

Report from Rio by Silvia Palacios

AIDS crisis in Brazil

Brazilian authorities are hiding the severity of the situation, which is assuming epidemic proportions.

The Brazilian health ministry, under the excuse of "avoiding panic" within the population, is continuing to follow a policy of covering up of the accelerating growth rates that AIDS is displaying in this country. In so doing, they are following the genocidal recommendations of organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia.

The real panic the Brazilian health authorities apparently want to avoid is that of the powerful "Gay Lobby," which infests every state in Brazil.

But there is another, even more important explanation for the criminal negligence of the health ministry, namely, "the high cost of treatment and the insufficiency of beds in the public health network, and of investment in research," as the officials themselves will admit. Desperate health workers—faced with a lack of funds and the increase in AIDS, in a situation where diseases such as dengue and malaria are considered endemic—see cover-up as their only option.

In this situation, which could be described as a threat to national security, the continuation of an economic policy premised on paying usurious interest rates to service the foreign debt, is sheer lunacy.

While in 1985 the most reliable estimates were that 1,000 cases of AIDS would be confirmed by the end of 1986, recent health ministry statis-

tics corresponding to October 1986, report only 841 cases. Ministry officials themselves, however, are privately confirming that the number of cases has surpassed 1,000.

No one can pinpoint the true state of affairs, but the official figures are being disproven daily. For example, Dr. Ricardo Veronesi, expert in infectious diseases from the University of Sao Paulo, reported on Oct. 27 that 3,000 of the 7,000 prisoners in that state were infected with AIDS. "Promiscuity in Brazilian jails," he said, "is nothing new. In the state penitentiary, new inmates are humiliated and forced to serve the oldest prisoners, who take sexual advantage of them even if they are not homosexuals."

Brazil has the second-highest number of AIDS victims among prisoners in the world.

No sane person would dare to ignore the miserable health conditions under which large percentages of the Brazilian population live, where entire regions are undergoing a process of "Africanization" that threatens to cause the death of millions. Sub-human living standards in large parts of Brazil may be one explanation for the AIDS explosion there; another is the prevalent Gnostic worship of "the body beautiful," which has given Brazil the unenviable fame of having the largest homosexual community in the world.

But even if the official figures lie and attribute deaths from AIDS to oth-

er diseases, such as leukemia, the health ministry has had to admit that AIDS cases have broken out of the "traditional high-risk" category. Thus, for example, in Sao Paulo—the state of the highest incidence of AIDS—of the 552 registered cases, 23 are considered part of "non-traditional" groups and 103 have been catalogued as "still under investigation."

In April of this year, the Eighth National Conference on Health met to take a close look at this new disease. While state and federal medical authorities participated in the conference, the final resolutions reflected the minority influence of leaders of the so-called gay communities who had been invited to participate. Noteworthy was the group from Bahía, which mobilized aggressively in defense of the civil rights of homosexuals and sought to "decriminalize" the moral ethic that considers homosexuality a perversion.

From that conference emerged a proposal for an AIDS control program, which was based on a series of weak-kneed "preventive" measures directed only at the traditional risk groups, such as hemophiliacs. However, a stipulation was made placing AIDS on the list of diseases for which compulsory notification in every state of Brazil is required. It was also recognized that, because of its epidemiological characteristics, AIDS "can become one of the most serious public health problems of the century."

The homosexual groups are staying on the offensive to combat what they call the "stigmatization of gays" caused by the appearance of AIDS. They are currently mobilizing for "legislation that prevents firing without just cause of AIDS-positive carriers." One case, that of an airlines employee with AIDS forced to resign from his job, has been taken up as a cause célèbre by Brazil's gay lobby.