

Dateline Mexico by Hugo López Ochoa

Wanted for treason: Samuel Ruiz

The MSIA poster accusing Ruiz of treason and of inviting foreign invasion has mobilized Mexico's patriots.

The Ibero-American Solidarity Movement's (MSIA) poster against "Commander" Samuel Ruiz, which over the past month has appeared on walls in the major cities throughout ten Mexican states, has caused a national uproar. Both the written and electronic media have given it substantial coverage. Together with the Mexican government's firm negotiating stance, and statements critical of Ruiz from within the Catholic Church, the MSIA's campaign has helped to put the bishop of San Cristóbal de las Casas, in the southeastern state of Chiapas, on the defensive for the first time in years.

In a March 19 press conference in Mexico City, attended by representatives of 25 media, MSIA president Marivilia Carrasco charged that "Samuel Ruiz is part of a foreign occupation army which seeks to separate Chiapas off from Mexico, and seize the rich strategic resources, including oil, in that part of the country." Ruiz is such a good friend of the oil multinationals, Carrasco said, that he is already known as "Royal Dutch Samuel." She added that he has also founded a new religious order, "the Seven Sisters."

Mexico's most widely watched news program, Televisa's "24 Hours," ran video clips of the poster, and showed Carrasco holding up the new MSIA pamphlet, entitled "Mexicans, To Arms! Stop the Foreign Invasion of Chiapas!" National dailies, including *La Prensa*, *El Nacional*, *Unomasuno*, and *El Día*, reported on Carrasco's statements, as did regional

media in Monterrey, Nuevo León. The latter included TV channels 2 and 12, and the newspapers *ABC*, *Metrópoli*, and *El Porvenir*. The last one reported that as a result of conferences on the subject given by Carrasco in Monterrey, citizens will demand "Samuel Ruiz's exclusion from talks in Chiapas."

In Mexico City, *Diario de México* reported on statements by MSIA leader Hugo López Ochoa, demanding an investigation of Ruiz's "ties to well-known drug legalization advocate, George Soros." López Ochoa, the daily said, "accused the prelate, the PRD [Party of the Democratic Revolution], and the EZLN [the Zapatista National Liberation Army] of forming a front on behalf of British intervention in Chiapas," which seeks to "reform Article 27 of the Constitution" and seize the region's "oil and uranium." The paper also reported on López's charge that these forces are involved in weapons trafficking across the southern border with Guatemala and Belize.

Commander Ruiz and his Zapatista hordes have also been under significant pressure in recent weeks from the Mexican government. President Ernesto Zedillo and his Interior Minister, Francisco Labastida Ochoa, have rejected the EZLN's demand that a tendentious law for "Indian autonomy" be submitted to Congress, on the grounds that it represents a threat to national security and national sovereignty. Labastida proposed several amendments which would eliminate the Zapatista proposal to grant

Indians the "use and benefit" of natural resources in the subsoil, which, as the Constitution mandates, belong to the nation, and not to the owner of the land in which they are found.

Labastida has also warned that the government may expel the Conai, the National Mediation Commission set up and run by Ruiz, from any negotiations with the EZLN, if Conai continues to openly side with the narco-terrorists. Ruiz has an "obvious sympathy" for the EZLN, and in particular for "Mr. Sebastián Guillén," or sub-commander "Marcos," Labastida said. He therefore has "ceased to be impartial, as has the National Mediation Commission. They have permanent contact [with the EZLN] and this causes them to be biased."

The minister underscored that the EZLN "receives a significant quantity of resources from abroad to maintain its level of weaponry and its sympathizers." Labastida reported that there are no more than 300-500 armed EZLN cadre, the group closest to "Marcos," and 60,000 sympathizers. This makes it "impossible" for the Zapatistas to win a military victory, he added, but rather, "they depend on political movements" around the world.

As for the Catholic Church, the March 7 edition of the Guadalajara-based *Público* reported that Cardinal Juan Sandoval Íñiguez, Archbishop of Guadalajara, "recommended the removal of Bishop Samuel Ruiz García from peace negotiations in Chiapas." Although they have defended Ruiz "as a priest," several other bishops have either openly or more diplomatically attacked Ruiz's partiality toward the EZLN. The Papal Nuncio, Justo Mullor, issued a letter on March 24, in which he urged "people or institutions close to" Ruiz to stop "putting up barriers to dialogue," and to keep "equidistant from the parties involved."