

Who is 'Bishop' Samuel Ruiz, and why is he aiding narco-terrorism?

by Carlos Méndez and Cynthia Rush

From the moment that the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) emerged in Chiapas on Jan. 1, the name most frequently mentioned in relation to the problems of Chiapas and indigenism has been that of Samuel Ruiz, bishop of the diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas. For 34 years, Ruiz has been the ringleader of the Marxist Theology of Liberation network in Chiapas, reportedly including over 7,000 catechists, which together with numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has created an armed narco-terrorist insurgency under the banner of "Indian rights."

This is hardly a secret. The joke now making the rounds among some of Mexico's bishops goes like this: "How do you say 'Comandante Marcos' [the EZLN's spokesman] in Tzotzil?" one of the languages of the Chiapas Indians. The answer: "Samuel Ruiz." The bishop is so identified with the EZLN insurgency that leaders of the Indian council of the state of Guerrero delivered two documents to him on Jan. 30 and asked if he would deliver them to the EZLN's deputy commander Marcos. The documents expressed the Guerrero group's support for the EZLN.

Ruiz's participation is central to the two goals of the EZLN's establishment controllers: first, to destroy the Mexican nation-state, by splitting it apart into separate ethnic enclaves; and secondly, to destroy the Catholic Church itself, by creating a pagan, pre-Christian "autochthonous church." In this effort, Ruiz works as part of an international network of Theology of Liberation schismatics within the Catholic Church, including the notorious Cardinal Evaristo Arns of Brazil.

It is precisely because, as the Vatican stated, that Ruiz "offered an interpretation of the Gospel based on Marxism, giving a reductionist vision of man and of the work of Jesus Christ," that just a few months ago the pope had given instructions to the papal nuncio in Mexico, Msgr. Jerónimo Prigione, to remove Ruiz from his post.

For reasons having to do with the internal Mexican situation, Ruiz was not removed, however, and when the Zapatistas appeared on the scene on Jan. 1, he leaped to national prominence. His role as a mediator with the EZLN is such that he is today portrayed as the virtual leader of the Mexican Catholic Church. So confident is Ruiz of his power that in a Jan. 11 press conference in Chiapas, he baldly asserted,

"I am no longer the bishop of San Cristóbal de las Casas, but the interlocutor in the name of the entire Mexican church, explicitly and incontrovertibly supported and accompanied by it." As Ruiz made these remarks, he was flanked by the church's leader in Mexico, Cardinal Corripio Ahumada.

A schismatic offensive

As recently as October 1993, the Vatican's Congregation of Bishops charged that Ruiz "bases his pastoral work on a doctrinal principle which does not cohere in all aspects with the teachings of the church." In fact, Ruiz is totally open about his ideological stance and his attempts to split the church. His 1975 book *Biblical Theology of Liberation* affirmed that Christ was, above all, a revolutionary and was crucified for being a "revolutionary prophet" because he "brought the Gospel to the poor and humble, the traditional victims of all kinds of injustices and violence." To understand God in history, Ruiz added, "it is necessary to have a scientific analysis" and that "today we have many historical analyses based fundamentally on Marx."

Ruiz's "defense" of Chiapas's Indians is merely a pretext for his efforts to create a schism in the Catholic Church, and serve the long-sought British aim of destroying Ibero-America's Indian populations by forcing them to define their humanity in ethnic or physiological terms. The Catholic Church in Ibero-America is the institution which has defended the concept of man created in the image of God, *imago Dei*. These degraded populations are then used as cannon fodder in the fight to destroy western Christian civilization which is premised on the same concept of man. Bishop Ruiz resorts to the British-created "Black Legend," the lie that everything related to Spain and its evangelization of the New World is "authoritarian" and repressive. The church, he claims, is responsible "on the continent for the schizophrenia experienced by indigenous peoples."

In a presentation given Feb. 4 at the University of Guadalajara, Ruiz expressed this openly, complaining that in the evangelization of America, "to the evangelizing message was added an identification with western culture, which was even baptized as Christian, [and] imposed on [the Indians'] shoulders, such that in order for one to realize himself in his most profound being, which is religion, he would have to

cease to be himself, and abandon his culture, to realize himself outside of it." If the church is "not incarnated within each culture, it becomes the oppressor of all cultures," he concluded.

