:

1. The countries must commit themselves to a global agreement without exclusions beforehand.
2. Canada and Mexico must accept the text already agreed upon by the negotiators of the original nine countries and not reopen those chapters; however, they can participate in the negotiations that are still open.
3. The negotiations must maintain at least the level of ambition agreed upon between the nine original countries in terms of scope, legal obligations and access to markets.

4. The negotiations should not be delayed or detained to accommodate the addition of Canada and Mexico.
5. The partners in the negotiation will have to proceed at the end of the text negotiated by the nine original members. If the negotiations become delayed due to the incorporation of the new participants, the negotiations with Canada and Mexico will be held at a later date.
6. The countries must be willing to discuss all of the obstacles to trade and investment that are on the table, especially non-tariff barriers, practices that distort trade, and issues of specific interest to the United States.
7. Canada and Mexico should agree to extend trade commitments and investment beyond NAFTA.
8. Canada and Mexico must implement and comply with its obligations under NAFTA, there must be no regression of the commitments or decrease of the dispositions previously compromised.”³

Like the legal changes that the PRI realized with Carlos Salinas de Gortari before signing NAFTA in 1994, now the PRI with Enrique Peña Nieto intends to amend laws such as legal reforms in areas of mining, water, energy, labor, income, tax, agrarian, finance and education in order to adapt the structure of the country to the interests of the multinational corporations in the frame of the TTP.

The large pharmaceutical companies such as Pfizer, Eli Lilly, MSD, Johnson & Johnson and Amgen have a strong interest in Mexico entering the TTP since Mexico consumes 14 billion dollars worth of pharmaceutical drugs each year, a statistic which has been on the rise since 2008 Mexico when eliminated the re-

³ Symposium, *Public Comments Before the United States Trade Representative Concerning: Canada's and Mexico's Participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement Negotiations*, National Association of Manufacturers (2012), available at http://www.nam.org/~media/B896EF5115E54F2C9C1C41858AFCA23C/%20FINAL_TPP_Comments_Mexicoand_Canada_Sept_4_2012.pdf.

quirement that corporations produce in the country. http://www.nam.org/~/media/B896EF5115E54F2C9C1C41858AFCA23C/FINAL_TPP_Comments_Mexicoand_Canada_Sept_4_2012.pdf.

**POLITICS FROM BELOW: NEW INITIATIVES BY THE
ZAPATISTA ARMY OF NATIONAL LIBERATION
AND THE PRI'S RESPONSE FROM ABOVE**

BY MEXICO SOLIDARITY NETWORK

Tens of thousands of Zapatista support bases occupied the cities of San Cristobal de las Casas, Las Margaritas, Altamirano, Ocosingo and Comitán early Friday, December 21, 2012 in a peaceful and silent replay of the January 1, 1994 uprising. An estimated 40,000 Zapatistas demonstrated an organizational capacity, carrying signs demanding justice for Acteal on the 15th anniversary of the infamous massacre in which paramilitaries, supported by government troops, killed 45 indigenous members of Las Abejas.

On December 30, this historic mobilization was followed by a formal communiqué titled “The EZLN announces their following steps” outlining their broad strategic focus for the immediate future and two public letters. The communiqué and letters represent the movement’s first public comments in a year and a half. The declarations follow historic silent marches by 40,000 Zapatista support bases in five major population centers in eastern and northern Chiapas on December 21. The declarations are available in Spanish and English at <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/>.

The communiqué opens with a brief review of Zapatista successes over the years: “we have significantly strengthened and improved our living conditions. Our standard of living is higher

than those of the indigenous communities that support the governments in office, who receive handouts that are squandered on alcohol and useless items.” For a movement that passed quickly in the early 2000s from *du jour* to *passé* in the mainstream media, casual followers of Zapatismo may find this claim surprising. But after institutional politics were largely closed off to the movement by the passage of a toothless version of the San Andres Accords in 2001, Zapatismo turned inward, focusing on self-implementation of the Accords. The results are impressive: autonomous self-government, a primary and secondary education system that covers the entirety of Zapatista territory, and a self-financed medical system recognized for its efficacy, even by opposition party members in Chiapas. Slowly but surely, Zapatismo has become a sustainable force focused on the basic needs and political organization of tens of thousands of indigenous families.

