

ZAPATTISTA

ARMY OF
NATIONAL
LIBERATION
UPRISING

1994

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1994

The Twentieth

Model United Nations Conference at Chapel Hill

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

February 20-23, 2020



Official Background Guide



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Letter from the Crisis Director

Greetings, Delegates!

My name is Maria Reid and I will serve as your Crisis Director for the Zapatista Army of National Liberation Uprising, 1994 committee.

I am a sophomore at UNC and I am double majoring in Archaeology and Global Studies with a focus on International Relations and Latin America. I have been involved with CIRA since my first semester freshman year, but this is my first MUNCH conference and also the first committee that I will be directing! Since I am essentially majoring in Latin America, this topic is something I'm quite passionate about. In researching for this committee, I have learned a lot about Mexico, the Zapatistas, and indigenous rights, and I hope you will all learn something too (in addition to having a lot of fun, since this is, after all, a Model UN conference).

It is my hope that this committee will teach all of you something about how treaties like NAFTA affect indigenous groups and why this causes groups like the Zapatistas to form. Issues like this one are much more complicated than they may seem and cannot be solved in one move. Declarations and treaties that sound appealing at first glance can hurt certain groups, usually the poor or minority groups of a country. As future policymakers, diplomats, or world leaders, it is important to consider all the effects of your actions.

In addition to learning a good bit about the Uprising, NAFTA, and Mexico in the 1990s, I hope you also have lots of fun attempting to resolve this issue in a manner that will benefit everyone. I am very excited to direct this committee and see what you do with your given positions and powers.

If you have any questions about this guide or the committee in general, I have provided my contact information for you.

Best wishes and good luck!

Maria Reid,
Crisis Director,
Zapatista Army of National Liberation
Uprising, 1994
mariaar@live.unc.edu



Letter from the Chair

Hello delegates!

My name is Mikhal (Mimi) Ben-Joseph and I am thrilled to be your chair for the Zapatista Army of National Liberation Uprising, 1994 Committee!

I'm a first-year student from sunny South Florida, and I'm probably majoring in some combination of biostatistics and public policy. I have been involved (read: obsessed) with MUN since I started competing in 9th grade. Since then, I've traveled around the country competing in specialized and crisis committees, organized my school's home conference, and ran a few crisis rooms myself. My favorite moments in committee were intense crisis updates, insane midnight crises, and scathing "against" speeches right before a directive vote.

I am involved with the Carolina International Relations Association (CIRA) through UNCMUNC, MUNCH, the Campus Affairs Committee, and The Internationalist: Undergraduate Journal of Foreign Affairs. When I'm not doing something related to international relations, you can find me dancing as part of UNC's Blank Canvas Dance Company, playing ping pong, or hanging out at Hillel.

As a delegate, I love mysteries, surprises, and complex puzzles in committee, so that is the environment I hope to create for you all as we travel back to Chiapas in 1994. I'm really looking forward to creative arcs that are well-grounded in historical context and move the committee forward. Our weekend together can only be as great as you all make it! If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to shoot me an email at mikbenjo@live.unc.edu.

I can't wait for MUNCH to get started!

Sincerely,

Mikhal Ben-Joseph,
Chair,
Zapatista Army of National Liberation
Uprising, 1994
mikbenjo@live.unc.edu



Background Information

Mexico in the 1990s

In the 1990s, wage, income, consumption, and wealth inequality in Mexico were at a high. The PRI had a monopoly over government and political power for more than 70 years with their reign ending in 1994 with the election of Ernesto Zedillo. GDP growth was slowing and immigration to the US was on the rise. Liberation theology, the movement by the Church to help the poor, was popular. Bishop Samuel Ruíz García of Mexico practiced this theology which led him and other members of the Church to become mediators for the eventual Zapatista uprising.

The North American Free Trade Agreement

Signed in 1992, NAFTA created a formal system of free trade between Canada, the United States, and Mexico, the three largest countries in North America. NAFTA involved the gradual elimination of tariffs and other trade barriers between the three countries, forming a free-trade bloc. It is set to go into effect on January 1, 1994. NAFTA was created in hopes of stimulating trade and job-growth between member countries; it created sanitary standards for goods and a system to facilitate potential disputes over trade between the three member countries.

