

Business Briefs

Space

U.S. to buy Soviet nuclear reactor

At the annual Space Nuclear Power conference which opened Jan. 7 in New Mexico, Sen. Pete Domenici (R-N.M.) announced that the U.S. government will be paying \$10 million to buy a Soviet Topaz 2 space nuclear reactor. As was reported in *New Federalist*, at the January 1990 meeting, the president of Space Power, Inc. announced that his company was selling the reactor for the Russians.

According to the *New York Times*, the aim of the purchase will be to learn about the Soviet technology, not to use the reactor. Though the U.S. pioneered the development of space nuclear power, when the plans for manned Mars missions were canned in the early 1970s, so was the research and development program. Though the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) breathed some life into space nuclear power, the demise of the directed energy programs pulled Defense Department support out from under space nuclear power.

The Soviets have developed new materials and energy conversion technologies to produce electricity from the heat of fission, and by default, are years ahead of the United States.

Health

Puerto Rican infants have bleak survival rate

According to researchers at the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia, Puerto Rican infants have the highest infant mortality rate among Hispanics in the United States.

Puerto Rican babies born in the continental United States have a 50% greater chance of dying before they reach the age of four weeks than babies born to non-Hispanic whites. The risk increases with infants born in Puerto Rico. Infants born on the island had a 130% higher risk than for non-Hispanic whites, according to another study in the *Journal of the American*

Medical Association.

A University of Texas study found that more Hispanics lack health coverage than any other U.S. ethnic group.

Health insurance coverage in Texas was found to be generally declining by a Texas Department of Human Services study. More than 3 million Texans reportedly have no health insurance—400,000 more than in 1985—and another 3.73 million cannot pay the difference between what they are billed and what the insurance costs, according to the Jan. 12 *Houston Chronicle*.

AIDS

African women seen as victims in 1990s

"Women and AIDS in the 1990s," a new World Health Organization analysis, sees a rapid worsening of the spread of AIDS. "WHO estimates that AIDS will kill at least 2 million women during the 1990s, most of them in sub-Saharan Africa," WHO's press release reads.

"An estimated one in 40 women in sub-Saharan Africa is already infected with HIV," it continues. "Elsewhere, for example, one in 500 women in Latin America and one in 700 women in North America is infected. In Asia, and particularly in South and Southeast Asia, recent data indicate that within the past three years alone, close to 200,000 women may have been infected.

"In some cities in sub-Saharan Africa, up to 40% of men and women may be infected with HIV, and these infection levels will cause a doubling or a tripling of the total adult mortality rate during the 1990s. They will also cause up to a 50% increase in the child mortality rate, thus wiping out the gains in child survival laboriously achieved over the past decade.

"WHO estimates that approximately 30% of infants born to infected mothers will become infected with HIV before, during, or shortly after birth. A cumulative total of as many as 10 million infants will be born infected with HIV worldwide by the year 2000."

Meanwhile, Uganda's President has stated that his country will have only 20 million citi-

zens in 2010, instead of the projected 37 million, due to AIDS. Six million children will be orphans by then and more than 1 million citizens are already infected, he added. Zimbabwe's President also sounded the alarm: He estimates that 490,000 of his citizens will die of AIDS within the next 10 years.

All hospital beds in South Africa will be occupied with AIDS patients in the next seven years, Professor Odendaal of Stellenbosch University warns.

Biological Holocaust

AIDS, TB linked, warn German researchers

The December 1990 issue of the German magazine *AIDS Forschung (AIDS Research)* reports a lecture on "Tuberculosis in AIDS" by Peter Eriki, presenting a review of the consequences of the HIV epidemic for the global incidence of tuberculosis:

"About one-third of the world population is infected with tuberculosis (in developing countries, about 80% of the adult population). At the present time, about 20 million suffer from active tuberculosis, and every year an additional 3 million develop the disease. Among infections caused by bacteria, tuberculosis is the most important cause of death. Globally, about 2 million individuals are simultaneously infected with tuberculosis and HIV (1.5 million of these in Africa, 300,000 in South America, and 100,000 in North America).

"Because of activation of tuberculosis in HIV-infected persons, an increase in active tuberculosis is seen since 1984-85 in areas of Africa having a high prevalence of HIV. . . . In Africa, persons with active tuberculosis exhibit about a six-fold higher HIV prevalence (20-60% anti-HIV positive) than comparable population groups without active tuberculosis.