The second half of the communiqué outlines in broad brush strokes a strategy for coming years, including a renewed commitment to the National Indigenous Congress and the Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacandona and expanded relationships with indigenous and Left movements throughout the hemisphere.

The EZLN elaborates on their coming strategy in a series of communiqués titled “Them and Us,” which appear to signal a strategy over the coming years that will emphasize building new alliances. This new strategy contrasts the largely insular politics of recent years in which the EZLN focused mainly on consolidating political and social gains in Zapatista communities, including the Juntas of Good Government, health care, education and food production. The gains have been extraordinary, with Zapatista life expectancy reaching that of Mexico’s urban areas. The lesson for other political movements is clear – a successful revolution is based not only on “no,” but also the “yes” of successful construction of alternative anti-capitalist programs. In one communiqué, Marcos critiques “individual rebellions. These

are so movingly useless. On the other hand, what really is a danger, a real chaos, is when each and every person becomes a collective, a group, a gang, a race, an organization, and they learn to say “no” and to say “yes,” and they come to agreements among themselves.” This clear call to organize is also an encouragement to de-emphasize political agendas focused exclusively on institutional politics (the “no” part of politics), and adopt community-based agendas that build functioning alternatives to capitalism.

While “The EZLN announces their following steps” offers pointed criticism of the “bad government” and institutional politics in general, there is also recognition of a changing of the guard as the PRI reassumes power, after twelve years of PAN rule. In this moment of transition, the Zapatistas present the political class with a challenge:

“It’s up to the federal, executive, legislative and judicial governments to decide if they are going to continue the politics of counterinsurgency that have only resulted in a flimsy simulation clumsily built through the media, or if they are going to recognize and fulfill their commitments by elevating Indigenous Rights and Culture to the level of the Constitution as established in the San Andrés Accords signed by the Federal Government in 1996, which was at the time led by the very same political party that today occupies the executive office. It will be up to the state government to decide if it will continue the dishonest and despicable strategy of its predecessor, that, in addition to corruption and lies, used the money of the people of Chiapas to enrich itself and its accomplices and dedicated itself to the shameless buying of the voices and pens of the communications media, sinking the people of Chiapas into poverty while using police and paramilitaries to try to brake the organizational advance of the Zapatista communities; or, if instead, with truth and justice, it will accept and respect our existence and come around to the idea that a new form of social life is blooming in Zapatista territory, Chiapas, Mexico. This is a flowering that at-

tracts the attention of honest people all over the planet. It will be up to the municipal governments if they decide to keep swallowing the tall tales with which anti-zapatista or supposedly “zapatista” organizations extort them in order to attack and harass our communities; or if instead they use that money to improve the living conditions of those they govern. It will be up to the people of Mexico who organize in electoral struggles and resist, to decide if they will continue to see us as enemies or rivals upon which to take out their frustration over the frauds and aggressions that, in the end, affect all of us, and if in their struggle for power they continue to ally themselves with our persecutors; or if they finally recognize in us another form of doing politics.”

