

five days in mid-February was the same. Ershad pointed out that the Bangladesh government is in the process of severing the “Gordian knot” which scares investors away—a reference to the extensive government ownership and control over the economy. Already 500 companies, 36 jute mills, 30 textile mills, and 18 insurance companies have been divested from the government’s clutches, and investors will face free and fair competition if they choose to invest in these or other areas, Ershad reported.

Closer to home, Bangladesh sent an 11-member delegation headed by Salman F. Rehman, president of the Dhaka Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, to India in late-February. Rehman, in an interview with newsmen, openly promoted Indian participation in the exploration for natural gas in Bangladesh, in building fertilizer plants, sponge iron plants, basic petrochemicals, and light engineering equipment. “There is a lot of Indian business in ASEAN countries, in Sri Lanka—why not in Bangladesh?” he asked.

According to reports, the delegation got a favorable response from the Indians on setting up a fertilizer plant in Bangladesh based on natural gas feedstock. The Bangladesh package includes: total flexibility in India’s equity participation in the projects, cheap supply of natural gas, and an option to sell part of the output in that country, besides the usual incentives offered to foreign investors. The Indian government has been toying for some time with the idea of setting up fertilizer plants abroad, jointly with the host nation, to assure its own growing fertilizer demands.

The real challenge

The biggest challenge Bangladesh faces is the fact that it has to depend heavily on foreign aid to finance its development plans. According to official estimates, Bangladesh’s dependence on foreign grants to finance the First Five Year Plan (1973-78), the Two Year Plan (1978-80), and the Second Five Year Plan (1980-85), was 71.9%, 76.8%, and 63.5% respectively. In the first two years of the Third Plan (1985-90), the trend has continued. (By contrast, neighboring India depends minimally—less than 8%—on foreign assistance to finance its developmental plans.)

The bind is very real. The only way Bangladesh can develop its economy is through its capacity to regenerate resources through investments. The catch is that unless the country is able to develop the basic infrastructure to prevent natural calamities from shattering the economy almost on an annual basis and the loss of life that implies, the regeneration of resources to finance developmental plans will remain illusory. These infrastructural investments require large capital inputs over a sustained period of time, something the government cannot begin to contemplate when it is constantly forced to divert significant resources to “fire-fighting.” So far, though, neither the developed nations nor the international monetary institutions have shown any comprehension or interest in this problem.

Soviets admit AIDS peril is like ‘bomb’

by Rachel Douglas

“The threat we are facing,” Soviet Health Minister Yevgeni Chazov was quoted in the March 7 issue of *Izvestia*, “is in no way less than that of an ecological ‘bomb’ or nuclear weapon. . . . U.S.S.R. Health Ministry workers have frequently tried to inform the government that the situation is a menacing one. But eminent scientists in charge of the problem have denied the acuteness of the issue, stating that it is all false panic.”

Chazov thus became the first official in the Soviet Union, and in many other countries, to echo Lyndon LaRouche’s warning from 1985: “AIDS: More Dangerous Than Nuclear War.”

Interviewed in the March 17, 1989 issue of *EIR*, LaRouche observed that for Chazov to adopt LaRouche’s very words, on the AIDS danger, could mark a momentous shift on the part of Soviet circles, toward serious consideration of what LaRouche outlined in a 1986 memorandum, “Parameters for U.S.-Soviet Talks on the AIDS Pandemic,” which identified the mortal battle against AIDS as one of those “common aims of mankind,” which the U.S. government should be presenting as the proposed agenda to the Soviet government.

“Their economy is collapsing,” said LaRouche, “In a physical-economic breakdown, *perestroika* cannot work, *glasnost* is the worst thing they could have done, from their standpoint, at the present time. There is nothing they could do with their present policy to save the Soviet empire from internal collapse, a spiraling collapse. Now the only thing that can save them, is a certain kind of cooperation with the West, which under certain terms they could get. For example, if I were President, they could get certain kinds of cooperation from me under certain conditions, cooperation they would need.”

The official Soviet line on AIDS has changed dramatically, since the time of Moscow’s first major publication on the matter, Oct. 30, 1985. On that date, an infamous article in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, entitled “Panic in the West” blamed Western military agencies for spreading, and perhaps manufacturing, the human immunodeficiency virus.

A postscript to that article attacked LaRouche and *Exec-*

utive Intelligence Review for exposing the role of Soviet officials at the World Health Organization, in covering up and soft-peddling the global threat from AIDS. For a long time, Soviet sources continued to portray AIDS as a problem exclusively of the decadent West.

