

Business Briefs

Asia

Peking unveils changes in economic policy

Chinese leaders have informed a World Bank delegation now visiting Peking that they plan broad changes in the government's economic policy, in the direction of "free enterprise" and greater decentralization, according to a report in the Sept. 4 *Financial Times* of London. The Chinese leaders indicated that in the next stage of reform, they would like entrepreneurs to tender for control of state-owned businesses, and then assume full responsibility for profits and losses.

The Chinese made clear to the bank officials that they want to overturn traditional policy, in the interests of making agricultural production more efficient. The intention is to allow coastal provinces, which are major grain producers, to concentrate on cash crops and rural industry instead, while China covers its grain deficit through a marked increase in imports.

Moeen A. Qureshi, the World Bank's senior vice president in charge of operations, said the changes could be introduced because of the success of reforms introduced in the past nine years. He said that the Chinese leadership had a very practical approach to policymaking, and the World Bank approved of almost all its policies.

Development

Thai MPs inspect European canals

Parliamentarians from Thailand, accompanied by members of the Thai National Security Council and Armed Forces, returned from a fact-finding tour of Europe Aug. 31, well prepared to inform their countrymen of the techniques available to build and operate a projected canal through Thailand's Isthmus of Kra. The Kra Canal, while spurring the industrial development of Thailand, would relieve the congestion now af-

flicting the chief water route between the Pacific and Indian Ocean basins, the Straits of Malacca.

The Thai delegation visited the Suez Canal in Egypt as well as the Kiel Canal, known as the Nord-Ost See Kanal, in Germany. They also stopped over in The Hague, the Netherlands, and Paris. Everywhere, they were given extensive briefings on canal building and earth-moving technologies.

In France, one of the companies involved in the Euro-tunnel project, Bouygues, had prepared a briefing for the delegation at its Paris headquarters. The Fusion Energy Foundation in Paris, one of the big promoters of the Kra Canal, introduced the group to a number of French parliamentarians for discussions on the canal, including the man who had been foreign trade minister under Charles de Gaulle.

The Fusion Energy Foundation office in Thailand has created a Kra Club, together with some 15 retired army personnel, and reports that it has already received requests for meetings on the project from German and Japanese companies.

Environmentalism

Push 'debt-for-land' swaps in Ibero-America

The United Nations World Commission on Development and the Environment has a high-powered delegation traveling around Ibero-America, promoting "an environmentalist solution to foreign debt," i.e., debt-for-land arrangements. Under the terms of agreements recently concluded by Bolivia and Costa Rica, for example, a certain amount of national land was set aside to be a "natural preserve," never to be developed, in exchange for the return of a certain amount of the country's debt paper.

The "Brundtland Commission," named after the Norwegian Labor Party leader, arrived in Argentina on Sept. 2 from Brazil, and held a press conference to promote its report, *Our Common Future*, described as a

"new global approach to the problems of debt, development, and the environment." Members include Vladimir Sokolov of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, Colombian environmentalist Margarita Botero, Brazilian Secretary of Environment Paulo Nogueira Netto, former Sudanese Foreign Minister Mausour Khalib, and Sen. Susanna Agnelli of Italy, leader of the Italian chapter of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and scion of one of Italy's richest families.

The WWF mediated the debt-for-land swap in the case of Bolivia.

At the Commission's Argentine press conference, *EIR* correspondent Juan José Balatti asked if the group specifically advocated plans like the recent debt-for-land swap in Bolivia. There was silence, until Senator Agnelli said that she "didn't understand the question," which was repeated. Agnelli responded that what was done in Bolivia was "good," but it would be preferable if such schemes were imposed "by the people themselves," rather than as a matter of agreement between the banks and governments.

The Commission was scheduled to visit Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, and Uruguay.

AIDS

Los Alamos reports mutation of virus

New studies done by the Los Alamos National Laboratory show the AIDS virus to be a complex family of rapidly mutating viruses. As a result, there must be presumed to be thousands of slightly different forms of the virus, called HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus).

Some of the mutated forms may have acquired new, specialized ways of being transmitted, to infect different tissues, to evade the immune system, or to resist drug treatments.

The Los Alamos studies, according to a report in the *Washington Post*, show the AIDS virus to be mutating five times faster than the influenza virus, thought until now to be the fastest mutating virus.