The Pena Nieto administration quickly responded to “The EZLN announces their following steps” and “Them and Us” by announcing the dissolution of the Commission for Dialogue and Negotiation in Chiapas, the PAN-initiated body responsible for a dialogue with the EZLN that never happened. Nieto then named the Commission for Dialogue with Indigenous Peoples, headed by Jaime Martinez Veloz, as its successor. The newly named Commission will “pay the historic social debt with indigenous regions and communities via a permanent political dialogue,” according to Interior Secretary Miguel Osorio. Martinez was a PRI representative on the COCOPA, the Congressional body that negotiated the San Andres Accords, but left the PRI in 2006 to join the PRD. During the negotiations in the mid 1990s, Martinez was considered sympathetic to the Zapatistas, though there has been no formal contact between the EZLN and Mexico’s political class since 2001. The newly named Commission appears to be an effort to isolate the EZLN, especially after the recent announcement by Marcos concerning a potential strengthening of the relationship between the EZLN and the National Indigenous Congress. It is almost certain the PRI will trot out for media consumption a number of indigenous leaders who support the current government and will favor, in exchange

for sufficient payments, whatever indigenous-oriented initiatives the Commission puts forward.

President Enrique Peña Nieto also announced a program called the Crusade Against Hunger, which aims to fight extreme poverty, following a recent trend in populist politics utilized early in administrations whose electoral legitimacy is in doubt. Carlos Salinas de Gortari of the PRI, who stole an election in 1988, announced his Solidarity program in the first week of his administration. Solidarity was an effort to convert the PRI's historic corporatist politics to a more direct relationship between recipients and party by offering supplies for construction of schools, roads and other infrastructure if communities provided the labor. Salinas often delivered the money in person in highly publicized events. PRIista Ernesto Zedillo followed in 1994 winning less than half the popular vote, the first time a PRI candidate publicly recognized such a slim victory. Zedillo replaced Solidarity with Progresá, a poverty-fighting program of direct subsidies to the poorest families provided their children go to school. PANist Vicente Fox took power in 2000 with 42% of the vote. He immediately replaced Progresá with Oportunidades, another direct subsidy program but more extensively linked to social engineering, including mandatory birth control classes with some experts reporting sterilization operations performed on uninformed indigenous women. In 2006, PANista Felipe Calderón stole an election with the help of political operator extraordinaire Elba Esther Gordillo. He immediately offered infrastructure programs for poor communities, a "70 and Over Program" that provides \$50 a month in assistance for the elderly (the idea came directly from his opponent in the presidential campaign), and continuation of Oportunidades.

Despite all the federal programs, or perhaps in part because of them, from 1988 to 2012 poverty increased in Mexico, with more than half the population today living under the official poverty level and nearly one in five under the extreme poverty level. Peña Nieto promises to end hunger, an ambitious goal in a

country whose political class is dedicated to a neoliberal, export-oriented economy, and not food production. The program will kick off in Chiapas, not an arbitrary choice given the Zapatista's continuing influence in the state. The EZLN claims that Zapatista communities have higher standards of living, longer life expectancies, and better access to education and medical care than indigenous communities aligned with either the PRI or PAN, which is quite an embarrassing assertion given the extent of anti-poverty programs managed at the federal level over the past twenty-four years. Pena Nieto offered few details other than citing Brazil's anti-poverty efforts over the past decade as his inspiration. He did mention the Defense Department will be involved, leading critics to wonder about the ultimate goals of the program.

**YUNA BLAJER DE LA GARZA: CITIZEN'S PERSPECTIVE
ON VOTING⁴**

I did not vote in the election. Although I am not currently living in Mexico, I could have done the paperwork to vote from the U.S. or could have flown to Mexico City for a weekend of civic duty. I am not particularly proud of my civic apathy. My apathy partly stemmed from the fact that I was far from impressed with any of the candidates. The only "agenda" that I found more or less compelling belonged to a candidate, Gabriel Quadri, whose party is run by the leader of the Teachers' Union, a despicable woman who has stood in the way of any improvements of the Mexican education system. Voting for her party was out of the question. The other three candidates had stronger positions in the polls, but besides what they represented, almost

⁴ Yuna Blajer de la Garza was born and raised in Mexico City. She received a Bachelor of Arts in international relations at El Colegio de México and a Masters of Arts in the same field at the University of Chicago. She is currently pursuing her PhD in Political Science at the University of Chicago. <http://cir.uchicago.edu/student/yuna-blajer-de-la-garza>

symbolically speaking, they did not seem to have discrete political agendas that I could agree or disagree with.

