

time, the city of San Cristóbal was plastered with the two posters when the bishops' delegation arrived.

A leaflet put out by the San Cristóbal Civic Front called on Mexican Bishops Conference president Msgr. Adolfo Antonio Suárez Rivera, a native of San Cristóbal who headed the six-bishop delegation, to explain himself, in view of the many signals he has given of "acceptance and even approval of Monsignor Ruiz's seditious efforts." The leaflet went on: "Your visit to San Cristóbal will make us happy with you, or ashamed of you."

Suárez Rivera is tied into the pro-Zapatista Camacho-Echeverría fifth column in the ruling PRI. He is a shirttail relative of former peace commissioner Manuel Camacho Solís through Camacho's ex-father-in-law, Manuel Velasco Suárez, who was Chiapas governor during the Luis Echeverría presidency and an Echeverría protégé.

The FCS and COCCH mobilization enraged interim Chiapas Gov. Javier López Moreno and current peace commissioner Jorge Madrazo Cuéllar, both professed supporters of Bishop Ruiz's "pastoral work," and they protested what they called "offenses to the dignity" of the red bishop. On the request of Madrazo Cuéllar, Governor López Moreno has ordered an "investigation" of municipal officials accused of organizing and participating in the Sept. 21 demonstration. The political persecution of Prof. Ricardo Díaz, leader of the FCS, was also ordered.

Despite this hounding, the civic mobilization against the "comandante" is having its effect. On the same day as the San Cristóbal demonstration, PRI President Ignacio Pichardo Pagaza declared in Tuxtla that "Robledo Rincón won and the popular will expressed at the polls cannot under any circumstances be negotiated, for to do so would be to invite anarchy and disorder."

As things in Chiapas get hotter, "Comandante" Ruiz has announced plans to go on a vacation for a month or two. Before leaving, he acknowledged that he owes obedience to the pope as his spiritual father, but he clarified that in his view, that means only "reasonable obedience."

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## Interview: Fr. Luis Beltrán Mijangos

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# Bishop Samuel Ruiz is the 'comandante'

*The following interview with a priest of San Cristóbal de las Casas diocese was conducted in Chiapas by Marivilia Carrasco and Hugo López Ochoa on Sept. 18.*

*Twenty years ago, Bishop Samuel Ruiz shut down the seminary in San Cristóbal de las Casas and forced all priests who opposed him to leave the region. As a result, all the churches in San Cristóbal are controlled by Ruiz's followers. There has also been a proliferation of over 20 fundamentalist Protestant sects, most of whose members belong to the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN).*

*The only opposition priest whom Samuel Ruiz did not succeed in expelling from the region was Luis Beltrán Mijangos Molina. After 20 years of being denied his own church, he was finally permitted to work out of the San Cristóbal Cathedral with a limited honorarium until Dec. 26, 1993.*

*"Comandante" Samuel tried to bribe Father Beltrán with drink, nuns, and money. This failed. On Jan. 1, 1994, Father Beltrán Mijangos was about to be murdered by the EZLN's assassins who, after burning down the mayor's office, sent a death squad to the cathedral when it was assumed that Father Beltrán would be there. Suspecting foul play, Father Beltrán didn't show up that day despite numerous phone calls urging him to appear. The priest who took his place would have been killed, had it not been for the fact that one member of the EZLN death squad shouted at the last minute, "No, it's not him, it's not him!"*

*A few weeks ago, a group of priests loyal to the bishop issued a statement saying that Father Beltrán was "not authorized" to give the sacraments or say mass, alleging that he was "undisciplined." Father Beltrán immediately responded in a radio message that "Comandante" Samuel Ruiz and his priests are the unauthorized ones because they are in rebellion against the Vatican.*

*On Sunday, Sept. 18, EIR correspondents attended a mass outside the chapel of San Cristóbal's municipal cemetery, held for 300 faithful. In his sermon, Father Beltrán spoke of love, even for one's enemies, and in between jokes about "my friend Samuel Ruiz," he called on all present not to be swayed by passion into seeking personal vengeance.*

**EIR:** The Ibero-American Solidarity Movement (MSIA) has identified Samuel Ruiz as the commander of the armed movement known as the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN). We'd like your opinion on Ruiz's role in these activities.

