

## Dateline Mexico by Carlos Valdez

### AIDS panic sweeps Mexico

*Health minister becomes the world's first government official to admit possible transmission by mosquitos.*

Secretary of Health Dr. Guillermo Soberón has finally recognized what *EIR* has been warning since late 1985: AIDS in Mexico, as in the rest of the world, has reached epidemic proportions. In Tepic, Nayarit, on March 12, Soberón stated that AIDS in Mexico "is advancing among the population of our country" and is "taking on a worrisome character." The Mexican official predicted that "by 1991 there will be 25,000-30,000 AIDS cases in Mexico" and that unless "energetic measures" are taken, the treatment or control of this disease could swallow the entire budget of the Health Department, currently 400 billion pesos.

Throughout most of 1986, Soberón led publicity efforts to make people believe that AIDS in Mexico "is not a public health problem." Then, at the beginning of December 1986, Soberón said at a press conference that AIDS "is tending to turn into a public health problem." Now, in March 1987, not only did he admit that AIDS is the worst disease the human species has ever faced, but he became the first government official in the world to admit that AIDS may also be transmitted by mosquito bites.

Shortly after the first announcement, this time in the state of San Luis Potosí, while signing a Joint Development Pact between the federal government and that state, Soberón not only repeated what he had said in Tepic; but he also accepted the possibility of AIDS transmission through saliva, sweat, flies, mosquitos, bedbugs, and rats. Soberón insisted that for every

person sick with AIDS, 50 to 100 persons are carrying the virus.

Soberón's remarks were backed up by Dr. Italo Barragán, epidemiologist from the University of Colombia and member of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), in an interview in the Mexican weekly *Novedades* on March 22. He said that the AIDS virus, which comes from Africa and Haiti, has been found in tears, saliva, and urine. Dr. Barragán announced that in the coming weeks PAHO and the Mexican health sector will launch a prevention campaign against AIDS. The drive consists, however, of the impotent measures still promoted by the World Health Organization and PAHO, of "promoting the use of prophylactics and perhaps their free distribution." (See article, page 10.)

José Cavazos López, health secretary of the state of Nuevo León, in public statements on March 3, estimated at 2,000 the number of infected by the dread disease of AIDS in metropolitan Monterrey, the state capital. Later, Dr. Mario Cesar Salinas Carmona, chief of the Immunology Department of the University Hospital of the Autonomous University of Nuevo León, told the press that "according to the ratios of the Health Department, the number of carriers could go up to 5,000, but the figure could be higher. Based on the Health Department ratios, we estimate that there are about 5,000 persons carrying the virus."

On March 25, the afternoon paper *Ovaciones* reported that in Ciudad Reynosa more than 100 persons had

joined the fatal "AIDS Club," victims of a pair of American prostitutes who were carriers. Two of the victims stated that at the end of last week, following a "sexual adventure" with the pair, the prostitutes vanished from the hotel the following week, leaving only the bathroom mirror adorned with the phrase, "Welcome to the AIDS Club, Mexican."

At first, the two considered this as a "joke" but in talking it over with other friends, they found out the same thing had happened to them. The "gringas" reportedly have left Reynosa and are rumored to be headed for Mexican beach resorts, such as Acapulco, in time to spend Easter vacation there.

On March 24, the daily *Ultimas Noticias de Excelsior* ran a front page story on a conference held in Culiacán, capital of the state of Sinaloa, by the Schiller Institute, where Ignacio Mondaca and Dr. Bertha Farfán de Nava warned that Sinaloa's tragic primacy in numbers of cases of malaria, leprosy, and TB, make the state a potentially "high-risk" zone for AIDS. Mondaca noted that "most of the cases have been discovered in the strip along the U.S. border with Mexico, which is a very short distance from Sinaloa, a fact that favors the spread of the disease." Dr. Farfan refuted the notion that AIDS, the plague of the 20th century, is exclusively a disease of homosexuals, drug addicts, or the so-called high risk populations.

There is one anomaly in this situation of virtual AIDS panic in Mexico. In early March, the municipal health director of Acapulco, armed with alleged medical studies, asserted that "Acapulco is AIDS-free." For the same reasons that Acapulco is a favorite haunt of Henry Kissinger, who vacationed there less than a month ago, this assertion is viewed by many as highly doubtful.