Critiques of the agreement include environmental concerns and job-loss in the U.S. manufacturing sector. The belief was that Mexico's low wages would attract corporations to move their manufacturing sector to Mexico because it would be cheaper. This would result in the rapid industrialization of Mexico which concerned environmentalists because Mexico lacked environmental regulations.

NAFTA also required that Mexico's ejidos (indigenous communal farms) be privatized. These farms were supposed to be protected by the Constitution. Because 67% of Mexico's indigenous population works in agriculture, this massive change would affect them directly.

Another important critique of NAFTA is that it would hurt smaller Mexican farmers who would be unable to compete with American agricultural products which are produced on massive industrial farms and heavily subsidized by the U.S. government. This is especially relevant to the Chiapas region, which had a heavily agrarian economy, but most farms lacked the machinery, irrigation, genetically-modified seeds and subsidies to be able to compete with the more productive American farms.

Formation of the Zapatistas

Named after Emiliano Zapata, a revolutionary peasant from the early 20th century, the Zapatistas emerged to fight for the rights of Mexico's indigenous groups. Known by their Spanish acronym, EZLN, the group was founded in 1983 in Chiapas, Mexico by members of the National Libertarian Forces (FLN).

The FLN was a guerrilla group founded in the late 1960s in response to the repression of the students' movement of 1968. Mexicans were angered by the political and social climate in their country, and the students decided to take a stand, organizing a demonstration on October 2nd in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas, Tlatelolco, Mexico. The Chairman and Secretary of the Interior of Mexico ordered the repression of this demonstration. It got violent – hundreds were left dead, missing, or injured. This event is famous around the world and is known as the Tlatelolco Massacre. The government claimed that the students fired the first shot and that this repression was necessary because the students were communists. This left the survivors and parents of victims of the Massacre frustrated and angry. Together they formed the FLN in Chiapas in 1969 with the goal of reforming their country.



Both the FLN and EZLN were founded in Chiapas. The FLN existed there from 1969 to 1983 when they joined with other political indigenous groups to become the Zapatistas. During this time, they created networks with the people, recruiting more members and exploring the Lacandon Jungle.

The EZLN is composed almost entirely of indigenous people (a notable exception being Subcomandante Marcos, the Zapatista's primary spokesman) and about one-third of the group is made up of women. It is a left-wing group and has declared itself to be anti-capitalism, anti-globalization, and anti-neoliberalism. They were inspired to take up arms by the other indigenous movements occurring at the time in Latin America, including the Sandinista National Liberation Front in Nicaragua and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front in El Salvador.

Chiapas, Mexico

Mexico is known for being diverse in its regions. Each part of the country has a rich history that is quite distinct from the parts around it. Chiapas has one of Mexico's largest indigenous populations – a quarter of its inhabitants are indigenous – and is also one of its poorest states. It lies in the southernmost region of Mexico.

Chiapas was violently conquered and its people continue to resist governmental control to this day. This resistance binds the different indigenous groups that live there together, despite their different languages and traditions that they have managed to preserve. This was important for the EZLN's growth because these groups were angry with the government and were the kind of people they needed to fight with them.

In the 1960-1970s, the people of Chiapas made peaceful protests for land reform but were met with indifference and increased repression from landholders. The formation of the EZLN, among other small guerrilla groups, was the response of the repressed people of Chiapas to decades of frustration. The Zapatistas concluded that if their peaceful protests brought about no change, then the only way to solve the problem was through violence.

