

worried that their country's endemic lack of disposable syringes adds to the risk of catching AIDS.

"It is not unknown for Westerners seeking blood tests at Moscow hospitals to take their own disposable syringes with them, only to have them pocketed by the doctor who uses the re-usable kind on them," says the *Financial Times*.

Disease

AIDS scare hits Mexico

Panic over the spread of AIDS is beginning to spread in Mexico. Among the items recently reported by wire services are:

- The two leading mid-day newspapers in Mexico City devoted their lead headlines: "AIDS: CNC [National Peasant Confederation] demands clinical exams of Simpson-Mazzoli deportees," and "AIDS is already corrupting us. Mexico is on the high-risk line."

- *El Sol de Mexico* says health officials are maintaining total secrecy about rumors of 718 cases of AIDs in the vast, densely-populated Nezahualcoyotl section of Mexico City: "Leaving aside contagion from homosexuality, AIDS can present itself through manicurists, barbers, hair stylists, acupuncture, ear piercing, etc., . . . improperly sterilized dentists instruments, as well as vaginal and nasal secretions, throat infections, sweat, saliva, and maternal milk."

- The health director of the notorious Acapulco jet-set resort on Mexico's Pacific Coast has declared that the town is AIDS-free—but hasn't been able to convince anyone of that unlikely fact.

Comecon

Soviets unhappy with economic results

Soviet leaders have been expressing their displeasure with the economy's poor performance so far this year.

The April 26 *Pravda* carried a lead article with statistics, released April 24 by the Central Statistical Board, showing a very poor first quarter economic performance. *Pravda* extensively criticized economic results, a theme which has been picked up lately by traveling Kremlin leaders.

Moscow Party boss Boris Yeltsin, speaking in Sofia, Bulgaria, denounced the "failures and shortcomings" of the Soviet economy, and was also critical of Bulgaria's economic performance.

Soviet Politburo ideology boss, Yegor Ligachov, speaking in Budapest, Hungary, had nothing but praise for the Hungarian economic model, and its "utilization of methods of economic leadership . . . and the financial, banking and price formation system of Hungary." Hungary has recently been offering its services to Western speculators as a "deregulated" banking system available for dirty-money laundering.

Technology

Big breakthrough in gamma laser

A major advance in the gamma ray laser project has been reported from Texas. Laser researcher C.B. Collins, a physicist at the University of Texas at Dallas, reported a big step forward in the development of the gamma ray device at the spring meeting of the American Physical Society in Toledo in mid-April.

The technology is one of the lines of investigation being pursued for anti-missile weapons in the President's Strategic Defense Initiative program.

A typical gamma ray laser, said Collins, would theoretically be able to produce a peak power output of three trillion billion watts. The total electricity-generating capacity of all the world's commercial power plants is only 2.3 trillion watts.

Collins and his associates also reported progress toward development of very intense sources of x-rays needed for the study of gamma-ray laser materials.

Ironically, the same meeting heard some scientists denounce mooted plans for early deployment of the SDI, saying it was not feasible in the near future.

Briefly

- **THE SOVIET UNION** has agreed to buy four million metric tons of bread-quality wheat this year, Agriculture Secretary Richard Lyng announced April 30. The sale is equivalent to about half of last year's crop in Kansas, and will be carried out under a subsidy program designed to recapture markets lost to subsidized competition, principally from the European Community.

- **SALLY SHELTON-COLBY**, wife of former CIA chief William Colby and an adviser to several American banks, declared during an April visit to Mexico that an "economic recovery" was in full swing in that debt-strangled country, thanks to President Miguel de la Madrid. Meanwhile, government figures showed first-quarter demand for steel down 17%.

- **RICHARD GEPHARDT**, presidential hopeful and author of the worst piece of trade-war legislation since the notorious Smoot-Hawley bill, told an audience in Iowa April 24 that the Reagan administration's "pursuit of arms" had "busted the budget" and "broken the back of American agriculture and many a basic industry. . . ." What the defense connection is, he did not make clear.

- **THE BANKS** that receive the most money from drug trafficking are Crédit Suisse, White Weld, Bank of Boston, and Merrill Lynch, Bolivian Sen. Daniel Cabezas told EFE, the Spanish press agency, in Rio de Janeiro. Cabezas is part of a Bolivian delegation touring Brazil, Argentina, and Peru to organize a Latin-American Parliament meeting to discuss drug trafficking.

- **THE TOKYO** Stock Market was hit with the largest one-day fall in its history, 850 points, on April 26. A London observer said this is a definitive signal "that the worldwide bull markets in stocks are over. We can expect now an overall bear market for a very long time to come."