

National News

First U.S. astronaut launched in Russia

In the early hours of March 14, Dr. Norm Thagard, MD, became the first American astronaut to go into space in a non-U.S. launch vehicle. Thagard was aboard a Russian Soyuz TM spacecraft launched atop a Soyuz rocket, along with cosmonauts Lt. Col. Vladimir N. Dezhurov, making his first flight, and Gennady M. Strekalov, the flight engineer, who is making his fifth space flight. Almost exactly one year ago, Sergei Krikalev became the first cosmonaut to go into space on the U.S. Shuttle.

On March 16, the Soyuz TM spacecraft docked with the Mir space station, and Thagard and his crewmates began a three-month stay aboard the Mir. On March 20, the Mir crew held a press conference, taking questions originating from both the Kennedy Space Center in Florida, and Mission Control in Kaliningrad.

Ethics charges grow against Gingrich

House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) is now the subject of a host of ethics charges in the House Ethics Committee. The scandals began during the last Congress, when Gingrich was Minority Whip, and involve a college class he taught called "Renewing American Civilization," underwritten by his GOPAC political action committee. Gingrich has used his course to promote his "Contract with America" legislative package. Worse, the course is also partly sponsored by a tax-exempt foundation, which by law cannot be involved in espousing a political view. In turn, the foundation has raised over \$1.7 million from the class.

In October 1993, the scandal forced Kennesaw State College to drop the course, which was transferred to nearby Reinhardt College. On Feb. 15, 1995, the House Ethics Committee announced that it would review a complaint charging that Gingrich used GOPAC to finance the course, and that he improperly aided a donor to the course,

while at Kennesaw.

On Jan. 26, 1995, House Minority Whip David Bonior (D-Mich.) filed new charges based on a complaint by former Rep. Ben Jones (D-Ga.). Jones charged that the Speaker's huge book deal with Rupert Murdoch, whose media empire is facing a challenge before the Federal Communications Commission, "could be deemed to constitute accepting favors or benefits" that might influence how the Speaker treated this issue.

Finally, on Feb. 23, Pat Schroeder (D-Colo.) and Cynthia McKinney (D-Ga.) filed charges that Gingrich had received a \$200,000 gift of free cable broadcasting by the Mind Extension University, a subsidiary of Jones Intercable, Inc., to broadcast his class. Jones Intercable may be in the running to purchase the Public Broadcasting Corp., which Gingrich has said he will privatize.

Bishops take GOP welfare reform bill to task

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a statement on March 18 highly critical of House Republicans' welfare reform legislation. The bishops insisted that they were speaking in an effort to illuminate "the moral dimensions and human consequences of this debate." They said they felt a special obligation to speak out now, as Congress begins debate on the bill.

The bishops' statement stressed: "Genuine welfare reform should rely on incentives more than harsh penalties; for example, denying needed benefits for children born to mothers on welfare can hurt the children and pressure their mothers toward abortion and sterilization. . . ."

"Society has a responsibility to help meet the needs of those who cannot care for themselves, especially young children. AFDC [Aid to Families with Dependent Children], food stamps and other entitlement programs provide essential support for poor children. . . . We cannot support 'reform' that will make it more difficult for poor children to grow into productive individuals. We cannot support reform that destroys the structures, ends entitlements and eliminates resources that have provided an essential safety net for vulnerable children

or permits states to reduce their commitment in this area. Also, we cannot support punitive approaches that target immigrants, even legal residents, and take away the minimal benefits that they now receive."

President to attend V-E celebrations in Moscow

President Bill Clinton will travel to Moscow to attend the May 9 "V-E Day" celebrations on the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe. The visit will also include a summit meeting with Russian President Boris Yeltsin covering issues such as NATO, Chechnya, and Russia's cooperation with Iran in the construction of a nuclear reactor complex.

Yeltsin called in a group of reporters on March 16, and told them that he will modify the nature of the traditional parade in Red Square, in deference to the U.S. President, who "is somewhat concerned by the planning of the event. He does not want there to be a military parade. . . . I think we will comply with these preconditions." Yeltsin said he would limit the May 9 parade to war veterans without military equipment.

Vice President Al Gore will attend the V-E celebrations in London, Paris, and Berlin.

Extend NPT treaty forever, says ACDA

At a Washington, D.C. briefing on March 14, U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency head John Holum said that the upcoming April 17 New York Conference on Disarmament to extend the expiring Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is "an historic moment," because signatories will vote on whether to extend the treaty indefinitely.