Lacandon Jungle

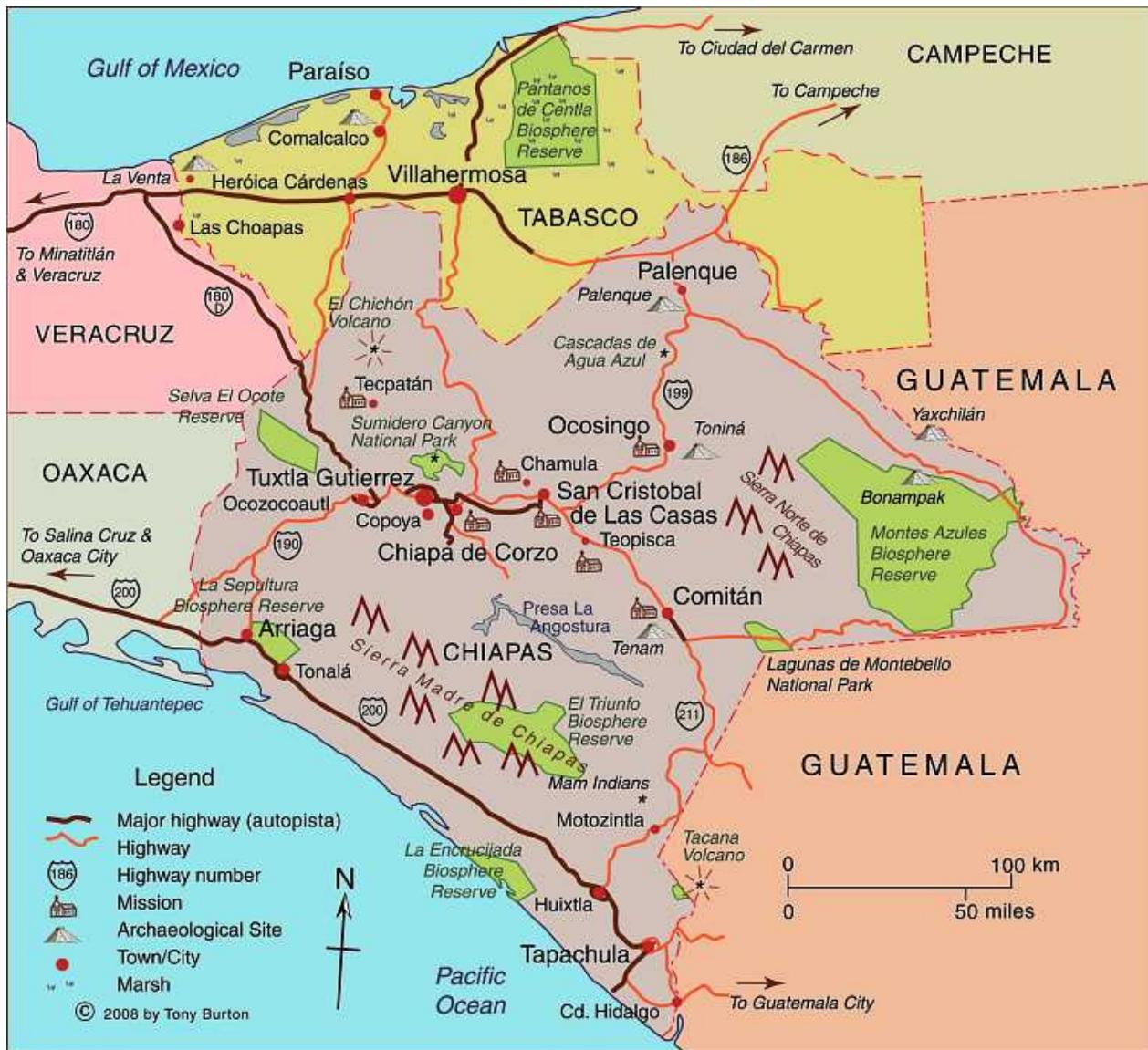
The Lacandon Jungle (known in Spanish as La Selva Lacandona) is a rainforest that stretches from Chiapas to Guatemala. It is a hiding place for the Zapatista guerrillas.

The Lacandon natives are reclusive. They retreated to their jungle when the Spanish appeared in Mexico and did not reemerge until the 19th and 20th centuries. They are one of the most isolated societies in the world, and they have been living on this land for over 400 years. They are direct descendents of the Maya and the Mayan ruins in the jungle are important to their culture.

The Zapatistas attempted to recruit the Lacandon natives to their cause but the Lacandon people did not trust the Zapatistas. They thought of them as people coming to invade their lands and steal their cattle. There was also a language barrier: the Lacandon natives and other indigenous groups spoke various indigenous languages while the founders of the EZLN spoke Spanish. This made it difficult for the Zapatistas to infiltrate the indigenous groups. They first had to befriend and establish relationships with natives that were bilingual and get them to convince their groups that the EZLN wanted to help them and could be trusted.

Another issue with the Lacandon Jungle is that it is the location of several important archaeological sites, including some that have yet to be excavated. This is problematic because the

Zapatistas want this land for farming but it is being used for excavations. International environmental advocates also protest Zapatista takeover of this land for farming because the land is already being farmed by the natives of the Lacandon. Any more farming would quickly deplete the quality of the soil.