Elections in Mexico feel like big fat Mexican weddings to me. Everyone is tremendously excited about the wedding, as if the wedding was the culmination of a loving and committed relationship. The reality is that the wedding is the first day of a marriage that must be constructed and lived day-by-day. Similarly, in Mexico, we celebrate and feel passionate about elections as if it was the wedding day of our democracy, but we fail to move forward and to defend our political beliefs and positions in the day-by-day construction of our democratic system.

**ANALYSIS : MEXICO –SEVERAL MOVEMENTS OF
CHESS-PIECES IN CHIAPAS**

BY SIPAZ, THE INTERNATIONAL SERVICE
FOR PEACE.

Biography:

In 1994, after the armed uprising by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (“EZLN”), social and civil organizations, as well as Mexican religious leaders, recognized the need for a permanent international presence in Chiapas to help avoid or lessen the risks of violent ends to conflict. In this context, in 1995, a group of international organizations with a long history of work in the areas of peace building, human rights, and non-violent activism responded by creating a coalition consisting of members from the United States, Europe, and Latin America. They shared not only concerns about the situation in Chiapas, but also the hope that they could help to build a just, long-lasting peace in the state. From this came the project of SIPAZ, the International Service for Peace.

SIPAZ accompanies organizational processes in defense of human rights and is physically and visibly present in the moments and places of highest tension in an attempt to prevent repression and violence so that threatened persons and organizations can continue their work to promote peace and human rights. SIPAZ exposes the causes and consequences of, as well as responses to, socio-political conflict in Chiapas as well as in Oaxaca and Guerrero, with the intent of raising awareness and mobilizing actors at local, national, and international levels to seek out non-violent solutions. SIPAZ works to strengthen the capacities of local groups, social agents—female and male—who work in defense of human rights and toward transformation of their conflicts in order to achieve a positive peace, and to promote and strengthen spaces for coming together and movement building.

SIPAZ has graciously allowed the DePaul Journal for Social Justice to reprint the article below, included in the SIPAZ Report Vol. XVIII N 1-February, 2013.⁵

Article:

As was foreseen, in Chiapas between October and December, the new governor, municipal mayors, and part of the new Congress came into power, coinciding with the change of presidency of the Republic.

More surprisingly, on December 21, 2012 (a symbolic day in terms of the change in Baktún, the beginning of the new Mayan era), tens of thousands of indigenous support-bases of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (“EZLN”) marched in five cities of the state. Contingents of between 5000 to 15000 base supporters were observed in each place. The communiqué

⁵ Sipaz, *Analysis: Mexico - Several Movements of Chess-Pieces in Chiapas*, SIPAZ (Feb. 24, 2013, 16:29), available at <http://www.sipaz.org/en/reports/114-informe-sipaz-vol-xviii-no-1-febrero-de-2013/455-mexico-se-mueven-varias-piezas-del-ajedrez-chiapaneco.html>.

released subsequently by the Zapatista General Command made reference to the rigorous silence maintained throughout the day and brought to attention the unspoken message “Have you heard? It is the sound of their world collapsing. It is the sounds of our world resurging.”

THE RETURN OF THE PRI TO THE PRESIDENCY

On December 1, 2012, Enrique Peña Nieto, candidate of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (“PRI”) and the Green Ecological Party of Mexico (“PVEM”), took power as president of the Republic. During the day a number of different protests broke out which came to an end following seven hours of disturbances, resulting in 105 injured (29 of whom required hospitalization) and dozens of arrests. For his part, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, presidential candidate of the center-left, refused to recognize the new president, opting instead for the construction of a new party based on the Movement for National Regeneration (“MORENA”), which was very active during the electoral process. From another perspective, the principal party leaders signed a “*Pact for Mexico*” just days after Peña Nieto’s inauguration. This pact defines strategic lines to continue. The initiative has been challenged for having excluded social participation, and it could be considered a return to the old forms of the PRI’s political maneuvering.

