

Dateline Mexico by Hugo López Ochoa

AIDS bomb explodes in Mexico

The condom-pushers fail to fool the population with their safe-sex campaign.

A conference organized on June 9 by Mexico's Health Department dramatically reflected the panic which is sweeping the country, as awareness dawns that AIDS is not transmitted only by sexual, but also by "casual," contact. The conference, given by Health Secretary Guillermo Soberón and Dr. Jonathan Mann, the director of the World Health Organization's program on AIDS, brought several surprises.

The first was for the event's organizers, who arranged an auditorium for 3,000 people—and found 10,000 people at the door. Among them were hundreds of doctors and nurses who had certified by their clinical experience the ever-greater contagion of the disease outside the so-called high-risk groups. Fourteen percent of the 487 officially registered cases are heterosexual adults from "low-risk groups."

The second surprise was for the parents worried about AIDS. After each found a condom on his or her seat, they listened as the director of the National Epidemiology Institute, Jaime Sepúlveda Amor, said that health authority polls had found that "50% of the population thinks AIDS is transmitted by casual means"; and therefore, the main goal of the government's "educational" campaign is to convince those people that casual contagion does *not* exist and that a condom is all they need for protection! When Sepúlveda Amor proclaimed his "energetic condemnation of those who have promoted a witchhunt against

certain high-risk sectors," that part of the audience burst into applause.

"It is scientifically proven that this disease is transmitted only by sexual contact or by transmission of contaminated blood," said Jonathan Mann, presented in the next day's press here as "the world authority." Mann spouted, "The AIDS is on the mark, because it is for prevention through education." Mann was not saluting Mexico's genuine accomplishment. It was the first country to legislate mandatory reporting of all AIDS cases by doctors to the health ministry. The law went into effect May 27.

Many found it ironic that as recently as April 20, they had seen Health Secretary Soberón saying that AIDS *is* spread by casual contact. "If a person with the virus shakes hands with a healthy person who has a small cut on his hand, he is going to give him AIDS," Soberón stated on national TV.

The official AIDS statistics were brought up to date at the June 9 conference. There are now "more than 500" registered AIDS carriers in the country; the disease doubles in Mexico every seven-and-a-half months; and it is expected that there will be 20,000-30,000 with the disease by 1991, "if a vaccine were discovered today," Dr. Sepúlveda told the conference. When we calculate on the basis of health authorities' own estimates that for every registered carrier, there are 100 unregistered, we find there are 50,000

AIDS carriers today in Mexico.

This information unleashed a panic in the population, which demanded strong measures. But the government decided that the budget set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) left no funds for a serious program; everything has to go to pay interest on \$105 billion in foreign debt. The only thing that could be done, said Dr. Soberón, is to educate people on "safe sex."

From then on, the Mexican government's anti-AIDS program has consisted of a few pamphlets written for the Health Department by a group of perverts who openly recommend "mutual masturbation" and condoms.

Naturally, since most Mexicans are traditional Catholics, the Health Department pamphlets mostly inspired the population to burn them in bonfires. This instinct was encouraged by a campaign by the Mexican branch of the Schiller Institute, an international cultural institute whose chairman is Helga Zepp-LaRouche.

There is resonance, too, among responsible officials. The president of the National Hospitals Council, Dr. Jesús Gómez Medina, said that most AIDS cases were found in U.S. border cities, Mexico City, and Acapulco. His organization of private hospitals is demanding that all tourists be forced to show certificates proving they are AIDS-free.

The June 9 conference was a desperate attempt to silence the discontent—and it failed. "We have to speak frankly about sex, even if it insults people's morality, because the future of humanity is at stake," Health Secretary Soberón cynically argued on closing the meeting. Dr. Mann then got up to give a final message and to congratulate the authorities for their "Mexican ingenuity" in writting pro-condom propaganda, distributed to everybody at the conference.