**Fr. Beltrán:** What does Father Ruiz have to do with the armed movement? I have told both national and international media that he is the "comandante"! And I say this because of everything he's done since 1967 when he began to preach among the catechists. I have written proof to show how he's been proselytizing since 1978.

There were two phases: The first was to take sacredness out of the church. The second was to promote a "peoples' church."

At a certain point, both these phases became reality and the dimension of the magisterium of the Church was lost. Ruiz even shared his authority and called it "collegial author-



*At a mass outside the chapel of San Cristóbal's municipal cemetery, Father Beltrán called on 300 people not to be swayed by passion into seeking vengeance.*

ity." And now not even Ruiz controls the diocese, but rather a "juridical resort" team. This was really terrible because then decisions as to conduct, when not otherwise resolved, were placed in the hands of people whose actions and attitudes were cold and false.

They could have cared less about the people's feelings, and this is . . . not human, much less Christian . . . and worse, it's not priestly or episcopal. At that point, the real pressure for proselytization began at the level of catechists and religious orders.

Take the case of the Clarissa Mothers for example. Samuel told them publicly, "You, the Clarissas, are the tumor of the diocese." Then other people came in and effected a total change in the attitude of the Clarissa Mothers. Now they are faithful Zapatistas. How terrible!

Then a lot of things were done behind people's backs, such that the cathedral was taken over and called the Cathedral of Peace. At the time I said, "this is the Zapatista general headquarters under the command of supreme commander Don Samuel Ruiz García." This earned me the hatred of many people, but today, Sept. 18, many tell me that I was right.

I think the solution is very clear: Monsignor Ruiz should be retired as bishop and then things will change. Even though the ideology has remained, I'm certain that we can have an ideological change toward love and religion in which we preach the words of Christ and not bullets; where we arm with the crucified Christ and not rifles; where we wear the

beads of the rosary rather than vile bullets.

**EIR:** What has been the result of this proselytization among catechists and religious orders and in relation to the loss of vocation? Why did this happen?

**Fr. Beltrán:** Well, there's nothing surprising here. To begin with, the life of a priest or nun or member of a religious order is difficult. Why? Because it means living a life contrary to that of the general public.

In the diocese of San Cristóbal, for example, there is no vocation for nuns. There may be a few, but there is really no vocation for them because there is no pastoral vocation or any model to follow. What might motivate you to become a nun or a priest in the face of this current barbarity? What people see is not Christian, not human, which is fundamental.

**EIR:** Father, do you think this also explains the proliferation of sects in the state of Chiapas, and particularly in the diocese of San Cristóbal?

**Fr. Beltrán:** Many sects have appeared especially since 1970. Why? Because, to put it bluntly, Monsignor Ruiz had what I call a vulgar line. He said that "being a Catholic or a Protestant is the same thing." Supposedly because we all worship the same God, but in different ways, Samuel welcomed them with open arms. . . .

Back in 1960, there was a U.S. institution called Wings of Help, and Don Samuel Ruiz García, the bishop of San

Cristóbal, “flew” on those wings. Anytime you use the services of a company like that, this logically leads to friendship, and later became a commitment.

So the strategy of “divide and conquer” became a reality. Now these foreign sects support the EZLN.

**EIR:** From your debates with Jesuits and Dominicans, what can you tell us about the convictions and thinking of the so-called Autochthonous Church?