This map shows the locations of archaeological sites and rainforest reserves in Chiapas. The Zapatistas used the Lacandon and the nearby mountain ranges to hide from the government.

Causes of the Uprising in 1994

Historically, the Zapatista Uprising in Chiapas, Mexico began the same day that NAFTA went into effect: on New Year's Day of 1994. However, NAFTA was not the only cause of the revolt. The removal of Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution by President Salinas in 1991 was also a factor. Article 27 protected native communal lands from being privatized or sold by the government and the removal of this article caused fear and anger in the indigenous community. The uprising gained international attention, especially in the United States and Canada since they had just tied themselves to Mexico through NAFTA. It also resulted in a lack of confidence from foreign investors in Mexico since an unstable country is unlikely to be able to fulfill their promises.

(More details about the causes of the Uprising can be found in the Committee Goals section of this guide)

Committee Goals

¡Tierra y Libertad!

Our committee begins on December 1, 1993, one month before the historical Zapatista Uprising began. As a committee, you can choose to go the direction that the EZLN went and follow their plans exactly or you may take the committee in an entirely different direction or some combination of the two. Either way, it is important that you keep the Zapatista's goals at the center of whatever steps you choose to take.

According to the Hemispheric Institute, the signing of NAFTA is generally agreed to be the most direct catalyst for the rebellion, but additional significant factors include “a combination of ecological crisis, lack of available productive land, the drying up of nonagricultural sources of income, the political and religious reorganization of indigenous communities since the 1960s, and the re-articulation of ethnic identities with emancipatory political discourses” (Harvey, 1998). It should be the goal of the committee to bring about change on the issues the Zapatistas are fighting for. Below is a list of grievances the EZLN has with the Mexican government.

NAFTA

Subcomandante Marcos, the face of the Zapatistas, declared NAFTA to be “nothing more than a death sentence for the indigenous ethnicities.” For the indigenous people, NAFTA represented the recolonization of their country. As detailed in the Background Information section of this guide, NAFTA was threatening to Mexican indigenous groups because labor was much cheaper in Mexico than it was in the US or Canada so corporations were likely to move their manufacturing and distribution centers there. This would cause environmental harm and lead to the selling of indigenous lands to corporations by the government, further violating indigenous rights.

Land Disputes

As mentioned in the Background Information section, Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution, which provided protections for indigenous communal lands from being bought or sold by the government, was removed by President Salinas in 1991. This meant even less protections for indigenous people under the law. As a committee, delegates will be at odds with the Mexican government, the Lacandon Maya, archaeologists, and environmental activists to seize the lands that they feel they deserve.

Access to Healthcare, Food, and Water

In the 1990s, Chiapas had the highest morbidity and mortality rates in all of Mexico for infectious diseases like malaria and tuberculosis. Mortality rates from diarrheal infections for children under five years of age were three times higher than that of other regions in Mexico. In 1991, nearly 50% of households in Chiapas lacked piped drinking water and toilet facilities. According to the Australian Institute of International Affairs, 70% of Chiapa citizens suffered from malnutrition. In Chiapas, 15,000 people die every year of curable diseases. The government neglects them because they are poor and indigenous. Zapatistas cited the healthcare factor as one of their main reasons for taking up arms, saying that they would rather fire bullets than continue to watch their children die of curable illnesses.

Marginalization of Indigenous People

The Mexican Constitution provides for indigenous autonomy, giving indigenous groups the right to self-determine their education and infrastructure. This also gives them the right to be free from discrimination. However, Mexico is divided into states and each state has its own constitution. Some states have the same protections for indigenous people as the Mexican Constitution while others have less or even no provisions at all for indigenous groups.

Positions and Portfolios

Each of the figure in this committee has been endowed with certain portfolio powers that we hope you will explore and take full advantage of. Some positions are well-known Zapatistas with added powers and new details, while still others are historically based but mostly contrived by your staff. Take advantage of the creative opportunities for your role, but remember to stay grounded in realistic circumstances.

Zapatista ideology maintains that comandantes have no special control over the rest of the movement and are mainly well-recognized spokespeople. In general, these titles are not deterministic of significance and only allude to specific areas of expertise.