ACDA and the British are pushing extension of the NPT, which expires this year, not for another 25 years, but "to infinity." After "infinite extension," all NPT signers not only forswear new production of plutonium and so-called weapons-grade materi-

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al, but also open themselves forever to U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) "special inspections," putting their nuclear power programs at risk any time the one-world crowd decides to exercise its dictatorship.

A worried Egyptian reporter asked Holum whether a country such as his, which is a signator to NPT, couldn't just renew for 25 years, so that if a competitor, such as Israel, which is not a signer, builds the bomb, Egypt could react. "No," said Holum. "Countries don't have the option to choose for their own purposes, and the majority rule will be binding on all members.

"That's why this is such an historic moment," he gushed. "Between 25 years, and infinity, is a dramatic difference. Under a permanent extension, the non-proliferation system is secure for all time. This is the one opportunity provided by the rules in the life of the treaty under which a simple majority of the members can vote to make it permanent without the requirement to go back to parliaments for ratification."

LaRouche discusses candidates' movement

Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche laid out the perspective of a candidates' movement to roll back the Conservative Revolution, during a call-in broadcast on March 15 with KMLB radio in Louisiana. One caller, who said he was "seriously considering running for state legislature" in his cotton-growing district, asked LaRouche: "I don't even know if I can win or not, but as a state legislator, just what could I do?"

LaRouche replied: "You could do a great deal. What we need to do is to think about a *movement*, not just individuals. . . .

"What's the situation now? We've got this recent mid-term election in which essentially the U.S. Congress was determined by about 25% of the total eligible voters. Not an unusual thing, really, in American history in a mid-term election. So, the 'Contract with America' group, Gingrich and Phil Gramm, and so forth, does not represent the American people. As a matter of fact, 80% of the American people would be

very badly hurt if that program were to go through.

"Now, what's going to happen, I believe, in the coming elections during this year and next year, is that we're going to have a reversal of that, in which a lot of very angry people—but much more sensible than they were in voting in the mid-term election—are going to try to put in the state legislatures and state offices and in federal offices, a better representation to address the crises which we're all facing. . . .

"And therefore, what we need, I think, is a movement of people to replace those who are a little bit off the wall, shall we say, in what they're doing in the legislatures now. So it's very important to have people who have given some attention to these issues . . . and who know *how* to find answers, which is almost as important as knowing the answers, in the legislature."

North still raising campaign money

Oliver North, the Conservative Revolution standard-bearer who lost his bid to be Virginia's U.S. senator last year, raised over half a million dollars in December, more than any other Senate campaign from the 1994 elections, according to an article this month in the Washington paper *The Hill*. According to Federal Election Commission reports, most of the money was raised through his continuing direct mail solicitation. North's mailing list is largely derived from his legal defense fund (which raised \$13.7 million over 1988-92), and his Freedom Alliance (which raised \$9.2 million over 1989-92). His current political action committee, formed in 1991, is called V-PAC.

North, who just launched his nationally syndicated talk show in the Washington and Houston "markets," is clearly keeping his fundraising apparatus in place for future endeavors, and apparently has not made his list available to any of the current Republican candidates. He raised about \$20 million in legally reported contributions for his Senate campaign, but informed sources estimate that his campaign actually spent about \$50 million.

● **OHIO GOVERNOR** George Voinovich has come under fire for cutting the state education budget, after the state seized control of Cleveland schools under federal order, earlier in March. He is now proposing to put \$117 million more into the schools, from funds he has taken out of Medicaid.

● **POVERTY** would be a felony in California, if an amendment to the Penal Code passes, according to a recent article in *The Wanderer*. Just before Christmas, according to the Catholic weekly, "an amendment was introduced to Section 638 of the Penal Code . . . which makes it a felony to have an income below the federally established poverty level. Don't believe it? Here are the words as clear as can be: 'A person who, intentionally and maliciously, has a yearly income below the federally established poverty level is guilty of a felony.' "

● **GOP CONGRESSMAN** Peter King of New York, at a hearing of the House International Affairs Committee on March 15, praised President Clinton, who, he said, "has done more than any President in our country's history to advance the peace in Ireland, and I want to extend to you, to pass on to him, the sincere thanks he has of many members of Congress on both sides of the aisle."

● **FRANCISCO DURAN**, the Colorado man charged with trying to kill the President, after spraying the White House with gunfire last Oct. 29, had left a business card at his last job reading "Death to all government officials," a government witness testified in court. Duran's trial began on March 16.

● **ATTORNEY GENERAL** Janet Reno dropped a Justice Department inquiry against Transportation Secretary Federico Peña on March 16. The inquiry could have ended with the appointment of a special prosecutor had the investigation found wrongdoing.