The findings "cast bewildering shadows" across the prospects for diagnosis, treatment, and a vaccine, one of the Los Alamos researchers, Gerald Myers, is quoted. "The AIDS viruses now manifest themselves as a complex family tree, sprouting new genetic branches—and apparently very quickly at that," Myers said.

Technology

'Privatization' threatens Landsat

The government's unwillingness to underwrite the U.S. Landsat system of Earth-viewing satellites may cost America its pioneering lead in the industry, scientists and other users of the technology say.

Two years ago the Reagan administration promised financial assistance in transferring the key satellite program to the private sector, and then did not deliver. Now, the Soviets, in addition to France, Japan, and India are gaining ground with their own government-subsidized satellite surveillance programs.

"The Reagan administration's policy has been an unmitigated disaster," said John E. Pike, associate director of space policy for the Federation of American Scientists. He was quoted in the *Baltimore Sun* Sept. 8.

Undeterred, the administration's extreme "free enterprise" ideology received new expression the week of Sept. 1, when the White House announced that a "privatization commission" will be created to "propose how we can return appropriate federal activities to the private sector through the sale of government operations and assets, the use of private enterprise to provide services for government agencies, or the use of vouchers to provide services to the public through the private sector."

The formation of the commission is part of the President's crazy "economic bill of rights," which he proposed July 3.

Named to the new commission are: Mel-

vin Laird, defense secretary under Gerald Ford, James McIntyre, who headed the Office of Management and the Budget for three years under Jimmy Carter; and Walter Wriston, former head of Citicorp.

Health

Colombian austerity slashes medical care

The Colombia Ministry of Health has admitted that under current government economic policies, it is incapable of spending the sums required to keep the population of that nation healthy. Colombia's austerity policies are dictated by the International Monetary Fund.

Minister of Health José Granada Rodríguez put the matter as delicately as he could at a Sept. 1 press conference, "Health has been the great source of sacrifice in the process of economic adjustment of the last few years." Economic adjustment, of course, is IMF-World Bank parlance for massive budget cuts and other measures to free up resources for debt repayment.

"The adjustments necessary for economic policy, especially impelled by the heavy weight of the foreign debt, has been a factor of deterioration in the development of health and the social sector, two areas that have been underfinanced for the past five years," the health minister continued. "The tightness of the economy with respect to social assistance in the country, has generated very delicate restrictions," but the government will make "efforts, within the obvious budgetary constraints, to improve the situation."

La República, Bogota's leading daily, gave the reasons why improvement in the situation is very unlikely. In its Sept. 1 edition, *La República* gives estimates on the amortization and interest due on Colombia's foreign debt for the period 1987-90, and finds that the country will be paying an average of 45% of its export earnings for debt service over that period.

Briefly

● **A WORLD SUMMIT** meeting of health ministers to thrash out a united approach to the AIDS problem will be held in London in January 1988, the British Department of Health announced Sept. 4. The three-day meeting, sponsored by Britain and the World Health Organization, is expected to include "the Russian minister of health, following growing interest from Moscow," the *Daily Telegraph* reported Sept. 5.

● **EGYPT** will require AIDS test certificates for anyone trying to enter the country, the health minister in Cairo announced. Persons without such certificates, including Egyptians returning from abroad, will be immediately quarantined and tested.

● **U.S. CONSUMER** debt is growing at an annualized rate of 7.1%, according to government figures for July, released on Sept. 4. Americans took out \$3.46 billion more in credit in July than they paid off. Credit card debt grew at an annual rate of 11.4% in July, an increase of \$1.3 billion.

● **HOLLAND'S** "Dr. Death," Dr. Pieter Admiraal, who practices and advocates euthanasia for AIDS victims and others, will be a featured speaker at the April 7-10, 1988 semi-annual meeting in San Francisco of the World Federation of Euthanasia Societies, sponsored by the California-based Hemlock Society. Thirty-two different organizations advocating the Nazi practice will be represented.

● **MANUEL ULLOA**, former prime minister of Peru, will be a featured participant at the "Working Group on Debt" sessions of Helmut Schmidt's Inter-Action Council Sept. 24-25 near Zurich, Switzerland. From Oct. 7-8, the Inter-Action Council's Executive Committee is to meet in Budapest, Hungary.