

## Dateline Mexico by Hugo López Ochoa

### Uproar over AIDS policy

*The Catholic majority is infuriated that the government's only prophylaxis is waving condoms in the schools and on TV.*

**A**IDS is advancing at a faster pace than expected," Dr. Jaime Cervantes Rangel, chief of preventive medicine for the Mexican Social Security Institute, announced April 21. Today, he added, "the disease affects more workers, waiters, and peasants than professionals and artists, who supposedly were the most vulnerable." Most of the new cases in recent months, he noted, are among "the poorer economically active population." He claimed hospitals and laboratories are now taking stricter measures to avoid "accidental contagion" from AIDS-infected blood.

The total number of cases reported in Mexico is 1,233, Health Undersecretary Jaime Sepúlveda Amor, reported April 13. That is sharply up from 779 last October. The official figures are disputed, however, by doctors all over the country. They are telling Marivilia Carrasco, president of the Schiller Institute of Mexico, that they discover five additional AIDS cases for every one officially reported. Many such cases are found by nurses who risk their jobs by sneaking blood tests on patients who show AIDS symptoms.

Sepúlveda observed that the male to female ratio was 21:1 in October but "now has a proportion similar to that of the United States," 14:1. Cases among children rose from 4 in February 1987, to 26 in October, to 50 now, he said.

Dr. Cervantes reported, "The majority died 6-12 months after the disease was detected and no patient has survived more than 3 years."

The Schiller Institute's view that

malnutrition, poverty, and insect bites are major co-factors promoting the rapid spread of AIDS in the Third World, is gaining support among health professionals. Biologists at the University of Veracruz said their independent research verified it. Doctors at a hospital in Salina Cruz, Oaxaca, found a higher density of AIDS antibodies in a patient's sweat than in his blood.

As the presidential candidate of the Mexican Labor Party (PLM), Marivilia Carrasco is traveling from town to town across Mexico. Millions have heard her proposals for universal AIDS screening, quarantine where needed, and breaking with the austerity policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which reduce the population's ability to resist disease. Everybody realizes that the millions of dollars the government is spending on AIDS ads is an attempt to smother the outcry for preventive measures, led by the Schiller Institute and the PLM. The ads lie: "AIDS is not transmitted by urine, by sweat, by tears or by mosquitos; make love responsibly," i.e., with a condom.

Despite what can be learned about the AIDS crisis in any hospital corridor, the government decided to invest in neither medical facilities nor restoring living standards. The reason: "It is very expensive" and would require using money now spent servicing the debt. Dr. Cervantes declared April 21, "Medicine has no cure [for AIDS], only preventive measures, basically sex education."

Those who disagree with official propaganda suffer police-state style

harassment. The president of the National Parents' Union, Guillermo Bustamante Manilla, described the Health Secretariat as the "Gestapo" April 13. The public health authorities had launched a press barrage tagging the parents' association and Catholic groups as "obscurantists" and "reactionaries" for opposing children being taught in schools and on television how to have "safe sex" and how to appreciate homosexual life styles. Bustamante accused Health Secretary Guillermo Soberón of "fomenting sexual promiscuity and institutionally inciting the population to prostitute itself." In early April, the Pro-Vida (Pro-Life) group announced it would provide cultural education based on Catholic moral and family values to counteract the government's teaching of perversion.

Secretary Soberón announced his "sex ed" strategy was to gradually get Mexico's predominantly Catholic population "used to" using prophylactics and accepting homosexual practices. On April 13, he displayed a TV spot showing the "irresistible" Lucia Méndez sporting a condom in her left hand, while offering "responsible love." Never one to discriminate as far as the sex of partners is concerned, Secretary Soberón gave equal time to homosexual actors like Juan Gabriel, Emanuel, and Hector Bonilla.

"AIDS is not a moral problem," proclaimed Soberón, who doubles as the high priest of the Aztec fundamentalist conclaves at the Tepoztlán Center, the Mexican branch of the Trilateral Commission. "The condom is nothing new as a health aid and regulator of birth control," Soberón lectured. "It was created in 1706 on the initiative of Charles II, king of England; and can be seen in ancient erotic art. . . . They used lambs' intestines; we use latex. And, in Mexico, we have strict quality control," he gushed.