The horror stories that have been told, as Soviet physicians and journalists began to make public the AIDS cases in the U.S.S.R., reveal that abysmal medical standards have created conditions for an even more rapid spread of the virus there, than in other countries.

Death in Leningrad

Moscow's posture shifted last September, and then more abruptly, after the HIV infection of nearly 50 infants in a Soviet hospital became known early this year. Now, in the weekly *Moscow News*, one can read that "in the U.S.S.R. the infection is spreading uncontrollably."

In September, Soviet health authorities revealed that one Olga Gayevskaya, a prostitute in Leningrad, the U.S.S.R.'s second largest city, had died of AIDS. She was, supposedly, the first Soviet citizen to die in the epidemic. Her death, a Radio Moscow broadcast on Oct. 14 announced, was "sending tremors of fear across the nation."

When the 29-year-old victim was admitted to the hospital several times during 1988, the AIDS diagnosis had not been made. "Moscow epidemiologists were angered by the fact that clear AIDS symptoms failed to alert her doctor, who made the wrong diagnosis." The AIDS diagnosis was made only after death.

AIDS expert Dr. Vadim Pokrovsky said, "This inefficiency is the result of a general mood of self-complacency. People are used to thinking AIDS exists somewhere out there, because the number of identified AIDS carriers in this country is so small."

On Nov. 11, *Pravda* printed an article, "The Unvarnished Truth About AIDS," which acknowledged that the Soviet Union's public health measures were far from adequate to meet the AIDS challenge, that there were insufficient diagnostic materials, and pitifully small quantities of disposable syringes being produced in the country.

Pravda reported that Aleksandr Kondrusyov, the deputy health minister, had announced agreements with Britain, Denmark, and East European countries, requiring their citizens to prove themselves AIDS-free before they enter the Soviet Union.

Dirty needles

Soviet press accounts revealed that syringes from which Gayevskaya was injected, were re-used on other patients. This practice, which is routine throughout the Soviet health care system, returned with a vengeance in the next big AIDS case: the Elista disaster.

The toll now stands at 49 people infected with HIV (not counting some who died already), 41 of them children, in the

town of Elista, Kalmykia near the lower Volga and the Caspian Sea, Pokrovsky reported at a March 17 press conference. Discovery of the cluster was announced in late January, when it was revealed only that 27 children who had been infants at a single hospital two years ago were infected. So were the mothers of several.

Authorities now say, according to *Izvestia* of Feb. 18, that the Elista case started with the husband of one of the infected women, a man who had worked in Africa and received a blood transfusion there in 1981. The man had no symptoms, was not tested, and did not know he was infecting others. He infected his wife, who passed the virus to their child. The other children were infected from the re-used syringes.

"World practice denies" that AIDS can be transmitted by saliva, commented *Moscow News* on Feb. 18, but how did the other Elista mothers contract HIV? Kondrusyov told the paper, "For us it is still unclear how the mothers were infected. According to preliminary estimates, they were given no injections or blood transfusions. So, couldn't a sick child, with a minor mouth injury, convey the virus to its mother" while nursing?

Public health disaster

"This accident would not have happened," *Izvestia* said on Feb. 18, "if . . . senior officials had seriously resolved to bring our medical establishments at least up to the standard of good turn-of-the-century hospitals." Nurses' training, the paper reported three weeks later, is far below the standards of earlier years, and "one nurse does the work of two or three for a miserly wage."

At an emergency Anti-Epidemic Commission meeting in mid-February, chaired by Chazov, *Pravda* reported, specialists projected a level of 200,000 AIDS cases and 15 million carriers in the Soviet Union by the year 2000. Yet in Elista itself, syringes are still being recycled.

Sovetskaya Rossiya, another daily paper, reports that only 49 million out of a planned 100 million disposable syringes were produced last year, of which over half were just lying in storerooms, because they were sent out to hospitals without needles.

Pravda author N. Gogol wrote: "I may be reproached, that there has supposedly been enough of a scare about AIDS already. And indeed, everyone is extremely frightened by the tragedy in Elista. . . . Parents are rising up like a wall, not permitting their offspring to have any shots or vaccinations—there is a real AIDSomania." But, he concluded, "We need to act quickly, . . . and that is why the total absence of any such action is amazing."

Reporting on Chazov's bombshell about the threat "in no way less than that of a . . . nuclear weapon," *Izvestia* demanded "immediate and resolute measures." The Anti-Epidemic Commission found, it said, that a case like Elista "can be expected at any time anywhere in the country."