

## Indigenous and Campesino Organizations Unite to Present Peace Proposals

*Peace will come when everything that has been confiscated and stolen from the people has been returned, especially in regard to land, because the legitimate and authentic owners of the land are the campesinos and Indigenous people. ---Working commission, State Indigenous and Campesino Council of Chiapas*

Six thousand Indigenous people and *campesinos* are occupying the public plaza in Chiapas' capital city of Tuxtla Gutierrez as this magazine goes to press. The occupation began when 10,000 members of the State Indigenous and Campesino Council of Chiapas (CEOIC) marched on the capital as part of a nation-wide mobilization called "Zapata Vive". They are seeking resolution of their demands for territory, autonomy land reform, and acceptance of the CEOIC peace plan. The Independent Indian People's Front reports some advances in negotiations with the government. However, but negotiations on human rights guarantees remain unresolved. Indigenous organizations will sign no agreements without securing the release of all those people who have been unjustly and arbitrarily arrested in the state.

Only ten days after the first shots were fired, every major Indian organization met in San Cristobal de Las Casas to form--along with non-Indigenous campesino organizations--the Indigenous and Campesino State Council of Chiapas (CEOIC). The Indigenous organizations are a minority in the tumultuous and fragile coalition. However, they are currently the most active and powerfully vocal faction.

Although the Zapatistas' positions have been minimal in relation to specifically Indian concerns, Indigenous organizations throughout the state of Chiapas have taken advantage of the political space opened by the January rebellion to unite forces and are developing their own alternative peace proposals. These proposals have special relevance since the Mexican government agreed that a prerequisite to negotiations was that there would be no return to the pre-rebellion situation in the state. Whether CEOIC will take a seat at the negotiating table with the government and Zapatistas remains unclear.

CEOIC has endorsed most of the EZLN's demands, in addition at their January 11-14 meeting, the council called for constitutional reform to enable a new relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Mexican state. This would be based in the reorganization of territory as well as political restructuring. CEOIC proposes the creation of autonomous pluri-ethnic regions which would shift power from the state and the federation to Indigenous peoples' in the state. Actual geographic regions have not been drawn. Actual territorial demarcation is the next challenge

## Interview with Antonio Hernandez Cruz

**Maya Tojolabal and Secretary General of the CIOAC**

*Hernandez is a founding member of the State Indigenous and Campesino Council of Chiapas. He spoke with SAIC in San Cristobal de las Casas regarding the Indigenous movement in Chiapas, government repression and the CEOIC's work. Following the uprising, Hernandez was among the hundreds of Indians detained and tortured by the military.*

Can you tell me what happened to you when you were detained by the military, what did they accuse you of?

-We were detained on January 5 until 2:00 pm the following day... They accused us of being the Zapatistas' political leaders... They took us from the car we were riding in, put hoods over our heads and tied them very tightly around our necks. We were like this for 24 hours. Then they interrogated us heavily, trying to force us to say that we sympathized or were active in the Zapatista army. When we said no, they hit us. I received blows in the stomach, chest, back, and head, about 20 hard blows.

Did you denounce this occurrence?

-To the national and international press, to the television, but television doesn't report anything. The press