In the first acts of the new government (a move that was seen as a means to gain legitimacy), Peña Nieto decided to suspend the controversy imposed by former president Felipe Calderón against the General Law on Victims—this being a motion that could have prevented its being signed into law. Consequently, the General Law entered legislation in February.

In more general terms, a large part of the beginning of this new six-year term has centered around a broad structural reform of the public administration: in January, the Secretary for Public Security was abolished and integrated into the Secretary

of Governance. This centralization could imply an advantage in the sense of national security from the perspective of the State apparatus, but it could also mean a major risk in terms of human rights. Amnesty International recalls that “during the six-year term of former president Felipe Calderón, the SSP took on a protagonistic role in the strategy against organized crime, one that has left more than 60,000 dead and thousands others disappeared. The use of torture and abuse as well as arbitrary arrests were routine on the part of the security forces during that period.” Peña Nieto has proposed the creation of a “national gendarmerie,” a sort of militarized police, which would not signify substantial change, given that the war against organized crime undertaken in the previous administration has blurred the line separating the constitutional distinction between police and the military. Also seen is an attempt to create a National Center for Intelligence (“CNI”), a sort of Mexican CIA that would centralize the information collected by all security and justice institutions. Meanwhile, the number of casualties linked to narco-violence and the war against it continue without respite. According to the Secretary of Governance, 2,243 murders were reported during the first two months of the new administration.

INAUGURATION OF MANUEL VELASCO COELLO AS GOVERNOR

On December 8, 2012, Manuel Velasco Coello became governor of Chiapas. He won the elections last July with a large margin, representing the coalition of the Green Ecological Party (“PVEM”), PRI, and New Alliance (“PANAL”). He announced that he would present a state plan of austerity, reducing salaries and spending by the government.

Upon taking power, he also announced that he would establish a government of citizen coalition. This coalition would be plural and inclusive, although to date, he has made few nominations and continues actually to operate largely with the cabinet

of the former governor. However, in mid-December, human-rights organizations released a communiqué, calling Jorge Luis Llaven Abarca a “perpetrator of acts of arbitrary detentions, disproportionate and undue use of public force, criminal preventive detentions (“arraigo”), death threats, torture, and other human-rights violations.”

LIGHTS SHINED ONTO THE SHADOWS OF THE SABINES GOVERNMENT

Noé Castañón, Juan Sabines Guerrero’s secretary of governance, spoke to the state Congress shortly before the end of Geurrero’s term as state governor. Castañón noted that “among the legacies of greatest significance and transcendence that remain for Chiapas and its citizens, for the government that is ending and the one to follow it is respectively to leave a state of peace, with security and harmony, and to receive such.” It is likely that few people in Chiapas will share this perception some months after the transition has progressed, given the debts and state of disarray in which the public administration was left. In several cities there have been multitudes of people marching to demand justice and a balancing of accounts, as well as protesting against the charges for vehicular driving licenses that have been implemented to diminish the state’s financial crisis. According to official accounts, the state’s debt is greater than 20 billion pesos, but several journalistic sources affirm that it could reach 40 billion. Some of the sources add that these resources were earmarked for the operation of non-existent firms. In parallel terms, 70 of 122 municipalities of Chiapas have declared themselves bankrupt, and numerous former mayors find themselves imprisoned or under investigation. Regarding the ex-governor, the local Congress in May 2011 conveniently carried out reforms that impede that Sabines Guerrero be held accountable in any administrative or penal investigation regarding his time in office.

