

Dateline Mexico by Carlos Méndez

Samuel Ruiz and 'the poster'

The Ibero-American Solidarity Movement has made things a little bit hot for "Comandante Ruiz" lately.

On May 3, one week after Bishop Samuel Ruiz told a group of supporters that "we brainwashed" government peace commissioner Manuel Camacho Solís, the two men publicly met in his diocese San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas. But a surprise awaited them: That very morning, the city had awakened to find itself plastered with a poster headlined "Samuel Ruiz: Wanted for Treason!"

Ruiz is the ringleader of the Marxist liberation theology network in Chiapas, which created and now protects the Zapatista insurgency.

The impact of the poster, signed by the Ibero-American Solidarity Movement (MSIA), was such that it was the lead headline in several national newspapers the next day. For example, *Excelsior* headlined its page-one article, "Propaganda against Bishop Samuel Ruiz. MCS [Manuel Camacho Solís] Is Surprised Upon Arriving in San Cristóbal."

The article, accompanied by a photograph of the poster, reported: "Upon his arrival this afternoon in San Cristóbal, Manuel Camacho Solís discovered the 'news of the day': posters against Bishop Samuel Ruiz. Attached to walls, including the front of the municipal palace just a few steps from the cathedral itself, the posters made by the Ibero-American Solidarity Movement—identical to those which appeared in Mexico City one month ago—have provoked reactions. The city, already polarized, has seen clusters of people gathered since dawn to read the poster, 'Wanted for Treason to the Fatherland' (under the photograph of Samuel Ruiz). And the posters that 'appeared' today add the

names of Camacho Solís, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas—who will be here next week—and of Comandante Marcos and the NGOs."

The fact is that the majority of the population does not back Don Samuel and his "Zapatistas," whose only real support comes from abroad, from certain news media, from the liberation theologians, and from Camacho's own political circles.

That same day, May 3, Don Samuel and Camacho took off for the Lacandona jungle of Chiapas, to meet with the terrorists of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN). Thus far, Camacho has issued no statement on the meeting, but the EZLN and Don Samuel have. On May 6, Marcos told the daily *La Jornada* that "the government is giving clear signs that the hard line is winning," and he threatened that "if there is no democracy, there will be civil war in the country."

For the EZLN, democracy means handing power over to Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the presidential candidate of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). On May 9, *El Heraldo de México* reported that the EZLN was preparing a warm welcome for Cárdenas, including a banquet in his honor, "because he has given us his full support."

Cárdenas's envoys to the EZLN were Pablo Gómez and Gilberto Rincón Gallardo, leaders of the "former" Mexican Communist Party, now part of the PRD. Cárdenas immediately accepted the invitation, adding for some strange reason that "of course, the Zapatistas did not pay nor will they pay anything toward our travel costs to that place" (*Unomásuno*, May 12).

Making it clear that he is in no hurry to solve the conflict in Chiapas, Don Samuel took off for Rome on May 6, without anyone inviting him there. *Excelsior* reported that according to an ecclesiastical source in Rome, his trip could represent an effort by the wily bishop to avoid being forcibly retired from his diocese. The day of his departure, the spokesman for the communications commission of the Mexican Bishops Conference, Msgr. Genaro Alamilla Arteaga, declared: "Only a lunatic would sit down to dialogue with hooded ones. . . . No one with the slightest common sense would sit down to deal with those who won't show their faces, much less when the fate of a nation of more than 85 million inhabitants is at stake."

In an open letter published by the press May 10, the Regional Civic Front for Peace of the Highlands and the Jungle accused Don Samuel and Camacho of extending the conflict, and charged that "the delaying tactics being used by the mediating bishop are only serving to hold on to his pontifical mandate over the San Cristóbal de las Casas diocese."

On May 9, Gustavo de Anda wrote in *El Heraldo de México* that Don Samuel is "known from some time ago" as a guerrilla trainer; he cited the cases of Riobamba, Ecuador, in 1974, and Panama in 1985. "Recently," De Anda wrote, "knowledgeable circles in the U.S. and Mexico have learned of another subversive effort inside the United States itself. In fact, Samuel Ruiz has travelled punctually every year for the last 11 years to personally give intensive courses in liberation theology in San Antonio, Texas. The courses, which are sponsored and organized by Texas Bishop Patrick Flores—also from the mystical left wing—pull together primarily Mexican-American priests, to egg them on."