Convention sets program for Mexican revolution

BY ABDUL ALKALIMAT

SAN CRISTOBAL DE LAS CASAS, Chiapas, Mexico — For four days (August 6-9), the revolutionary and democratic forces in Mexico held a convention to begin preparing for fundamental social and political change.

With the action of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), the Lacandón Jungle of Chiapas became the focal point of armed struggle against the one-party dictatorship of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and President Carlos Salinas de Gortari.

By hosting the National Democratic Convention, the Lacandón Jungle became the focal point of a political struggle to define a program for massive civil resistance and political transformation of the Mexican state.

The people of Mexico are being pulled into a ground swell of social revolution in this era of the North American Free Trade Agreement. The opening shot was the emergence of the EZLN on January 1. As one journalist put it, "Many Mexicans went to bed dreaming of NAFTA and becoming like the USA, and when they woke up they didn't find the USA, but [instead]..."

Mexico's democratic forces meet to prepare for fundamental change

on the five main topics of the convention: (1) the inviability of the one-party dictatorship of the PRI; (2) the 11-point program of the EZLN; (3) a peaceful transition based on massive civil resistance; (4) a transitional government; and (5) a new constitution.

There were two main parts of the convention: one day of workshops in the city of San Cristóbal de las Casas on the five main topics, and a two-day plenary session deep in the Lacandón Jungle.

Each workshop had at least 1,000 delegates. The morning session was devoted to convention rules, five-minute speeches from at least 30 delegates chosen at random, and the submission of written documents. The afternoon was devoted to proposals to take to the jungle.

Great unity was reached on the program proposed by the EZLN, but two issues were tabled until the plenary session.

One was the possible convention endorsement of support. In a major speech given by Subcomandante Marcos of the EZLN, the point was made that the focus of political struggle at this stage is the question of electoral fraud. Because fraud has already occurred, forces at the convention were urged to prepare massive social protest to force the government out.

The EZLN announced that while it is an army and, as such, would never surrender its arms, the decision to escalate the armed struggle to overthrow the state was being turned over to the convention leadership.

Revolutionaries in the United States must stand ready to unite with this revolutionary upsurge, to stand shoulder to shoulder with our comrades in Mexico. The main task is to deepen and broaden the fight right here in the United States, especially on the question of immigration and the rights of the undocumented workers who will be forced to cross the border during the coming struggle.

These are the times we dream of, the time when the poor masses rise to take control of history. Forward, comrades all, to the work that we must do!

Abdul Alkalimat is the International Secretary of the NOC. He attended the National Democratic Convention in Chiapas as the representative of the National Organizing Committee.
Participants in the National Democratic Convention held in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico.

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Arms buildup in Mexico

Heavy-duty riot-control equipment recently arrived in Mexico from the United States and Russia. The Washington Post reported August 7.

The equipment includes:
- Eighteen 13-ton water cannons from Cadillac Gage Textron in Warren, Michigan. These cost $500,000 each and are used for crowd control.
- Several 17-ton Cobra riot-control vehicles from Custom Armoring in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. These vehicles are equipped with plows to destroy barricades, indelible dye to mark protesters for subsequent arrest and rows of gun ports.
- Twenty-three tanks and armored vehicles, unloaded August 4 in Veracruz from the Russian-flag vessel Ulan Bator.

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