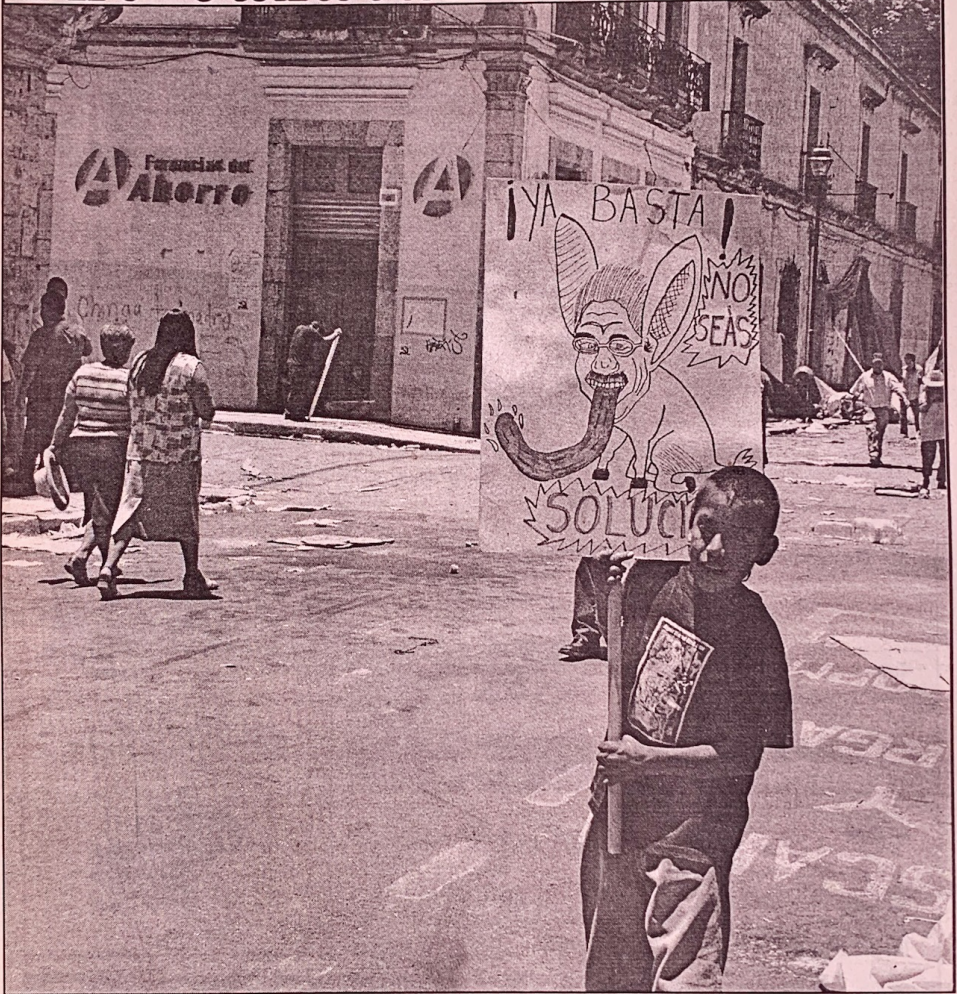




Oaxaca Times

Volume XV No 212 THE INNER LIFE OF OAXACA • AUGUST 2006 www.oaxacatimes.com

The Oaxacan Revolution

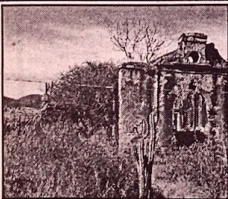


Find

Feature

Food

Film



The Mixtec Cradle

Page 4



Mexican Comics

Page 8 & 9



Oaxaca's Energy Drink

Page 12



Zoomorphic

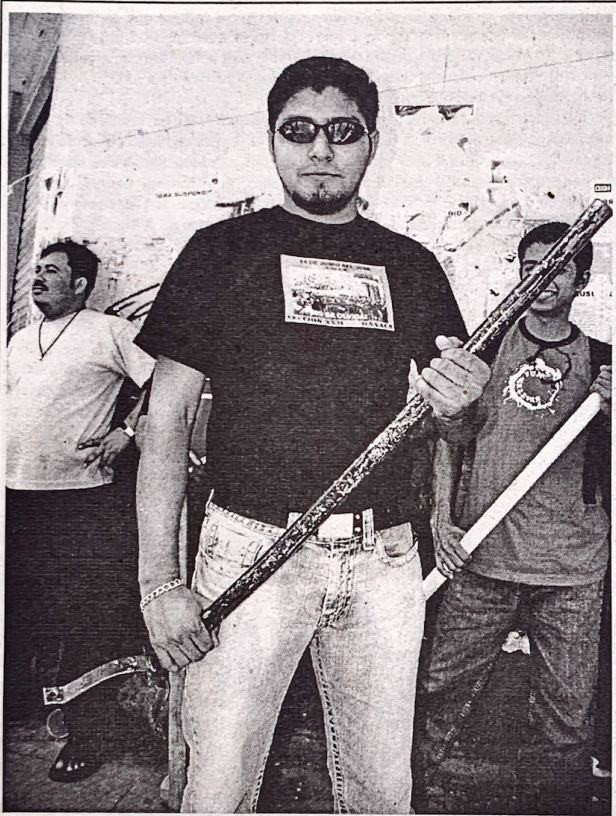
Page 13

Learn Spanish at the ICC: Oaxaca's Best Language School

Housing, Health, Horseback riding... see our classifieds section

The Oaxacan Revolution

What is going on



Teachers controlling the city's center

It doesn't take much effort to realize that something is happening in Oaxaca; it just takes a stroll along the streets and through the city's zocalo. However, it takes a little more to understand exactly what is going on. As always, when politics are involved, it is never easy to reach consensus; people's opinion are diverse and contrasting. While some show a vehement aversion towards the whole situation, some speak of a true revolution in bloom. The only thing in common is that nobody remains indifferent.

First a local conflict, the Oaxaca affair has made national and also international headlines. Amidst all the hustle and bustle, it is not easy to know what has been going on, much less to figure out what is going to happen.

It all began more than two months ago with the yearly teachers' strike. Every year, during May, the teachers' union and the government negotiate the terms of the collective contract. As means of pressure, teachers suspend classes and organize permanent demon-

