

Briefly

for a joint U.S.-Soviet mission to Mars. The four-page interview, appearing the same week as the summit and the INF ratification debate, was conducted by *Post* owner Katharine Graham herself, along with *Newsweek* editor Richard Smith, and others.

AIDS

High incidence reported in Spain

Approximately 25% of all AIDS tests conducted recently in Madrid were seropositive, the Health Department of Madrid announced. Of 42,000 persons tested, 10,000 were infected.

EIR was unable to find out by press time if the 42,000 persons were selected for testing as "high-risk group" members, or on a more random basis. The rate is enormous, in any case.

AIDS is spreading faster in Spain than in any other European country, according to the latest European Commission statistics. Between 1986 and 1987, cases reported went up by 198%; the average rate of increase in the EC is 126% for the same period. There are now officially 20.2 cases per million inhabitants in Spain.

Debt

German bankers respond to churches

The German Bankers Association responded to Catholic and Lutheran Church documents on Third World debt of May 16 with a statement denouncing the churches for "polemical tones that won't help any of the debtors in the Third World."

The churches' documents denounced current financial policies toward Third World countries as a violation of Christian moral values.

The bankers' association response re-

jected the idea of debt cancellation, and restated its policy of "enabling the debtors to have more growth of the economy, in order to pay their debt."

In a separate release, Commerzbank at least stated that "there is something just in the churches' view," but added that "from a strict merchant's viewpoint, debt cancellation is not the way out of the debt crisis."

Pope John Paul II's recent encyclical, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, the inspiration for the West German church documents, had denounced economic policies which are conducted without ethical considerations, as it were, "from a strict merchant's viewpoint."

Deutsche Bank had a spokesman say that the churches had "better stick to religious affairs, and leave the finances to those who understand the business"—and he might have added, who are now bringing on the worst financial crash in human history.

Mexico

Oligarchy dictated economic policy

The leading spokesman for Mexico's elite circle of financial speculators, banker Agustín Legorreta, publicly admitted that the government of President Miguel de la Madrid is little more than a front for the country's financial oligarchy.

In a speech to students, at which he requested tape recorders be turned off, he outlined how, in November 1987, he went to the government and told them that if they wanted the cooperation of his circle in arresting inflation long enough for the PRI to win this July's elections, they had better do what the "business sector" wanted in the economy. And they have, selling off the largest copper mine in the country, letting the national airlines go bankrupt, and "privatizing" major chunks of the public sector.

Meanwhile, real wages have continued to plummet, public investment has been slashed, and now, intense suffering from the drought is taking place, and still there is no government action.

● **THE MEXICAN** drought is causing serious crop losses, and a health emergency for its population. Along with threatened loss of 60-70% of Mexico's soy crop, which depends on irrigation, are reports of thousands of infants and children suffering from dehydration in Mexico's north. In numerous townships around the city of Monterrey, drinking water is only available for four hours a day.

● **THE GOVERNOR** of Brazil's Alagoas state, Fernando Collor de Melo, held a meeting with small industrialists in which he said that his state will not respect the budget cutbacks ordered by the federal government because "they are unconditional surrender to the IMF and stem from a government that hasn't the least authority." He also criticized the government for not establishing "a policy of incentives for businessmen to invest in the productive sector and not in the unproductive, which is the open market."

● **BRAZIL'S** trade surplus in April hit \$1.9 billion, most of it in raw materials. The huge margin is a sign of the illness of the economy: It reflects, according to president of the Foreign Trade Association, Norberto Ingo Zadrosny, a fall in imports and a contraction of the internal market.

● **SPAIN'S** largest banking operation in history took place in mid-May, as Banco Central merged with Banesto. The head of Banesto, 40-year-old Mario Conde, is being profiled as the new economic czar of the country.

● **SOUP KITCHENS** are proliferating throughout the United States. Highlighting a soup kitchen in Homestead, Pennsylvania, created in the aftermath of the closing of Homestead's USX steel plant, the May 24 *Washington Post* called soup kitchens "part of a nationwide growth industry—an underground, largely volunteer network that distributes millions of pounds of free food every year."