**Fr. Beltrán:** First that they are Mexican priests and nuns. That’s the cover.

**EIR:** But doesn’t that contradict the fact that there are more foreign than Mexican priests in Samuel Ruiz’s diocese?

**Fr. Beltrán:** No, because everyone who’s come here is committed to following [Ruiz]. Those who opposed him left.

**EIR:** How many priests are in the diocese, how many are Mexican and how many foreign?

**Fr. Beltrán:** I don’t have those figures right now because since 1981, this son of God has been isolated and denied all information. But I do know many French, Italian, Spanish, Central and South Americans. There are very, very few Mexicans, and their interests lie elsewhere.

**EIR:** You mean, they have a political project?

**Fr. Beltrán:** Worse than that, a project of destruction.

**EIR:** The doctrine now promoted by the diocese tends to exacerbate feelings of vengeance, hatred, and ambition. Why is this? Since this is not Catholic doctrine, what is it really?

**Fr. Beltrán:** It is to sow hatred and bitterness against the “wealthy.” And I can tell you that there are no wealthy people. They may have a comfortable life but they have earned it, with great sacrifice. The “rich,” as they are called, are those who have something to live on.

And how do [Ruiz’s followers] justify their attitude? On historical claims which say that, 250 years ago, X land was sold for X price, which was unjust, and therefore the land should be returned! This is unfair. This is outright robbery. The fifth commandment says, “Thou shalt not kill,” and a commandment of God’s church says, “Thou shalt not steal.” But all of these things, murder and thievery, have been done.

**EIR:** It’s well known that Samuel Ruiz maintains close ties with a faction which you mentioned at the beginning, when you mentioned [Peruvian Theology of Liberation advocate] Gustavo Gutiérrez. This is a current which calls itself Catholic but which is not, and has organized especially in Peru, Brazil, Ecuador, and Bolivia. What can you tell us about Don Samuel’s friends?

**Fr. Beltrán:** I can tell you that when I asked to go to Rome

to study canon law, Ruiz said this was impossible, but offered to send me instead to the IPLA, the Political Institute for Latin America. Why? So that I would be politicized. I told him, “I don’t need to be political, otherwise I would have studied political science. I could be an excellent politician, but I’m not interested in that. I want to study canon law in Rome for my doctorate.” He then responded, “No. I can’t justify the cost!” So I couldn’t go.

**EIR:** Speaking of expenses, it’s well known that the diocese receives large contributions of foreign money. What can you tell us about this? Where does it come from, and under what pretexts does the diocese receive it? And finally, where does it end up?

**Fr. Beltrán:** Well, I know a few things, for example, that it comes from Germany, Italy, France, and even from the United States. I don’t remember right now from which organizations, but I know that a lot of money comes in, all of it supposedly for charitable purposes and the Church’s social projects. But I don’t know what works they’re talking about because I haven’t seen them; I don’t find them, and I don’t know where the money is.

**EIR:** What can be said is that there are no churches in San Cristóbal’s northern zone.

**Fr. Beltrán:** This is the clearest example. There is not a single Catholic church in an area where there are 18 churches of other sects. That’s why two deputies have demanded that Ruiz’s diocese be audited, and I think this would be the best solution. We often said, in fact yelled, that there were many strange things going on here and called for investigation. No one paid any attention and now the consequences are staring us in the face. Violence has already erupted.

**EIR:** You mentioned in your mass this morning that it was unacceptable that a man who had sowed so much hatred and desire for revenge could be named as mediator.

**Fr. Beltrán:** This is a very delicate situation, because he was not named—he offered himself as the peace mediator! So someone who fathered a child is also going to be the godfather!

**EIR:** Is it true that some people are denied the sacraments? Under what pretext?

**Fr. Beltrán:** This is an excellent question, and I see it as inspired by God. Isn’t it curious that sacraments are denied to all those who are supposedly “rich” because they don’t want to share their wealth?

I also know that some Indians are denied the sacraments. Why? Take note, listen carefully: *because they are not Zapatistas*. This is not fair, it’s playing with our faith. . . . Samuel Ruiz could care less about the faith of the Catholic Church. The only thing he cares about is a political position, and now he wants the Nobel Peace Prize.