strations in many cities around. These negotiations normally orbit around money but other demands are also considered. This year the first protest took

place on May 22 and since then, around 70,000 teachers, almost all of Oaxaca's mentors, began living on the streets of central Oaxaca. The main square and 60 blocks around were taken as campground.

Originally, the demands were higher salaries and better working conditions. Sometimes it is a matter of days or weeks; sometimes it lasted for a month. Like in a theater play where everybody knows the part to play, the normal happy ending is a compromise in which not all the demands are met nor dismissed, however, the script changed. Seeing that it was monetarily impossible to satisfy what was asked for, the state's governor, Ulises Ruiz Ortiz tried to use force to end the conflict. Not only did he fail to finish with the problem, but as a matter of fact made it harder to solve.

14 de Junio No Se Olvida

On June 13, the city went to sleep as usual; the next morning was far from the usual. Before daybreak, while the teachers slept peacefully, many with their families, the state's police attempted a violent eviction. Armed with sticks and with the aid of a helicopter that threw tear gas over the protesters, the police managed to recover the zocalo, but just for some hours. Teachers regrouped and recuperated the zocalo some hours later, took eight police men as hostages and forced the police to recoil. Immediately the people went out to help the teachers, fed them, gave them water and shelter. The city was paralyzed the whole day. Deserted streets in which only debris remained



Tear gas bombs that were thrown over the protestors

The Oaxacan Revolution...

