

## Dateline Mexico by Rubén Cota Meza

### Ruiz resigns as 'mediator'

*Zapatista "Commander" Bishop Samuel Ruiz abandons the charade of neutrality in Chiapas insurgency.*

**D**uring mass on June 7, Samuel Ruiz, Bishop of San Cristóbal de las Casas, announced that he is ending his role as "mediator" between the so-called Zapatista National Liberation Army and the government, but not before issuing another of his provocations against the national government. Presenting himself as the bearer of a "special illumination" which led him to recognize "the legitimacy of the just causes" raised by the January 1994 Zapatista insurgency in Chiapas, he alluded to "a constant and growing government aggression" against himself, the diocese which he heads, and "the Catholic Church of the entire country."

The Mexican government rejected Ruiz's charges as "false and deceptive," stating that "differences with Mr. Samuel Ruiz are not over his pastoral labor," but rather relate to the fact that he "has used methods and supported actions which intrude on the political arena. . . . It is unacceptable that, under the pretext of defending Indian communities, the participation of foreigners [in Mexican affairs] should be promoted."

The Papal Nuncio in Mexico, Justo Mullor García, declared that Ruiz's resignation as mediator is not a point of friction between the Church and the government, and that for Ruiz, "it is better to return to his point of departure, which is that of a bishop and of a pastor."

Ruiz's resignation came as a result of a growing national campaign, by both Mexican government and Catholic Church layers, exposing him as a partisan of the Zapatista insurrection, and not the neutral mediator he likes

to pretend to be. Things reached the breaking point when Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo, on a visit to Chiapas, spoke out against those who advocate "the theology of violence"—an unmistakable reference to the schismatic bishop. Shortly thereafter, Ruiz tendered his resignation.

The drumbeat for Ruiz's ouster was started years earlier by the Ibero-American Solidarity Movement (MSIA) of Mexico, the political movement associated with the policies of Lyndon LaRouche. It published a poster against Ruiz, headlined "Wanted, for Treason," which made national headlines across Mexico every time it was reissued over the last couple of years; it charges Ruiz with being the "Commander" of the Zapatistas, and a follower of Nazi philosopher Martin Heidegger. Then, in April of this year, the MSIA circulated tens of thousands of copies of a 32-page pamphlet featuring an historical and political analysis of the networks behind Ruiz, written by LaRouche, entitled "Fidel Castro's French Connection" (see *EIR*, Jan. 23, 1998).

Three days after Ruiz's resignation, the Zapatistas had an armed confrontation with Chiapas police, for the first time since a truce was declared on Jan. 12, 1994. The clash occurred when the police undertook to reinstate the legally elected authorities in a town in northern Chiapas. The Army was forced to intervene on behalf of the state police, and during the confrontation, six guerrillas and one police officer died, while nine were injured and 56 members of the Zapatistas' so-called "social bases" were arrested.

Ruiz has now begun a highly publicized "pastoral tour" through his diocese, together with Assistant Bishop Raúl Vera López. His diocese is the only one in which armed groups have formed, drawn from what Ruiz calls "a new era," from which will emerge "something new and strong for the struggle."

Everything suggests that "the new era" to which Ruiz refers is a renewed effort to train recruits for his autochthonous church, so-called "catechists," of whom the majority of Zapatista militants constitute the armed part. Another part of Ruiz's "catechists" are drawn from the Zapatista propagandists and "social base."

In early June, the press released a letter, dated June 23, 1997, from Felipe Arizmendi, Bishop of Tapachula, Chiapas, in which he warned Ruiz and Vera about a pamphlet that was circulating among the Tapachula catechists, entitled "Christian Brothers, Do Not Fear the Fight for Justice," signed by their "Indian and Zapatista brothers." The pamphlet, wrote Arizmendi, "tries to justify armed struggle, using biblical quotes," and invites Indians to form autonomous and rebel townships.

The content, Arizmendi wrote, "makes one think that it was written by those who live and operate in territories of the San Cristóbal diocese . . . to promote all of the previously described actions. . . . Any person to whom this pamphlet comes and who has information about what it is trying to infuse in our catechists, would not hesitate to blame the San Cristóbal diocese as responsible . . . or at least tolerant of the mentality of the pamphlet and of the cited rebelliousness." Bishop Arizmendi called on Ruiz to distance himself from those who are distributing the pamphlet—something which neither Ruiz nor Vera have yet done.