

Bits & pieces

Chiapas conflict still unresolved. In the early days of October the EZLN announced its intention to break off talks with the federal government. Scoring its recent peace proposals as a farce, the Zapatistas view the government as undesirous of a peaceful solution to the armed conflict. They charge the federal army with flying over EZLN-controlled zones with the intent of provoking anti-aircraft fire from the Zapatistas in order to blame them for breaking the treaty. EZLN spokesman Marcos states that a breakdown of the ceasefire would bring disastrous consequences, since the war would not be limited to Chiapas but would spread across the whole country: "Everyone will have to live through it themselves. We're not lying when we say our army exists throughout the country."

The Zapatistas believe that the federal government has been preparing an escalation of violence against the EZLN since achieving its objective of preventing them from interfering with the August 21 elections. The victory of PRI candidate Eduardo Robledo Rincón in the Chiapas gubernatorial race has been questioned by several local groups which demand that opposition candidate Amado Avendaño Figueroa be recognized as governor-elect, increasing the tension caused by the breakdown of peace talks.

Meanwhile, Bishop Samuel Ruiz put forward a new proposal which includes resolution of the post-electoral conflict, a return by the EZLN and federal army to the positions they occupied before the elections, and the naming of a new mediating commission made up of distinguished civilians and academics from around the country. While commissioner Madrazo initially rejected the proposal, he later accepted the point on the mediation commission and proposed that Zapatista accusations regarding army mobilizations be investigated in return for the Zapatistas answering charges that they have blocked aid from reaching non-Zapatista refugees living in territory under EZLN control.

The tension generated by the talks' breakdown has been increased by constant land takeovers and the removal of municipal authorities by local citizens. Up until December 8, the date on which Eduardo Robledo became Governor of Chiapas, the conflict continued without resolution.

Colosio assassin sentenced. On October 31, seven months after the assassination of Luis Donaldo Colosio, 23-year-old Mario Aburto was sentenced to 42 years in

prison for the crimes of premeditated homicide and carrying an unlicensed firearm. The charge of "advantage" (a category which further exacerbates the finding of first-degree murder) was dropped. Aburto's sentencing brings to an end an initial stage of the investigation; it remains to be established whether others were involved in the assassination. The attorney general's office made an appeal that Aburto be given the maximum sentence (50 years), while the defense will ask that the term be reduced to 8 to 20 years.

Urgent aid to the Tarahumaras. The Tarahumara Mountains are located in Chihuahua, Mexico's largest state. While Chihuahua has the least numerous Indian population in the country (2.9 percent, which is particularly low when compared to states such as Yucatan with its 44.2 percent Indian population), several indigenous ethnic groups live in the mountain range. The largest of these is the Tarahumara people: *raramuri* ("light-footed ones"), in their language. In this region official statistics fail to convey the reality of the Indians' lives. Doctors at the four local clinics estimate that only one out of every four infant deaths is reported. Between 50 and 90 percent of the Indians suffer from malnutrition. In 1993, 515 Tarahumaras died due to various causes, foremost among them violence and hunger, while by early November 1994, 512 deaths had already been registered, including those of 53 minors. The Tarahumaras—who live largely by cultivating corn, beans and some fruits—faced a critical situation with the advent of the worst drought in the past forty years. Chihuahua's governor asked that the state be declared a disaster zone. After a visit to the area, President Salinas announced an emergency aid program including 35 million pesos (roughly equivalent to 10 million dollars) for food purchases, hospital construction and agricultural improvements.

Myth & Magic: Oaxaca Past & Present. Through the Neighbors Abroad program, the permanent exchange relationship between the cities of Palo Alto, California and Oaxaca de Juárez, Oaxaca has made possible the "Myth & Magic" exhibition on the customs, cultural roots, myths and magic of the state of Oaxaca's capital city. The show presents paintings and works on paper by fifteen of the city's most important contemporary visual artists. Fables and stories told in the myths of Oaxaca's past and present are also featured in the exhibition and are presented in the catalogue, accompanied by the artists' illustrations. "Myth & Magic" was first shown last year at the Palo Alto Cultural Center. In early 1995 it will be shown in several East Coast U.S. cities, traveling to the Santa Cruz, California Museum of Art in April and May ❧