

Briefly

AIDS

Insurance firms behind euthanasia push

AIDS is a ticking time-bomb for all life insurance companies, because of the enormous medical costs the insurance firms will be required to handle as AIDS caseloads mount, Wolfgang Schieren, the head of the largest West German private insurance company, Allianz, stated in an interview with the German daily *Die Welt* on June 3.

Because of this, the insurance giants have been pressing forward a campaign to make euthanasia a routine practice in medical institutions around the world, and to even legalize it where possible.

Their chief instrument in the United States has been the American Medical Association. The AMA has just conducted a survey purporting to show that 80% of U.S. physicians favor the old Nazi practice.

"There comes a time with the terminally ill or irreversibly comatose patient that the physician must step back and, at the patient's or the family's request, allow the patient to die with dignity," Dr. James H. Sammons, executive vice president of the AMA, so nicely put it.

The results of the AMA survey of physicians from specialties across the medical spectrum was published June 3 in *American Medical News*, the weekly newspaper of the AMA.

Nearly 80% of the 1,000 doctors who responded to the survey favored withdrawing life-support systems from "hopelessly ill or irreversibly comatose patients," if such withdrawal were requested by the patient or the family of the patient, the paper reported.

The survey did not mention AIDS or the costs entailed, its actual motivation.

Markets

Tokyo exchange called century's biggest bubble

Some stock analysts in the United States are worried that the Tokyo Stock Exchange has

grown too big, too fast, and warn that it is a "bubble about to burst"—with potentially devastating effects on world financial markets, according to the June 5 *Washington Post*.

Wariness about the stability of the dollar and dollar-denominated U.S. stock and bond investments has grown since 1985, when the dollar began its long decline, and dramatically so since the October 1987 crash. In consequence, Japan's cash-rich companies and individuals have bid up prices of Japanese stocks.

Nippon Telephone and Telegraph (NTT), the privatized former government telephone monopoly, for example, trades at \$20,000 a share. At that price, NTT's outstanding shares are worth about \$76 billion, more than the entire West German stock exchange!

Marc Faber, a managing director of Drexel Burnham in Hong Kong, calls it "the greatest bubble of this century," adding, "When it breaks, it will be devastating, more than people will ever believe."

Space

Russians far ahead of NASA

The Russians are far, far ahead of the Americans in space, according to a feature in West Germany's *Welt am Sonntag* June 6. The next visible Soviet breakthrough will be the flight of a manned space shuttle, Kosmolyot, in August. General Shalotov, in charge of the Soviet cosmonaut training program, announced the flight.

Kosmolyot will be launched on an Energia rocket, the most powerful booster in the world today.

The head of project design at NASA, Jesco von Puttkamer, said, "This is a big leap forward for the Soviets, and will secure a monopoly position for them. Energia is a universal tool."

The Soviets have launched 24 satellites since the beginning of 1988 with no failures and are preparing two drones for a mission to Mars. Another NASA official told *Welt am Sonntag*, "We must admit such multiple-use activities are not possible on our side."

● **THE AIDS VIRUS** eludes detection by hiding in cells, according to medical researchers at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research in Washington, who have found cases in which the AIDS virus remains hidden in macrophages, a type of immune system cell.

● **THE IMF** opened a three-day conference in Chicago the first week of June. Finance ministers, central bankers, and corporate chieftains from around the world discussed economic stagnation, trade imbalances, and Third World debt.

● **MANUFACTURERS** Hanover, the nation's seventh-largest commercial bank, faces an "uncertain future," say business analysts in New York. They called "Manny Hanny" the sickest big bank in New York, although Chase Manhattan and Chemical, the nation's second- and fifth-largest banks, are not far behind. Large loans in the Southwest and Ibero-America are the cause of Manny Hanny's problems. It reported profits of \$140 million in the first quarter of 1988, but half of that is from currency speculation, a risky thing to hang the future on.

● **WILLIAM C. VERITY**, Commerce Secretary, intervened with Soviet authorities recently to help a Louisiana company secure an offshore oil drilling contract, even as the Reagan administration continued six years of diplomatic efforts to halt a nearly identical Soviet-Japanese oil drilling project. Both involve drilling for oil of Sakhalin Island in the Pacific. Verity reportedly kept State, Defense, and Energy Department officials in the dark about his action.

● **A FARMER** who won \$1 million in a lottery told a friend who asked him what he would do with the money, "I guess I'll just keep farming until the money's gone," according to a story in *American Legion* magazine.