Rafael Guillén Vicente (Subcomandante Marcos)

Known as Subcomandante Marcos, this man is the notorious face of the EZLN. Vicente never confirmed or denied that he is Marcos, but the Mexican government has declared that Vicente is the man behind the balaclava (facemask) that Marcos is known for. He addressed crowds, appeared on television, and wrote passionate articles detailing the desires of the Zapatistas and justifying the violence of the Uprising. Unlike the other Zapatista leaders who speak only their indigenous languages, Marcos speaks fluent Spanish, which is why he is the face of the Uprising. Subcomandante Marcos commands his own camp of Zapatista militants.

Javier Elorriaga Berdegue (Comandante Vicente)

Known by his nom de guerre, “Vicente,” Berdegue is a well-known Mexican journalist and alleged Zapatista leader. Vicente is married to the widely known Subcomandante Elisa. Vicente has a good written command of several languages and is an expert in printed communication. Although he has previously served as a press and government liaison for the FLN and EZLN, the Mexican government is highly suspicious of the couple and it is thought they are both under constant and deep scrutiny.

Fernando Yáñez Muñoz (Comandante Germán)

Muñoz changed his nom de guerre to his brother’s name, Germán, after this brother was killed by Mexican security forces in 1974. Germán is a well-connected and long-standing member of the Zapatistas who has experience in many areas, from training new recruits in guerilla warfare to editing the EZLN magazine, *Rebeldía*. In fact, he likely initiated the EZLN reform of 1983. Germán is married to another member of the EZLN, Lucía.

María Gloria Benavides Guevara (Subcomandante Elisa)

Since her early teen years, Benavides has been involved with various communist movements in Mexico. She is notably not indigenous, but remains an influential voice in the EZLN through her long-standing and staunch personal belief in gender equality and indigenous rights. Elisa spends a lot of time translating for indigenous people within the social action divisions of the EZLN, including health and education missions in the Lacandon jungle. She also is a regular contributor to EZLN internal publications.

Silvia Fernández Hernández (Comandanta Gabriela)

Although Fernández left the Zapatista movement early in 1993, she has now returned to see the launch of the great revolution. Fernández is the main editor for all EZLN newsletters, propaganda, and external memos. She is married to Comandante Rodrigo and has connections to the Autonomous Metropolitan University (UAM).

Rodolfo (Comandante Rodolfo)

Born and raised in Chihuahua, Mexico, Rodolfo is the most mysterious of the six founding members of the reorganized EZLN. Since 1985, he directed the northern branch of the EZLN's predecessor movement in Villa Front. He is bringing his on-the-ground expertise and leadership skills back to the south in Chiapas to aid with the upcoming surge, but he is not well-integrated with the other members present in this council.

Mercedes García López (Comandanta Sofia)

Not well known and rather mysterious, Comandanta Sofia is thought to be from Oaxaca, Mexico and of indigenous descent. She quietly orchestrates the logistics behind the EZLN's meetings and announcements, and has connections to far-flung members of the organization. Comandanta Sofia knows the geography of Lacandon jungle well and is an intuitive planner, so her knowledge will prove useful when making strategic diplomacy and military moves.

Héctor Ochoa (Subcomandante Pedro)

Although Ochoa was born in metropolitan Mexico City, he has been an instrumental member of the reformed EZLN since 1984. Although he has faltered in health on occasion since committing himself to the movement, he is currently a strong leader who demands respect from his fellow men in the Chiapas. His friendship with the other founding members, especially Subcomandante Marcos, remains active. Subcomandante Pedro commands his own camp of Zapatista militants.

Esther (Comandanta Esther)

Esther was born to a poor, indigenous family in Chiapas and has been an activist for indigenous causes since her youth. Along with gender equality and political rights for indigenous people, environmental sustainability is a major concern for Esther. She constantly reminds her counterparts of the dire lack of necessities such as clean water, infrastructure, and healthcare in rural areas. Esther is popular among EZLN members but is not well known to the Mexican government.

Ramona (Comandanta Ramona)

This major Zapatista leader is one of the most recognizable officers in the EZLN's ranks, though she has never been identified by the Mexican government. Despite Ramona's petite size, she commands attention and respect of both indigenous and Spanish Mexicans with her articulate, logical reasoning and speaking. Ramona is a major architect of the Women's Revolutionary Law, which emphasizes the importance of sexual health, professional equality, and education for women.

