

# How Mexico is being subverted by the implantation of religious cults

by Elsa Ennis

Several U.S. administration officials, including President Reagan himself, have publicly warned that Mexico could fall prey to the Central American conflagration. While there are forces indeed committed to reproduce the Central American turmoil south of the border, the main promoter of this strategy is not, as the administration vehemently argues, Soviet or Cuban communism.

The same Jesuit Order of the Catholic Church and its "left" and "right" allies in Protestant groups which are running the radical "Popular Church" of Nicaragua and "born-again" Guatemalan President Efraín Ríos Montt, are now setting the ideological basis for reproducing in Mexico the religious conflicts now taking place in Central America.

The National Council of Churches-linked international apparatus behind the Nicaraguan Popular Church has made Mexico its main base for operations in Central America, while U.S.-based "anti-communist" evangelical groups aided by the fascist "Catholic" National Action Party (PAN), are now raising a fundamentalist base of support among Mexicans for the "born-again" dictator. Consistent with the PAN's separatist organizing, Ríos Montt is sending provocative messages to its neighbors claiming that the southern Mexican states of "Chiapas, Tabasco, and all of Central America were ours."

As we documented in the first part of this three-part series (see *EIR*, June 21), the PAN, the descendant of the 1920s "Cristero" movement which revolted against the industrialization effort introduced by the 1910 Mexican Revolution, is now taking advantage of Mexico's economic ills to incite anti-state sentiment and separatist movements.

Circles linked to the Washington-based American Enterprise Institute (AEI) are now promoting "Christian" anti-state organizing among Mexican businessmen. Michael Novak, who is AEI's "theologian," the Reagan administration delegate to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, and Jeane Kirkpatrick's top advisor, descended on Monterrey—a center of separatist organizing—last month to lecture businessmen on how to fight the government's "excessive intervention" in the economy. Novak, a product of the world's leading Jesuit training center, the Rome-based Gregorian University, made headlines when he compared the Mexican state to "a dinosaur" with a small brain and a huge body which is impeding the spread of Adam Smith-style "free enterprise."

The word "Christian" is thus rapidly becoming a code-word for ideological manipulation aimed at channelling the

population's anger over the International Monetary Fund's rapid destruction of the country's economy away from the IMF and toward a Khomeini-styled mystical revivalism.

## The fundamentalist boom

Thousands gathered every night from April 24 to May 1 in Hermosillo, Sonora to listen to Luis Palau, an Argentine-born preacher closely linked to Ríos Montt and now engaged in a continental "crusade" of support for the fanatic Guatemalan president. Palau is linked to such groups as World Vision, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, and the National Religious Broadcasters. At a giant revival meeting in Guatemala City in November 1982, Palau preached that Ríos Montt had divine backing to a crowd of 200,000.

The preacher, who heads an Oregon-based group calling itself the "Luis Palau Evangelistic Team," found enthusiastic support from the PAN mayor of Hermosillo, Casimiro Navarro, a national leader of the PAN's separatist campaign who has been repeatedly denounced by several political parties as a traitor to the nation. Flanked by Navarro, Palau went through the fundamentalist brainwashing routine of inviting his distressed middle-class audience to forget about this material world and to be "born again" in the spiritual world.

Palau does not hide his intentions of giving birth to a Mexican version of Ríos Montt. He claims that Navarro "made a commitment to Christ" upon his invitation. This is how Ríos Montt was "born again" at the invitation of several "elders" of Gospel Outreach, a California-based evangelical Church of the Word sect, which collaborates closely with Palau. During one of the preaching sessions, Navarro told the attendants that "I am glad Luis Palau is here to give us counsel that we so desperately need to live in this hour of crisis." Palau has held similar preaching sessions with Ríos Montt, whose government was denounced June 8 by the Guatemalan Council of Bishops as persecuting Catholics and inciting "religious warfare of incalculable consequences."

Mexico, with its 70 million population, is the prize of "Christian" would-be ayatollahs. A formidable obstacle is the Mexican constitution, which prohibits the use of mass media channels for religious broadcasting. The measure is part of a series of restrictions taken by post-revolution governments to block the Jesuits' centuries-long incitement of religious fanaticism among backward sectors of the population. The Palau group boasts of having violated this constitutional mandate by using TV and radio to air their funda-

mentalist message. "In the past those of us involved in evangelism told ourselves that Mexico, because of its legal restrictions on public proclamation of the Word, was not close to the Gospel. The crusade [in Hermosillo] demonstrated that this is not true," says Palau.