But the "red bishop" doesn't restrict himself simply to academic prattling. In one press conference, he threatened that the Zapatistas would unleash further terrorism if the results of negotiations with the government were not to its liking. While claiming to only be the "mediator" between the EZLN and the government, Ruiz said that "if a peaceful negotiated settlement is not reached in the Chiapas conflict, Mexico will enter the irreversible path of violence and savagery, in which terrorism will also show its face." Ruiz also echoes the Anglo-American line against the Mexican Army. "If we want to be truthful," he said, "we have to say that there have been a greater number of violations committed by the Mexican Army than by the Zapatista National Liberation Army."

Create history . . . with the Zapatistas?

In a presentation given at the Pontifical University of Mexico on Oct. 30, 1992, in which he raised the idea of an "autochthonous church," Ruiz put forward the hypothesis which in large part explains his role vis-à-vis the EZLN. "Now we arrive at a particularly difficult problem in many [indigenous] cultures," he said. "Unlike other groups, there is no historical consciousness; there are no national heroes in these ethnic groups. There are feast days and saints' days, but there isn't . . . any historical consciousness.

"Now, when I confirmed the lack of a conscious history in our diocese, this posed a serious pastoral problem. How could we incarnate the Gospel in a human group which doesn't possess, at least explicitly, historical consciousness? Because Christianity is not just a group of dogmas to be accepted, or a combination of laws to be obeyed, although there are dogmas and moral laws. It is, above all, the history of salvation. So, we came up with the following—we had to create history."

Taking into account the rest of Ruiz's conference address, one wonders whether the EZLN's use of Emiliano Zapata represents the importation of a hero for the Indians of Chiapas, and if the eruption of the armed and violent EZLN seeks to create a hero through the route of immolation.

On Jan. 30, the daily *Unomásuno* reported that "documents left at a radio station by the Zapatista National Liberation Army during its takeover of the Independencia municipal building discuss the pastoral work done at the San Cristóbal de las Casas diocese: 'From the word of God, the people organize as the forgers of their own destiny to accelerate the process of liberation, structural change and, with a new faith, making real the kingdom of God.'" Referring to 1986, the *Unomásuno* reporter noted that at that time, "the San Cristóbal diocese had already posed as a decisive challenge the [task] of working with the people in their struggle, explaining

'that beyond discussing whether only to do so in the phases of consciousness-raising and organization—but not in violence—our challenge is how to support, from our ecclesiastical identity, the people of Chiapas in all stages of the process.'"

Ruiz is a narco-terrorist

Ruiz's denial of direct involvement in organizing the EZLN, and claims that the group's emergence is merely a "desperate" indigenous response to terrible conditions in the region, are belied by the evidence which has emerged over the past six weeks.

In an interview published in an early February issue of *Siempre!* magazine, a high-level Guatemalan military officer provided extensive details about the relationship between the EZLN and Guatemalan terrorists, and their ties to other Central American terrorists. "Several years ago," this officer said, "the Guatemalan Army's intelligence service detected the important work of the bishop of San Cristóbal, Samuel Ruiz, on behalf of the guerrillas." The Guatemalan officer pointed to the fact that Ruiz operated a hospital in Chiapas for Guatemalan guerrillas wounded in combat, and offered many details on how other religious individuals in the area organized support for Mexican and Guatemalan narco-terrorists.

On Feb. 3, the daily *Excelsior* reported on the investigative work done by French writer Michel Algrin, who reported to the Catholic magazine *30 Giorni* that German charitable organizations such, as Adveniat and Misere, had sent sizable sums of money to numerous subversive groups in the developing sector, among them the Fray Bartolomé de las Casas Human Rights Center in San Cristóbal. The center, run by Samuel Ruiz, is the major non-governmental organization and coordinating entity for pro-guerrilla activities in the Chiapas region.

But Adveniat and Misere are not the only financiers of the center. Such prestigious institutions of the Anglo-American establishment as the Ford Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation have generously contributed to the center's "indigenous" projects.

It is no surprise that some of the continent's leading liberation theologians, many of whom are linked to narco-terrorist subversion, are among Ruiz's staunchest defenders. During a recent visit to Mexico, Brazilian Bishop Pedro Casaldaliga of São Félix raved that the Zapatista insurgency "is an explicit response to the neo-liberal [free trade] system. . . . No matter what happens in Chiapas, because it is Indian and is an answer to a system of exclusion and death, it is a continental signal." Revealing the truly degrading, Jacobin purpose behind these insurgencies, Casaldaliga warned that he hoped that the Mexican government "wouldn't lead the Zapatistas to suicide," noting that in Brazil, some communities of Guarani Indians had committed suicide "when their lands were taken away from them."