

Dateline Mexico by Carlos Valdez

State of Chiapas legalizes abortion

The surprise legislation was a Christmas gift to the IMF and World Bank from the Salinas regime.

On Dec. 18, the legislature of the southern state of Chiapas announced that it had modified Article 136 of the state Penal Code in order to decriminalize abortion. The reformed article now states that "abortions are not punishable when the pregnancy is a result of rape, if they are done within 90 days of conception; when, because of the pregnancy, the mother's life is in danger . . . [or] when abortions are carried out for reasons of family planning, by common agreement of the couple."

The new legislation has actually been in effect since last October, but it was only made public now. The announcement has set off a national debate on whether or not to legalize abortion nationally.

There was an immediate, sharp reaction from the Catholic Church and opposition political leaders, who recognized it as a foot in the door for a broader policy of malthusian genocide.

The Catholic Church's Episcopal Conference responded by excommunicating the Chiapas legislators who voted for the measure, and called on President Carlos Salinas de Gortari to "put an end to this social degeneration that could culminate in a situation of national evil." Bishop Lozano Barragán said that the new law is "equivalent to legalizing murder."

Bishop Genaro Alamilla went to the heart of the Mexican government's malthusian arguments in defense of population reduction. "It would be criminal," he stated, "to argue that, because of Mexico's demographic problems, it is necessary to

eliminate lives, eaters at the national table." The problem, rather, is a government which is "disorganized and corrupt, and which doesn't organize its inhabitants to produce the basic goods for the population. . . . Mexico has everything needed to guarantee a dignified existence, with everything that means in terms of food, clothing, housing, entertainment, education, etc., for twice the current population."

The archbishop of Monterrey, Adolfo Suárez Rivera, also went at the heart of the economic policy issues. The Church isn't trying to make a revolution by opposing the legislation, he said, "but rather is trying to prevent the international bodies like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Inter-American Development Bank from continuing to score points against us. . . . It's obvious that the international organizations made this a condition for the granting of fresh money. . . . It's so obvious, that a large part of the loans granted to our country come in the form of contraceptives."

Msgr. Suárez Rivera also addressed the issue of malthusianism. "Mexico does not want to be a nation of the elderly, as occurs in many European countries that dedicated themselves to implementing radical birth control measures. . . . Rather than killing or suppressing eaters, we have to redefine production policies so that there is enough food for all of us."

José Angel Conchello, a national leader of the opposition PAN party, also targeted the international financial institutions, in statements to the

press on Dec. 26. The legislation, he charged, was "due to pressures from international financial agencies, such as the World Bank, which pressed a few years ago for it [abortion] to be used as a birth control method for Mexico, in exchange for having access to new loans." If the government of Salinas did this on its own, Conchello added, it was merely to try to "get in good with the lords of money. By this measure, they wanted to show they had a tough family planning policy so that the creditors would look well on us and loan money."

Conchello added, "Now that abortion is decriminalized, tomorrow they will legislate to apply euthanasia to men and women over 70; that's why the change in Article 136 of the Chiapas Penal Code—supposedly to benefit some nebulous family planning—is really a grave assault on life."

Also outspoken against the measure was Dr. Kunz Bolaños of the PARM party, who said that "abortion in Chiapas is the seed of a fascist policy. . . . Someone will come along and propose that it would be better, because of social problems, if children who are born sick or with physical defects would die, and after that it could be applied to the sick. . . . We'll end up embracing fascism under any kind of pretext—such as poverty, race, or religion."

Seasoned political observers believe that the Chiapas legislation has the behind-the-scenes backing of the federal government. They note a direct family connection between Chiapas Gov. Garrido-Blanco and President Salinas. Garrido-Blanco's wife is the daughter of the dean of Mexican malthusians, Antonio Ortiz Mena, who was for years the president of the Inter-American Development Bank, which Archbishop Suárez Rivera attacked. President Salinas is Ortiz Mena's nephew.