There is already an apparatus in the field to make sure this happens. During a public speech in Hermosillo in early May, PAN Deputy Congressman Jonas Flores demanded that the de la Madrid government drop the constitutional prohibition on religious broadcasting and that fundamentalist churches be given constitutional rights granted only to "political associations." Claiming that three million Mexicans are now committed evangelical fundamentalists, the "born-again" congressman demanded that religious broadcasting be considered part of the government's National Development Plan.

The Palau group thinks President Miguel de la Madrid, with its "moral renovation" campaign to clean the government of corrupt activities, is susceptible to their fundamentalist "message." According to Palau, "this official commitment to improving Mexico's morality gives evangelical opportunities that we've never had. I believe that we are going to see a great revival in Mexico."

The proliferation of fundamentalist sects goes well beyond the Palau group to include "revivalist" missionaries of the Palau-linked Full Gospel Businessmen Fellowship, the Utah-based Mormon church, and others. A group calling itself the Extended Outreach Ministries based in Prescott, Arizona, is now performing "miracles" in the slums of Hermosillo. Calling themselves "La Puerta" (The Door) and "Iglesia Cuadrangular" (Foursquare Church) and recruiting drug-addicted youth, the group is reportedly inciting forms of irrationality among the poor.

Mexican security authorities report this popular psychosis is rapidly extending to universities, traditionally very volatile political centers. Groups of students from the University of Monterrey are now traveling to Guatemala to "touch" the "new Messiah" Ríos Montt and then return to Mexico to organize support for him.

The government has started to crack down on the controllers of this psychosis which, linked to a deteriorating economy, poses a great danger to the country's national security. Earlier this year, the government announced it was cancelling permission to operate in Mexico for the Summer Institute of Linguistics, a U.S. sect of Bible translators who had been widely denounced as promoting anti-government agitation among Indian groups. Once again the PAN showed its treacherous colors when Congressman Jonas Flores publicly defended the Institute. As of this writing, the case is under review.

### **Michael Novak preaches in Monterrey**

The Jesuit Order has tailored a different version of "Christian" organizing to manipulate gullible businessmen.

On May 19, the International Union of Christian Entre-

preneurs (better known by its French acronym UNIAPAC) held its annual convention in Monterrey. The colloquium was a high point of anti-government rhetoric among oligarchical groups passing as businessmen. Headed by the Belgian Baron Antoine Bekaert, UNIAPAC is an offshoot of European aristocratic networks using so-called Christian "solidarist" doctrines against the economic growth brought about by industrial capitalism. The Mexican branch of UNIAPAC, the Social Union of Mexican Businessmen (USEM) was founded in the 1960s and has its stronghold in Monterrey, a hotbed of hostility against the central government. A prominent participant in the meeting was Andrés Marcelo Sada from Monterrey, nationally recognized as leader of a business faction rabidly opposed to any collaboration with the government on development projects.

The convention was modeled on the "Atalaya" business colloquium held in Guadalajara in January 1982, which gave the green light for the massive capital flight and peso devaluation which hit Mexico last year.

A high point of the UNIAPAC colloquium was the presence of Jesuit-trained "theologian" Michael Novak from the American Enterprise Institute. Political observers did not miss Novak's ideological transformation. He was last seen in Monterrey in 1968—a year of intense student destabilization—passing as an extreme liberal. In 1972 he worked for the presidential campaign of George McGovern. Adjusting to the times, Novak came this time to attack the Mexican government and to lecture right-wing businessmen on the convergence of Christian values and a "production ethic" he erroneously ascribed to Adam Smith.

UNIAPAC has produced similar transformations. Roberto Guajardo Suárez, a former head of the National Businessmen Confederation which worked behind the scenes on the founding of the USEM, went the other way on the same road. Guajardo abandoned his "right-wing Catholic" profile, and is now one of the major patrons of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) which attacks government-led capitalist development from a leftist "greenie" standpoint.

Novak's American Enterprise Institute is now pushing business groups in the United States and Mexico to go beyond their business orientation and become "Christian" political associations, what Jesuit terminology calls "intermediate groups," a strategy similar to the one pursued by the PAN and the evangelical groups for their more "popular" organizing. These groups would take further control of small businessman by "mediating" between them and such "big" (dinosaur-type, as Novak says) institutions as the state. Such a doctrine is being hotly debated in the Mexican Confederation of Employers (COPARMEX), where some businessmen have shown suspicions of the insurrectionary purposes of such a doctrine.

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*Part three of this series will deal with the terrorist organizing of the leftist Theology of Liberation current of the Jesuit Order in Mexico and its links to Central America.*