

Dateline Mexico by Carlos Méndez

Church fights abortion

Health Secretary Kumate finally reveals the government's policy for legalized abortion.

The obstacle to legalizing abortion in Mexico "is Catholicism . . . and the influence of the Catholic Church is weighty. And it is intransigent," Health Secretary Jesús Kumate asserted in an interview published in the March 11 issue of *Proceso* magazine.

Kumate went on to say that "for Japanese women, when there weren't pills, having abortions was like putting on makeup." The problem in Mexico, he complained, is "that Catholicism is still very strong, despite the Protestant sects and the Mormons in the southeast. This makes things very difficult; and now there's a big uproar. Every six years it starts up again and we have to get out the thermometer to take the temperature."

The last thermometer reading was on the legalization of abortion (and euthanasia) passed at the end of last year by the Chiapas state congress, most of whose members belong to the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Because of a very strong popular protest, that legalization had to be "temporarily" suspended. But, the pro-life organization Pro-Vida has charged that with his public statements, the health secretary has now given the go-ahead for this genocidal campaign to the PRI majority in Chiapas, as well as to other state assemblies "studying" the legalization of abortion, such as those in Zacatecas and Aguascalientes.

Health Secretary Kumate is not just anti-Catholic and pro-abortion, but favors Nazi-style euthanasia. In his statements to *Proceso*, he says that it's not clear when a new life begins,

adding that "for me, there is a phase which biologists call pre-embryonic, in which there is still nothing clear, nothing recognized as one's own, something foreign. Some time ago, I wrote an essay about the minimum basis of life in which I identified three criteria. First, the capacity to reproduce, that is, genetics, the nucleus, and chromosomes, the human being's reproductive apparatus."

Second, Kumate continued, "a mechanism of energy transmission which allows [the being] to metabolize, grow, and be nourished. Third, possession of a membrane which creates individuality, and allows differentiation from the environment, a type of dividing line. In the end, I believe that of that cell or that collection of cells, one must ask the same. Because if it can still . . . be one thing or the other, it doesn't have the minimum basis for life."

The argument is false. The zygote, and later the collection of cells which make up the embryo, is distinctively human from the start, and it is impossible to confuse it genetically with that of any other species. From the moment of conception, it possesses all of the genetic elements of a single and specific individual human being—a member of the human species, and at the same time, absolutely unique.

If Dr. Kumate doesn't understand this, he should go back to medical school. As he should know, there is a basis for morality.

Most serious is the theory of eugenics which underlies Kumate's

"reasoning," whose application implies that any individual who doesn't meet the three conditions he establishes can be eliminated by the same criteria the Nazi doctors used, and as the Chiapas PRI officials intend to do. According to the reforms passed in the Chiapas assembly, abortion should be legal in cases "when it can be determined that the 'product' has suffered genetic or congenital alterations leading to birth with serious physical or mental deformities."

Health authorities are also moving forward with a program of voluntary or involuntary sterilization. On March 14, Pro-Vida President Jorge Serrano Limón charged that as of last February, health authorities had "sterilized more than 4 million women nationwide . . . to achieve the goals established by the federal government of reducing the population growth rate by 1% by the year 2000."

Serrano Limón also reiterated that official campaigns to promote abortion are the result of foreign pressures for population reduction. Referring to the Chiapas abortion fight, the Archbishop of Monterrey and president of the Mexican Bishops' Conference, Adolfo Suárez Rivera, said last Dec. 21 that it wasn't enough to oppose legalized abortion, but to also stop "international agencies such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Inter-American Development Bank" whose credits to the country "come in the form of contraceptives."

But even the abortion campaign hasn't been enough for Kumate. Now he's pushing cholera as well. On March 15, the front pages of all major Mexican dailies showed a picture of him together with Fisheries Secretary María de los Angeles Moreno, eating fish in public "to show," in the style of Peruvian President Fujimori, "that there's no risk of cholera in Mexico."