Furthermore, the government has begun to see several other challenges regarding not only the management of public finances but also other aspects of the former administration. Deputy Alejandra Soriano Ruiz (“PRD”) has denounced the persecution of 200 social and campesino leaders, members of oppositional parties, trade-unionists, and human-rights defenders. In other news, in November, the Table for Transborder Coordination of Migration and Gender (“MTMG”) presented its report “Abyss between the word expressed and exercised action: the migratory policy of the government of Juan Sabines Guerrero,” a title that emphasizes the evident gap between official discourses and that which really took place during the previous administration.

REPOSITIONING OF THE EZLN AND INITIAL GOVERNMENTAL REACTIONS

The massive marches undertaken by the EZLN in December succeeded in “creating” a new “context” (see the Zapatista communiqué of February). Furthermore, a day before rumors of a possible mobilization, the state government released four prisoners, two of whom were Zapatista base supporters who “contribute[d] to a reduction in tensions” and the strengthening of a climate “of tolerance and peace” in the state. In this sense, the state government also proposed “the convenience of a minimal mechanism” of communication with the Zapatista Good-Government Councils that would permit the prevention and resolution of any conflicts that could arise.

Subsequently, on different occasions, both the federal government and the state government of Chiapas expressed themselves in regard to the Zapatista mobilization. Miguel Ángel Osorio Chong, secretary of governance, declared that “they still do not know us; we hope they do not come out too soon, given that President Enrique Peña Nieto has a great commitment to the indigenous peoples.”

On December 30, 2012, the EZLN released a communiqué and two letters. In these documents, EZLN strongly criticizes the different political parties, the federal government (both the present one and the previous one), and the state and municipal governments. It affirmed that all have failed in their attempts to weaken indigenous resistance.

On January 1, 2013, governor Manuel Velasco made a call for the observance of the San Andrés accords on indigenous rights and culture, signed between the EZLN and the federal government in 1996. The governor announced a series of actions by the government regarding concrete conflicts and in regard to the demand for the release of Alberto Patishtán Gómez and Francisco Santiz López. Beyond this, the governor announced his position regarding two questions concerning local community conflict. On the one hand he notes, “We will respect the possessions of Zapatista lands that now are being used with social benefit.” Beyond this, he assured that “all state development programs in communities with Zapatista presence will be careful in their propositions and implementation. It is not our aim to divide communities.” While the governor addressed critical issues, the resolution of several of these questions is out of his hands, depending instead on the federal government. Apropos, on January 25 2013, Francisco Santiz López, a Zapatista base supporter who had been imprisoned since 2011, was released.

In January, after publishing an “illustrated letter” directed to his “critics,” there was released a series of postscripts in which Subcomandante Marcos indicated that for many the EZLN does not exist, if it does not appear publicly. After this, a series of communiqués began to be released signed by Marcos and then in February by Subcomandante Moisés. It should be mentioned that this communiqué was released just hours before President Enrique Peña Nieto arrived in Chiapas to launch the National Crusade against Hunger in the Las Margaritas municipality. Notably, Las Margaritas is one of the poorest municipalities in the country and it is considered to be a Zapatista bastion. The next

day, Marcos published yet another illustrated letter, which casts Peña Nieto's visit and his "Crusade" in a sardonic light.

Although the EZLN was not directly mentioned, Marcos letters challenged at least one other federal government decision for its potentially counter-insurgent purposes. On January 14, 2013, the Secretary of Governance announced the decision to transform the Commission for Dialogue and Negotiation in Chiapas into the Commission for Dialogue with Indigenous Peoples. This transformation aims to evaluate the debt owed to indigenous peoples via a permanent policy of dialogue that would guarantee all people access to justice, education, health-care, and infrastructure. Nevertheless, the move seeks to displace the EZLN from center stage.

If these communiqués, which have continued to be published, reflect EZLN's future plan of action and with whom it plans act, they do not reveal the totality of EZLN's plans at the moment of the publication of this bulletin.

