

to allow the mobilization of the population in anti-rodent campaigns, and general economic recovery; insecticides to fight the fleas, rodenticides and sanitation programs against the rats; and within months emergency housing programs to begin to turn back the conditions which create holocaust. Within weeks of the beginning of these "weak link programs," food and other aid must be on its way outwards to the Third World as a whole to prevent other disease foci from developing, and to lay the basis for the expansion of food production in the Third World. Simultaneously, the idle productive capacities of the advanced countries must be mobilized to increase food production now. But such mobilization of resources is impossible without immediate implementation of international debt moratoria and creation of new international credit facilities to speed issuance of the necessary credits both for emergency programs and basic development projects.

Speaking for the Atlanticist banking community, Wilhelm Marx of Frankfurt's Sal Oppenheim investment banking

firm, stated this week that "perhaps epidemics are the only solution to overpopulation. It's a biological fact." Such criminals are enemies of the human race, and the fact that they have endorsed a bubonic plague epidemic as part of their debt collection policies ought to be enough to convince frightened waverers that their objections to debt moratoria and the International Development Bank cannot be tolerated one day longer.

Time is short. By mid-May, plague will almost certainly be spreading out of Burma. By late May it will be too late to affect either the spring planting in the Northern hemisphere or to prepare for the fall planting in Argentina, and thus too late to raise 1976 food supplies. By mid-May at the latest, the initial steps in implementing the International Development Bank must be underway. Conversion of industrial capacity to expanded tractor production must be underway, fertilizer, food and emergency supplies must be moving around the globe. Otherwise the Dark Ages will arrive by fall.

## Plague Expert: "This is a Calamity"

*NEW YORK, April 10 (IPS) — The following are excerpts from an interview conducted this week by a spokesman for the U.S. Labor Party with the plague expert at the U.S. Public Health Service Rat and Plague Monitoring Station in Washington, D.C.*

**Labor Party:** We picked up a report of 40 cases of plague hitting Mandalay, Burma, in the Bangkok Post of March 29. When we checked the report with the World Health Organization's (WHO) main office in Geneva, the plague expert there, Dr. Bytchenko, told us that they have second hand reports of at least 974 cases in Mandalay, presumably all occurring in the last few weeks. However, they said that they have lost all contact with representatives in the area, so that they don't have a clear picture of how the situation is being handled. Have you heard anything on this?

**Epidemiologist:** No, we haven't heard anything from WHO on this. The communications lines from Third World countries are frequently bad. Countries will often cover up epidemics to protect their commerce and tourist trade. But if Geneva is aware of this kind of a situation, they damn well should let us know. As far as I know, WHO hasn't issued anything on this.

**LP:** How bad would the Mandalay situation have to get before you would call it "out of hand?"

**Epidemiologist:** 974 cases means it's already out of hand, especially since you're dealing with an urban situation. An epidemic of this size undoubtedly means progression from the bubonic to the pneumonic form. Pneumonic plague is much more deadly and extremely contagious.

**LP:** What is the danger of spread to other areas?

**Epidemiologist:** All of South Asia has a tremendous rat problem. The epidemic could easily spread directly to Rangoon, Bangladesh, India, and beyond.

**LP:** So even in its present state, the plague epidemic is a threat to the rest of the world?

**Epidemiologist:** This has to be considered an international calamity.

**LP:** Doesn't WHO realize this?

**Epidemiologist:** Sure, but their hands are tied until Burma comes out with a request for international assistance. It's too bad, but that's the way WHO operates.

**LP:** We're calling congressmen, labor unions, and the press, setting up a cross firing network and directing the pressure on WHO to break the story.

**Epidemiologist:** That's the way to do it. Once people know what the situation is there'll be such an outrage that WHO will be forced to act. Let's just hope it's not too late.

**LP:** What's the plague situation in the U.S.?

**Epidemiologist:** We saw an unusually high rise in the number of cases last year. But the most disturbing thing was the high incidence of conversion from bubonic to the pneumonic form. Of 20 odd cases in the last twelve months, there were four pneumonic cases. This is a higher ratio than I've seen since I started in this field a decade ago. We think that the organism may have changed to a more virulent form, so we want to do virulence studies by testing the plague on primates. So far, though, we can't get any federal funds to do it. It's always this way in public health, you can't get funding to prepare for a problem, you have to wait until it's staring you in the face, but with this one that may be too late.