Jorge Santiago (Director of DESMI)

DESMI, or the organization for the Economic and Social Development of Mexican Indians, is a non-governmental organization that helps provide water infrastructure, basic education, and job opportunities to indigenous populations in Mexico. Jorge Santiago is also known as Jacobo and has successfully embezzled some DESMI funds to the EZLN. However, the Mexican government is suspicious of DESMI and Santiago for their ties to the Zapatista movement. Santiago also has an American ex-wife and frequently visits California to see her and their sons.

Samuel Ruíz García (Government Liaison and Bishop)

Ruíz is a Roman Catholic Bishop in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, which is where the Uprising will likely begin. Tasked by the Vatican to persuade the indigenous Mayan people to convert to Catholicism, Ruíz failed to do this and instead is advocating for the rights of the Mayans, even creating the DESMI organization. As a somewhat neutral party, Ruíz has the ability to negotiate with both the Zapatistas and the Mexican government. However, he is not a Zapatista and therefore may find himself out of place at some moments in this committee.

Roger Magil Yáñez Muñoz (Director of Medicine)

Roger Muñoz, the eldest brother of Comandante Germán, got his start with the Zapatistas distributing medical supplies in the 1970s. Now as a doctor, he has been selected to oversee all things related to healthcare and medicine in the EZLN and in the indigenous communities as well. He will have to coordinate with local leaders, non-governmental organizations, and existing healthcare providers in order to resolve one of the most basic complaints of the indigenous communities the EZLN aims to serve: lack of adequate healthcare.

Gloria Muñoz (Head Secretary)

Also known as Lucía, the wife of Comandante Germán has been involved with indigenous resistance movements since at least 1968. Her expertise is writing and editing (as well as her marital status) has aided her in climbing the Zapatista officer ranks. She is the head secretary of the movement and has the ear of both her husband and Subcomandante Marcos. When not editing EZLN publications or reviewing other documents, she can be found among the indigenous communities conducting political advocacy lessons.

Yolanda (Major Ana María)

Yolanda, or Ana María, is most widely recognized for her marriage to Subcomandante Marcos. However, Zapatista ideology has been in her blood since her early teen years and she has independently achieved great things within the EZLN. Formerly the director of recruitment in northern Chiapas and an undercover operative in a Mexican hospital, Ana María has been involved with many facets of the EZLN's work. She currently leads her own regiment of EZLN fighters.

Humberto Trejo (Comandante Tacho)

With his roots deep in the Tojolabal-speaking region of Chiapas, as a young man Trejo was sent to study in a Catholic school, where he learned a variety of religious and academic subjects. Currently, Tacho works to connect local cooperatives and farmers with the EZLN cause. Outside of his responsibilities in the EZLN, he runs various unions for poor indigenous people in the region.

Francisco Gómez (Capitán Hugo)

As the former secretary of one of the most important unions in Chiapas and then leader of a militant group called ANCIEZ, Francisco Gómez is an experienced leader whose dedication to the indigenous cause is unquestionable. He currently works in the arm of the EZLN that organizes large-scale events and protests. As Capitán, he has earned the respect and honor of all of the Comandantes, and has a distinctly resolute, firm personality.

Lázaro Hernández (Director of Recruitment)

Involved early on with such characters as Francisco Gómez and Samuel Ruíz García, Lázaro Hernández, is a key member of various indigenous groups including Quiptic and the Chiapas Indigenous Council. Also known as Jesús, he is well-known in the EZLN for organizing a program to unite poor, indigenous people with industrial workers from northern Mexico. Currently, he uses his role in unions and councils to funnel young people into the EZLN.



Old Antonio (Principal Advisor)

A long-time friend of Subcomandante Marcos, Old Antonio has been a friend of the EZLN and its mission for a decade. Although he mainly acts as a civilian advisor, his presence in the villages will prove critical as the EZLN works to expand its reach. He often consults EZLN leaders on ethical questions and keeps the movement attuned with ancient indigenous values.

Mario (Major of La Calabazas camp)

Mario joined the EZLN in 1984 and rose through the ranks to take command of his own camp in 1986. His intimate knowledge of the terrain and languages of the region make him a trustworthy and skillful leader. He is a close friend of Yolanda, as they were in the same EZLN training group as youngsters. He now controls the day-to-day activities of the Las Calabazas camp.

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