

Dateline Mexico by Carlos Méndez

Salinas backs schismatic bishop

The government is supporting a bishop linked to theology of liberation and to the separatist and guerrilla movements.

Despite statements to the contrary, the Mexican government is using a recently negotiated agreement with Papal Nuncio Jerónimo Prigione governing church-state relations to support a schismatic bishop, Samuel Ruiz of San Cristóbal de las Casas in the southern state of Chiapas, whom the Vatican has ordered to resign because of his ties to separatist and Marxist movements in Chiapas, which borders Guatemala.

It is a longstanding goal of Freemasonry to provoke a split in the Mexican Catholic Church, which it tried to do both in the last century and in this, during the presidency of Plutarco Elías Calles. The new church-state law, agreed to last year by Mexican President Carlos Salinas and Prigione, gives the state the authority to require each diocese in Mexico to register independently, as if it were an independent church, rather than having the Catholic Church register as one national body. This gives the state the power to assist schismatic tendencies at the diocese level, a power which threatens the church.

This is extremely dangerous in Chiapas where, according to press reports, a guerrilla movement has been founded by government officials, including Adolfo Orive Alba and Hugo Andrés Araujo. It is connected with practitioners of the Marxist "liberation theology," and with movements that utilize indigenism as an instrument of class struggle and of separatism. Bishop Ruiz has been connected to these movements.

In his characteristically evasive

style, Prigione began in mid-October to say that Ruiz would be asked to resign, triggering a wave of statements defending the bishop.

Suddenly, without any apparent reason for getting involved, the Government Ministry issued a release on Oct. 30 stating that "decisions concerning the bishop of San Cristóbal de las Casas are a matter strictly between Ruiz and the ecclesiastical authorities of the church." Belying this statement of neutrality, the ministry's director of religious affairs, Niceforo Guerrero Reynoso, defended Ruiz, stating on Nov. 3 that the pastoral work carried out by Samuel Ruiz "has been very important," and pointing to the 33 years he had run the San Cristóbal de las Casas diocese as proof.

On Nov. 4, Government Secretary Patrocinio González Garrido, the former governor of the state of Chiapas, traveled to Chiapas to personally hand Ruiz and two other Chiapas bishops certification of their dioceses under the new law. Claiming that the state "will not intervene in the internal life of religious associations," Secretary González never explained why he was hand-delivering Ruiz his certificate, when all other bishops had to go to Mexico City to get theirs, if the gesture was not meant as a deliberate show of support.

On that same day, Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú, an intimate of Mexican President Salinas, sent Pope John Paul II a letter on Ruiz's behalf. The Guatemalan Menchú, a backer of Yucután indigenism and separatism, is closely tied to the

URNG narco-terrorist movement in Guatemala, and was recently honored by Fidel Castro. Her message to the pope asserted that "for the indigenous peoples of America, the firing of Don Samuel leaves us without a pastor who knows how to relate to us. This measure is for us one more affront, added to those we have received in the last 500 years of history."

The head of the Mexican Bishops Conference, Cuernavaca Bishop Luis Reynoso Cervantes, told *Proceso* magazine on Nov. 8 that it took the Vatican to force Nuncio Prigione to fire Ruiz. The Vatican Congregation of Bishops gave Prigione its letter ordering Ruiz to resign, telling him "to personally give it to Samuel Ruiz. Until then . . . he had refused on principle to deliver the letter. . . . But the Congregation ordered him personally . . . and [he] had to obey."

Bishop Reynoso also revealed that Ruiz "travels a lot. He is always going to Europe . . . Germany, France, Italy . . . and now he just returned from South America. No one knows where he gets the money for these expensive trips. From the poor? It is a mystery." In fact, when Prigione tried to hand him the letter, he was attending a meeting of bishops in São Paulo, Brazil, a city whose archbishop Cardinal Evaristo Arns is, like Ruiz, a noted "progressive" churchman.

Ruiz has denied all charges, but said he will obey the order from the pope to resign. On Nov. 11, making clear his intention to set up a schismatic church, he described as "urgent" the emergence of an autochthonous church which would not conflict with indigenous cultures, nor with the poor. Days earlier, during a seminar at Mexico's National Autonomous University, Ruiz said that his work with the indigenous communities was intended to encourage "a tremendous politicization."