

## Dateline Mexico by Héctor Apolinar

### Church rejects Mexico suicide pact

*The Catholic hierarchy in Mexico is demanding a role in addressing the country's economic and social problems.*

**T**he hierarchy of the Mexican Catholic Church is refusing to back the Economic Solidarity Pact, announced to the public by President Miguel de la Madrid last Dec. 15. That pact—affecting workers, businessmen, and agricultural workers and producers—was the government's response to the 10 million-member Labor Congress' demand for a 46% wage hike, to counter the maxi-devaluation of the Mexican peso by a like amount.

The pact—which has only satisfied the former bankers, led by Agustín Legorreta—establishes a 15% general wage increase, plus another 20% hike in the minimum wage, as of January. At the same time, the pact imposes increases of nearly 85% in the cost of goods and services provided by the state, ranging from gasoline and electricity to fertilizers and telephones.

On Dec. 23, Mexican Cardinal Ernesto Corripio issued a careful criticism of the pact, stating, "The reality of all these pacts is that it is precisely those who appear at first sight to be making the sacrifice, who are the most needy . . . and anyone can see this." On Dec. 24, a document was released over the signature of Sergio Obeso, the archbishop of Jalapa and president of the Mexican Bishops Council, which fiercely attacks the government as responsible for the economic crisis ravaging the nation.

Archbishop Obeso is known for his sometimes radical positions on national matters, a radicalism that has on occasion created problems for the Mexican episcopate. However, the

criticisms in the Obeso document must be taken into account, as they are a reflection of the radicalization which can take hold of a nation in response to suicidal economic policies by the government.

A few days later, on Dec. 27, the president of the Episcopate's Commission on Social Communication, Monsignor Alamilla, was the most categorical in asserting that, if in five years of government "the economic situation of Mexico has not been corrected, one cannot expect it to happen in 60 days."

At the same time, the Church hierarchy has escalated its demands that the government legally recognize its existence, and establish a de facto relationship with it. The Church's aspirations were expressed by the Papal Nuncio to Mexico, Msgr. Girolamo Prigrione, who in a Dec. 19 interview with the daily *La Jornada*, said that it is necessary to change Mexico's laws, since the Church in Mexico "is a reality. Even the blind can see it, and one can't ignore reality."

Monsignor Prigrione added that the relation between the Church and state is "a de facto relationship. Open, respectful, cordial, but *de facto*, not *de jure*." Therefore, he argued, the law needed to be adjusted to reality, because otherwise "a deformation of the national conscience is created: the people become accustomed to trampling on the law." He added, pointedly, that for now, "we are doing okay, because the law is not applied, but over the long term, is it good or bad?"

Also on Dec. 27, Monsignor

Alamilla had said that the Church's intention in seeking to change the Constitution of the republic, is to try to prevent Mexico from sinking into social chaos as a product of the current economic crisis. In his statement, Monsignor Alamilla said, "The Church must say what it feels about the situation prevailing in the country, especially in these days of crisis and of the Pact of Economic Solidarity."

The Church, Alamilla explained, "which is the majority of the country, demands participation in the future of Mexico, since there is no reason for it to continue manacled, cornered, or ashamed." He added ironically that "the Jacobin, Marxist, and Masonic brothers" should not fear that the Church is seeking to change the law to be able to "kick out Miguel de la Madrid or Agustín Legorreta, nor to install a dictatorship."

The statements of the Church about the economic situation in the country are not coincidental, since the problem of the foreign debt is well known, and the relationship between morality and economics is a question that has deeply concerned Pope John Paul II and the majority of Ibero-America's bishops. One sign of this is the visit to Mexico of Colombian Cardinal Alfonso López Trujillo, the first week of December. During his visit, Cardinal López Trujillo—former president of the Ibero-American Episcopal Commission—spoke on the current situation in Ibero-America, and on the role of the Church at this juncture. In his address, given in Guadalajara before 100 important local businessmen, the Colombian cardinal referred to the problem of the region's foreign debt burden, and urged that "our countries pay, but without the huge explosions and social costs that all this conveys, and pay, but under truly rational circumstances and terms."