In other news, various civil and social organizations throughout the state have carried out numerous sit-ins, marches, pilgrimages, meetings, and communiqués in recent months. In January 2013, the Believing People, an organizational process associated with the diocese of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, carried out a pilgrimage in this city. The pilgrimage of some 10,000 people demonstrated their concern regarding "the launching of the National Crusade against Hunger, precisely in the municipality of Las Margaritas, given that with this action the federal government's strategy of not attending to the structural necessities of the people is shown clearly." In their message, the Catholics equally denounced "the concessions for mineral exploitation that the federal government has awarded, particularly to foreign firms, thus totally violating the peoples' fundamental right to prior informed consent," among other demands.

Also in January, the Las Abejas Civil Society challenged the National Crusade against Hunger as being nothing more than a "pretty painting." "[S]/he who lives from the welfare of the State

is a slave. We are clear that their projects will not benefit us: they merely change the laws so that indigenous peoples remain ignorant.” Another point deemed part of this “*pretty picture*” is the new interest that has been expressed by authorities with regard to the San Andrés accords regarding indigenous rights and culture. The Society questions whether its observance will in fact come to pass.

**GUERRERO: *EMERGENCE OF SELF-DEFENSE PROCESSES IN
LIGHT OF ONGOING VIOLENCE***

Given the inefficacy of the authorities amidst the extortion, disappearances, rapes, robbery, and murders committed by organized crime, there have emerged in Guerrero self-defense processes that have generated strong national media coverage, followed by similar initiatives elsewhere in the country. On January 6, 2013, four municipalities of the Costa Chica took up arms to directly confront organized crime. Checkpoints were installed and fifty-four persons arrested for supposed offenses related to organized crime. On January 31, 2013, in Ayutla de Los Libres, the first session of a “popular tribunal” was also held during which the accused were presented.

In light of these acts, governor Ángel Aguirre Rivero installed the Commission for Harmony of Indigenous Peoples in Guerrero at the beginning of February, so as to analyze “the handing over of the arrested who find themselves in Ayutla [. . .] who should be subjected to the established laws and institutions.” Organizations committed to the defense of human rights have cautioned that with the emergence of these self-defense groups as well as the creation of this Commission, which according to them lacks legitimacy, is provoking a greater move towards militarization in indigenous communities.

The self-defense processes of the peoples of the Costa Chica are being led by the Union of Peoples and Organisms of the State of Guerrero (“UPOEG”). The Regional Coordination of

Communal Authorities-Communal Police (“CRAC-PC”), which has worked for seventeen years in the same zone and several others in the state has repeatedly distanced itself from these processes. The CRAC-PC has also rejected the state decree that seeks to regulate and institutionalize the communal police. The differences between the two processes are threatening the system of communal justice in its totality; however, it should be noted that at the close of this report, there were attempts to seek forms of agreement between the two. Whether they succeed in this is a delicate matter: the National Commission on Human Rights (“CNDH”) has affirmed that the self-defense groups in the states of Guerrero, Oaxaca, and Michoacán affect state stability and are a problem of national security.

Meanwhile, violence continues to grip several parts of the state. In November, Juventina Villa Mojica, director of the Organization of Ecologist Campesinos of the Sierra de Petatlán and Coyuca de Catalán (“OCESP”), denounced the murder of two of her nephews. Just two weeks later, she was murdered together with her ten year-old son during an ambush, despite the fact that they had been protected by at least twenty-five police agents who had been assigned to ensuring their security since May 2012. In response to this attack, forty-five families from her community of origin, La Laguna, fled to Puerto de las Ollas.

Beyond this, attacks on rights-defenders and attempts to devalue their work have not diminished. In February for example, the Guerrero Truth Commission (“Comverdad Guerrero”), which investigates human-rights violations committed during the so-called “Dirty War” of the 1960s and 1970s, denounced that one of its investigators and the son of one of the disappeared whose whereabouts comprises part of the investigation were subjected to anonymous death-threats and harassment.