"Until 1986, the HIV epidemic probably caused more than 9,000 additional cases of tuberculosis in the U.S. . . . This increase affected mainly blacks and the 25-45 year age group."

According to Eriki, "Programs to control

tuberculosis have top priority within any HIV prevention strategy. Tracing of contacts of persons with tuberculosis, and tuberculin testing of contact persons, are essential elements of such control programs."

Ecological Fascism

DDT ban spreads malaria in Brazil

A million more Brazilians fell victim to malaria in 1990, according to the Health Ministry's National Epidemiological Center, as environmentalist policies have halted the use of DDT to control mosquitoes. Most of the malaria cases are in the Amazon, with 150,000 in the city of Manaus alone.

The health authorities of the previous government ordered 3,000 tons of DDT from Indonesia in 1989. By the time it arrived in June, the new President, Fernando Collor, had ordered the health authorities to limit the use of DDT against malaria, and Environment Secretary José Lutzenberger intervened directly with the health ministry to stop all use, until there was a full environmental impact study. At the end of December, the solicitor general asked for a total halt of DDT use.

National Health Foundation chairman Waldir Acoverde responded, "Despite the appeal from the solicitor general, we have two choices at the moment for the Amazon Region: DDT or malaria."

Acoverde noted that in 40 years of using DDT against malaria in Brazil, there has been no contamination problem. In the early 1940s, Brazil had 6 million malaria cases per year. With the DDT campaigns, this fell to 50,000 by the early 1970s. Since then, with the opening of the Amazon to settlement under World Bank conditions, new cases grew to 660,000 in 1989 and 1 million in 1990.

World Wide Fund For Nature spokesman Theo Coburn charged, "DDT is going to penetrate the aquatic system and the jungle food chain. This will poison birds and fish, harming their reproductive system and weakening their eggs."

Development

Japan building infrastructure, markets

Japan is providing more than \$2 billion of bilateral aid annually to the nations of South Asia, to build up the infrastructure of poorer nations and increase the markets for its own companies, the *Washington Post* reported Jan. 12.

Japan's Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) provided \$222 million to India, \$218 million to Bangladesh, \$92 million to Sri Lanka, \$88 million to Pakistan, and \$21 million to Nepal in 1989.

Total OECF aid rose from \$2 billion in 1980 to nearly \$7 billion in 1989.

Labor

'Mild' recession to triple homelessness

A study by Rutgers University estimates that 10-14 million people will become homeless in the United States over the coming year because of the "mild" recession. The current estimate of the U.S. Census Bureau is 3-4 million homeless.

According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, the new homeless are those who were formerly employed in heavy manufacturing, mining, and the petrochemicals industry. At the same time, cities' budgets are being cut, and shelters are disappearing. Some cities are razing shelters for the homeless and building convention centers. Investors, meanwhile, can no longer expect tax breaks if they invest in shelters.

In many cases the homeless are the new "walking dead." One estimate puts the number of AIDS cases among the homeless in New York City at nearly 12% of the street population, or about 13,000 people. In other cities, there are outbreaks of cholera and TB. The sick don't have the strength to go from agency to agency for help; and are unable to work, so they cannot get the health insurance for adequate medical care.

Briefly

● **A RECORD** 768 U.S. corporate credit ratings were downgraded by Standard and Poor's in 1990—double last year's record-setting level—while just 189 were upgraded. The volume of corporate downgrades was \$510 billion, compared to \$174 billion in 1989.

● **THE ENVIRONMENTAL** Protection Agency will spend \$210,000 on a three-year study to determine the effects of cow belches on so-called global warming. Three scientists at Washington State University said that they will study how much methane gas cows and other cud-chewing animals produce when they belch.

● **AIDS** was apparently transmitted by one football player to another during a collision in a game in Germany in December 1989 in which both were left bleeding, researchers report.

● **'THE PSYCHOLOGY** of fear is beginning to take hold," said the Jan. 8 *USA Today*. "One of the most enduring and vivid images of the 20th century is the run on the bank. Seared into the national consciousness is the sight, the sound, even the smell of fear as panicked customers" demand their money.

● **500 MILLION** square feet of office space is vacant in the U.S. Behind that empty space, the Jan. 13 *New York Times* warned, stands the U.S. banking system. According to a study by McKinsey and Co., if commercial real estate values fall 20-25%, it will cost the FDIC \$20-40 billion over the next few years.

● **ALCOA** has announced that it will write off \$275 million in the fourth quarter of 1990 to cover costs of abandoning most of its non-aluminum operations, including the new technology areas of ceramics and composites.