...continues fromrom page 3

were silent witnesses that spoke eloquently of what happened. Rumors of two to eight dead teachers spread; these casualties were never confirmed and the teachers themselves belied them weeks later.

it would take more than well-intentioned phrase to unite a polarized society. The events of June 14 revived the old conflict and the educational demands became political demands. On June 16, the Popular Assembly of the People of

organizations and other citizens marched to the Llano Park. They demanded the end of the strike and the return to normality. Dressed in white, in a clear call for peace, those who didn't support the APPO expressed themselves. Rumors of a violent confrontation between the teachers, who remained retrenched in the zocalo and around, and people from government-controlled organizations were heard but nothing ever happened.

Since then the negotiations between the local and federal government have remained stagnant, Ruiz's resignation, which seems unlikely to happen, is not negotiable, that's both parts' position.

Dialogue has been cancelled, but peace has prevailed. In spite of the absence of police force in the central area of the city, things remain in calm. With the exception of a few pickpockets that take advantage of the situation, life tracks on in the city. Protests have not stopped, roads have been blocked, TV and radio stations taken over, government offices blocked, and the famous Guelaguetza celebration was cancelled as a result of a boycott (an alternative free Guelaguetza was organized instead). However, the general atmosphere is peaceful. It is true that many find the graffiti, banners and posters unattractive, but that is far from the media reports of a violence-stricken city. Locals and tourists walk around, sit down to take a coffee and read the newspaper. While some see it as a peaceful revolution, others aren't so optimistic. However, everybody agrees that the only way out is a peaceful one.



Protesting teachers

Ya cayó...

Two days after the unsuccessful police action, a massive demonstration against the use of violence received the support of thousands of Oaxaqueños. In a city of approximately 500,000 inhabitants, a 300,000 people demonstration is quite an event. Even those who didn't support the teachers' demands or their ways to express their dissent rejected the use of force. Not even a merciless thunderstorm prevented the people from demonstrating. The events of the 14th triggered off the protest, but an older distress was the bottom of it.

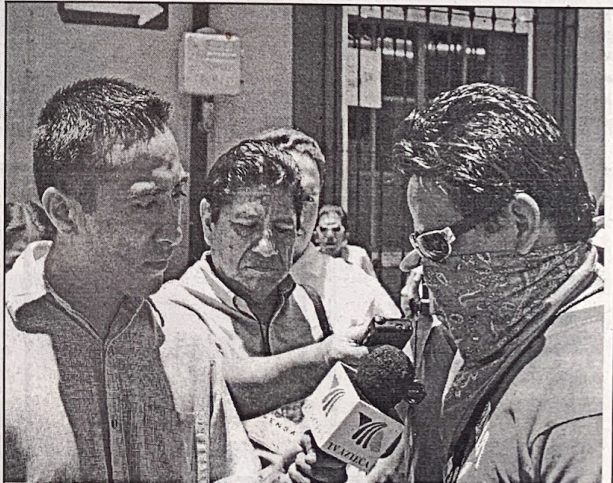
Two years earlier, Oaxaca went through a complex political conflict. Considered a PRI bastion for many years, it seemed impossible to snatch the government from PRI's hands, until 2004. As the later victorious Ulises Ruiz and Gabino Cue campaigned, it seemed like for the first time the opposition would win an election in the state. Mutual accusations of all sorts were made and in the end, in the midst of fraud allegations, the PRI maintained the government and the control of the local congress. Polarization remained, though quiet and awaiting the moment to emerge again.

Ruiz's government motto 'Con unidad' (with unity) is a call to harmony but

Oaxaca (APPO) was formed. Under the leadership of Oaxaca's teachers' union, several organizations united their efforts to achieve something that seemed impossible: the governor's resignation.

Por la Paz Y el Dialogo

As a response, the government organized a demonstration for 'peace and dialogue'. A large group of people, including government personnel, business



National media have been covering the conflict