**OAXACA: EXTRACTION AND ENERGY PROJECTS BEHIND
INCREASES IN COMMUNAL CONFLICT**

Tensions have been particularly high in some of the communities of the Tehuantepec Isthmus, where a struggle has been undertaken against the wind-energy project advanced by the Mareña Renewables firm. On December 29, 2012 in San Dionisio del Mar, opponents and proponents of the project engaged in a confrontation over the realization of an assembly to which the opposing group was denied access. The confrontation left twelve persons injured. Subsequently, two attempts were made to organize an assembly to grant support to the wind-energy project, though without success to date. Several civil and social organizations have condemned the “intimidating actions and the campaign of harassment promoted by the firm Mareña Renewables,” several governmental officials, and media against the opponents.

In November, in another of the symbolic struggles for land and territory in the state, an observation mission arrived to the community of San José del Progreso, Oaxaca. Its purported to work toward the goal of making visible the human-rights violations committed against members of the Coordination of the United Peoples of the Ocotlán Valley (“CPUVO”) who have resisted the activities of the Cuzcatlán mining firm, which is a subsidiary of the Canadian corporation Fortune Silver Mines. The civil observation mission declared in a press conference that it had observed the systematic violation of human rights in the region, together with a climate of insecurity, fear, and strong division as follows from mining operations. The mission affirmed that the project had been imposed without the consultation of the local population, and it denounced the harassment directed against opponents of the mine, as well as the existence of a strong relationship between the mining company and municipal authorities.

More broadly, Oaxaca is the state with the largest number of cases of abuse against human-rights defenders in the entire country. According to Services for an Alternative Education (“EDUCA”), from January to November 2012, 120 acts of violence against human-rights defenders occurred in the state. In December 2012, moreover, several organizations presented the “Special Report on Violence and Impunity against Female Activists and Human-Rights Defenders in Oaxaca,” which documented forty-eight aggressions against thirty female defenders in the state in 2012. These organizations declared at their press conference that “intimidation and harassment have become daily attacks, while death threats, injuries, arbitrary detentions, and campaigns of slander and defamation have become more common.”

THE SILENCE IS INHABITED

BY: LUIS ENRIQUE AGUILAR PEREDA?
(MEXICO CITY, 1980)

Luis Enrique Aguilar Pereda studied at the Escuela Activa de Fotografía. He participated in the Contemporary Photography Seminar in 2010 at the Centro de la Imagen, and also attended the first National Meeting for Photographic Investigation at the Instituto Internacional de Periodismo José Martí. His work has been exhibited in collective exhibitions in Mexico, the United States, Argentina, and Spain. He was selected for the 14th Latin American Photography Contest in Colombia, the 7th Puebla de los Ángeles Biennial, and the 3rd Chiapas Photography Biennial. He received a special mention from the jury in the International Migrations and Borders Contest in Spain, and A Day in the Life of the People from Chiapas Contest organized by the

Universidad Intercultural in Chiapas. He is a member of the Colectivo Fotógrafos Independientes in Chiapas [Independent Photographers Collective]. Currently, he is coordinating the project Gimnasio de Arte y Cultura in Chiapas and lives in San Cristóbal de las Casas.

DESCRIPTIVE TEXT OF THE WORK

The north of Mexico is covered in silence, thousands of kilometers replete with sand and closed eyes, an anecdote of an immeasurable collection of human stories that becomes invisible behind the veil of fear. The progress of an opulent few rises above the laments and absences that are not named. The silence of the north is larger than its desert, lips sewn with threads of blood that silence the blind hope.

In these barren lands, the documentation of the consequences of irrational violence forces me to turn my gaze to these people almost shadows, who survive day after day this discouraging scenario. Mute witnesses who move away from the noise and the glitz, survivors of an industrial city that never shuts up, between its productive shrillness and the permanent scream of promises of wealth and opportunities. People patiently wait for the day when once again they will have a voice and words.

Images that do not break the silence — perhaps they prolong it — but they reveal it to be inhabited, they portray him standing in the face of the ominous future.