

No shooting, but plenty of trouble in Chiapas

SAN CRISTOBAL DE LAS CASAS, Mexico (CNS) — The rebellion in southern Mexico's Chiapas state has been bullet-free for some time, but there was still plenty of political conflict, fear and anger that directly affects the Catholic Church as well as the general population.

While refugees were fleeing into the hills in front of advancing army units that seemed to be ignoring the orders of Mexico's president, pro-army demonstrators turned on local churches as local police looked on.

The prime target of the protesters, who appeared to represent the Spanish-descended elite of the state, was Bishop Samuel Ruiz Garcia of San Cristobal de Las Casas. Some in the crowds called for his death. The bishop has also received a number of anonymous death threats.

Bishop Ruiz is chief mediator in the effort to achieve peace between the government and the rebels.

He is also a strong defender of the rights of the state's Indian minority, which has often put him at odds with large landowners.

About 400 protesters — organized by municipal officials, ranchers and businessmen — hurled eggs and chairs at the diocesan offices and a small group of Mexican and foreign supporters of Bishop Ruiz Feb. 19. Fistfights broke out, and five shots were fired in the air during the hourlong melee, as local police Chief Oscar Dominguez and armed police officers stood by and watched.

"Out with Samuel Ruiz Garcia," Rolando Villafuerte, a deputy of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party, shouted into the public address system as the crowd turned surly and headed toward the cathedral.

Bishop Ruiz reportedly was not in the diocesan offices or his residence at the time of the incident. However, Dominican Father Gonzalo Ituarte, diocesan vicar general, issued a statement shortly after the melee condemning the incident.

"This incident forms part of the campaign of persecution, widely known and condemned, against the diocesan church, principally against our Bishop



A Mexican soldier takes up position after hearing a shot in Guadalupe Tepeyac, the former Zapatista rebel stronghold in the southeastern state of Chiapas.

AP/Wide World Photos

Samuel," Father Ituarte said.

Similar demonstrations, with anti-church overtones, took place throughout the diocese.

A few days before, Bishop Ruiz ignored a call by the state's outgoing governor, Eduardo Robledo, for his resignation as peace mediator.

Robledo, a ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party member whose election last August was denounced as fraudulent by the rebel Zapatista National Liberation Army and the opposition Democratic Revolution Party, made the call in a Feb. 14 speech after being granted a leave of absence from the governorship by the Chiapas legislature.

Several hours later, Bishop Ruiz read a statement from the eight-member National Mediating Commission over which he presides referring to Robledo's resignation as a "real contribution towards the peace process in Chiapas and the country."

During his speech, Robledo called on Bishop Ruiz "to resign from his current activities and unequivocally show in a responsible manner that his true in-

terest has always been Chiapas ... not just to one group or the few."

While its supporters were celebrating Army Day, the army appeared to be taking matters in its own hands.

Although President Ernesto Zedillo ordered the military and the police force it supported to stop a search for rebel leaders nearly a week before, units in remote areas appeared to be paying little attention to their commander-in-chief.

On Feb. 16, two days after the order was issued, about 200 soldiers and 40 pieces of heavy military equipment, including tanks, artillery pieces and armored troop transports, pushed five miles further down a canyon through Zapatista roadblocks toward the rebels' Lacandon jungle stronghold.

Within two days, the army had more than doubled its troop strength and advanced down the canyon to the village of Belisario Dominguez, pushing a wave of refugees ahead of it.

Federal police, who were supposed to be the primary agents of the Chiapas operation, were nowhere in sight.

Daughter of Charity Sister Patricia Moysen, director of the San Carlos Hospital in the town of Altamirano, said civilian refugees "can't survive up in the hills for more than a few days."

"There was already a serious gastroenteritis epidemic among the people," she said. "They have virtually no food and there is little shelter for them."

Some members of a Mexican congressional commission, charged with seeking a settlement of the rebellion, appeared downbeat following a meeting Feb. 16 with Bishop Ruiz.

After that meeting, the mediating commission issued a proposal for renewed peace talks and was waiting for the government and rebel representatives to respond.

"It is very worrisome," said Sen. Juan Guerra of the opposition Democratic Revolution Party. "Zedillo is being pressured from all sides, some sectors of the army clearly want war, the economy is in a mess ... we have very little time to act."

Juneau bishop dies of brain aneurism

JUNEAU, Alaska — Bishop Michael H. Kenny of Juneau died of a brain aneurism Feb. 19 in Jordan while visiting ancient ruins in Jerash, Jordan, north of the capital of Amman. He was 57.



Bishop Kenny was with Father William Corcoran, head of the Pontifical Council for Palestine and stationed in Amman.

The bishop fell ill, and declared that he would feel better, but was stricken with the aneurism a half-hour later. Father Corcoran tried cardiopulmonary resuscitation and then administered absolution. Bishop Kenny died before an ambulance could arrive.

Bishop Kenny had no diagnosed condition that would have alerted him or his doctors to the possibility of an aneurism.

"It's such a shock. He was a young, healthy man," Father Moore said.

In nearly 16 years as bishop of Juneau, Bishop Kenny acquired a reputation as a liberal voice within the U.S. Catholic

hierarchy.

In a 1992 magazine article, he expressed dissatisfaction with the reasons the church has given for not ordaining women priests. Citing the church's argument that because Christ was male, so must those acting in the person of Christ, Bishop Kenny said, "I can't make that leap because it seems to be making too much of the maleness of Christ."

He also expressed his opposition to a proposed U.S. bishops' pastoral letter on women's concerns because of the issue of women's ordination.

Bishop Kenny also publicly opposed the U.S. decision to go to war with Iraq in 1991, reaffirming his judgment made prior to the war that it was not a last resort.

In 1993, Bishop Kenny joined 26 other U.S. bishops in asking President Clinton for a Haitian policy showing stronger support for its then-exiled president, Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Born in Hollywood, Calif., Bishop Kenny was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Santa Rosa, Calif., in 1963. Among his posts were high school teacher and diocesan vicar general. He was appointed bishop of Juneau in 1979

and ordained in Rome by Pope John Paul II.

Bishop Kenny is survived by two sisters and his stepmother.

The body will undergo an autopsy at an Amman hospital before its return to the United States. It was expected back in Juneau Feb. 24 or 25. Burial will be at the Shrine of St. Therese, 23 miles north of Juneau on Lynn Canal.

St. Bridget's Church

would like to express its extreme thanks and appreciation to the management and staff of the *Diplomat Party House* for the spaghetti dinner held February 12, 1995, and for all those that contributed towards its success.

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Correction

A photo caption which ran with the parish profile on page 7 of the Feb. 9 issue was incorrect. The caption should have read: Following the 10:30 a.m. Mass Feb. 5, Father Joseph R. Catanise, pastor of St. Mary's Church in Dansville, blesses a parishioner's throat in veneration of St. Blaise. We regret the error.

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R	A	O	R	A	E	A	A
H	O	Q	M	S	P	R	M
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