

Dateline Mexico by Valerie Rush

EZLN financing under investigation

Foreign financing of the Zapatista terrorists is coming under scrutiny as demands for a probe grow.

German auxiliary bishop Franz Grave, also the president of the German Roman Catholic charity Adveniat, deployed himself to the 10-day meeting of the Latin American Bishops Council (CELAM) held in Mexico in early May, where he attempted to quash reports that his organization and its sister German charity Misereor had funnelled millions of dollars of "donations" into the hands of Bishop Samuel Ruiz, who in turn used the money to finance the narco-terrorist insurgency in the Mexican state of Chiapas known as the Zapatista National Liberation Army, or EZLN.

Msgr. Dieter Spelthahn, a director of Adveniat also attending the CELAM conference, issued a statement to the press early in the conference denying that his organization had given funds to the EZLN, but nonetheless defending both Bishop Ruiz and the narco-terrorists. "What is happening in Chiapas is something that came about logically, because the ethnic groups have lived there in misery for a long time," he said.

Reports of foreign financing of the EZLN have been growing for some time. As early as mid-January 1994 (less than two weeks after their uprising began), *EIR* denounced the EZLN as a "foreign invasion, using nationals as part of the operation." More recently, Misereor officially admitted that it had given \$7.5 million to the diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas over the period of a decade. Since then, Adveniat acknowledged that it, too, had given the diocese \$1.5 million over 20 years, \$200,000 of that in 1994. That diocese is the base of

operations of Bishop Ruiz, otherwise known as the EZLN's "Commander Numero Uno."

According to a note by the German wire service DPA published in the Mexican daily *Excelsior* on May 3, the Adveniat mission to Mexico was designed not only to gather information and consider granting new contributions to the Mexican Catholic Church, but also to "protect its investments" in Chiapas. In an Aug. 19, 1994 advertisement placed by Misereor in Germany's *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, the charity declared, "Your Misereor contribution is in good hands with Samuel Ruiz. With it he pays for . . . justice for the indigenous in Mexico. . . . They see him as one of theirs and can rely on him, such that Misereor can imagine no one better in Chiapas for using donations from Germany in the way the donors want."

As *EIR* has documented, Samuel Ruiz has used his longstanding influence as a bishop and his advocacy of "liberation theology" to organize for the creation of an "autochthonous church" in Chiapas. He has relied on funding over the years from a variety of "charitable" sources to build up a network of so-called catechists, which has served as a training ground for insurrection. The impoverished Indian communities which make up a significant portion of the population in Chiapas, and which have been extensively profiled by the likes of the Harvard anthropology department's "Chiapas Project," provide the cannon fodder for Ruiz's insurgency. (For more on this, see *EIR*'s January

1994 *Special Report*, "Shining Path North Explodes in Mexico.")

After Adveniat's Bishop Grave left the CELAM conference, he headed straight for San Cristóbal, where he met with Ruiz and reportedly audited the diocese's accounts. He then told the press that "no diversion of funds has been detected, as was speculated in Mexico." Maybe, and maybe not. But Grave's endorsement of Ruiz's work with the Indians of the region, i.e., his support for the EZLN, is a de facto endorsement of that violent uprising.

Bishop Grave's denials do not appear to have calmed the waters. On May 11, Mexico's bishop of Zacatecas, Msgr. Javier Lozano Barragán, told the press that there had been discussion in the CELAM conference regarding foreign financing of the EZLN. "Unspeakable interests have been financing the guerrillas, seeking openly to harm Mexico and thus its national sovereignty," said Monsignor Lozano. He concluded, urging, "Only the government can investigate and determine if there are foreign funds going to Chiapas to finance from abroad uprisings and instability."

The call for such an investigation has also been picked up inside the Mexican Congress. On May 8, PRI senator from the state of Nayarit and president of the Senate Defense Committee Gen. Alvaro Vallarta Ceceña urged that "there be an investigation of CELAM's charges regarding financing the EZLN is receiving from foreign groups that seek to destabilize Mexico." Although hard evidence to that effect has yet to be presented, Senator Vallarta noted, "there are forces interested in dividing Mexicans, to take advantage of our natural resources, and unfortunately the Zapatistas are lending themselves to this."