

Business Briefs

Agriculture

Soviet harvest imperiled, hunger looms

Huge quantities of food grown in the Soviet Union this summer for what should have been the best harvest in decades, are perishing because of infrastructure and fuel deficits, and heavy autumn rains. Widespread hunger is likely to result this winter, while the question of who is to blame has become a burning issue in Moscow's furious political battles over economic policy.

Heavy rains in much of Russia during September made the fields impassable to machinery. Root crops began to perish in the field before manpower was mobilized for hand-harvesting. The Soviet Armed Forces mobilized 23,000 in the Moscow harvest area alone. But as of early October, officials said, the city of Moscow had only 38,000 tons of potatoes harvested, out of a requirement of 555,000 tons—just 7%! By that time in 1989, there were 279,000 tons of potatoes laid up.

In the whole republic of Belorussia, according to its prime minister, a little over half the potato crop could be brought in so far.

Problems started well before the rains. More than with grain crops, labor-intensive vegetable harvesting in the Soviet Union has depended on the deployment of manpower from urban areas to state and collective farms: factory brigades, Communist Youth League-organized student brigades, and other types of mandatory "volunteer" laborers. The political authority of the Communist Party to commandeer such labor has greatly declined, with the past year's political upheavals.

On Aug. 30, *Pravda* wrote that Leningrad (the second largest city) was running 300-400 tons of vegetables short per day, from the local harvest.

Third World Debt

Philippines asks for global plan

"It is almost a decade that the debt crisis has been thundering across our planet," Philippines Foreign Minister Raul Manglapus told

the U.N., the *Bangkok Post* reported.

"If the whole world can be summoned to confront Iraq, why can there not be onslaught against the debt problem?" Manglapus asked. "The Third World now owes \$1.3 trillion. Therefore every child in that world is born not only . . . with original sin, but also with original debt."

Manglapus said creditor nations must agree to alternative adjustment programs that would promote growth and suit both planned and free economies. Noting that the Philippines had to divert 40% of its annual budget for debt payments, he said the International Monetary Fund approached debt problems with short-term programs, whereas the "structural and financial horizons of transnational debt can span a generation."

Science

Fusion reactors reach record temperatures

Two of the world's largest tokamak fusion reactors have reached record temperatures. The TFTR at the Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory and the Joint European Torus in England achieved the record results, scientists reported at a week-long fusion meeting in Washington.

Princeton's Tokamak Fusion Test Reactor reached 400 million degrees centigrade and produced 50 kilowatts of power for a fraction of a second.

In a speech titled "Iter Ad Astra," John Clarke, the former head of the U.S. magnetic confinement fusion program, urged the world fusion community to back the ITER, the \$4.9 billion International Tokamak Experimental Reactor now under study by a council of fusion scientists from the United States, Japan, the Soviet Union, and Europe.

The huge ITER, with its shared costs and benefits, "might be the best opportunity we've ever had to achieve the goal of fusion," Clarke said. He spoke at the opening session of the week-long meeting of 700 fusion scientists sponsored by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

"A fusion community divided," Clarke said, "will assure that fusion never develops." Aside from assigning scientists to participate in "studying" the ITER proposal, none of the

nations involved has made firm money commitments to go ahead to build ITER and a site has not been selected.

Infrastructure

Environmentalists attack Indian river project

Members of the Japanese Friends of the Earth and Japan Tropical Forest Action Network gathered in Washington in early October with nearly 100 other environmentalist activists from around the world to plan out a campaign against World Bank funding of India's Sardar Sarovar Project, according to coverage by Indian newspapers.

Action by these groups earlier caused the Japanese government to reassess its funding of the project, which is part of the Narmada River Valley development program. Now they have begun mounting pressures on the World Bank to do likewise.

"Most of the people living along the Narmada call the river their mother," asserted Prof. Kazo Gumi, head of the Tropical Forest Action Network. "They cannot sell off their mother." Added Yukio Tanaka, head of Friends of the Earth: "We have decided to take parliamentarians from all over the world, including Japan, to India this December. As taxpayers, we do not want to destroy the living environment of other people."

Space

Shuttle launches European spacecraft

On Oct. 6 the Space Shuttle orbiter *Discovery* launched the European spacecraft *Ulysses* on its journey to the Sun. The mission will be the first time a spacecraft is propelled outside the plane of the ecliptic, within which all the planets orbit the Sun. In 1994, the craft will observe the Sun from below its south pole and then travel up past the Sun's equator to its north pole.

In order to gain the velocity required to do this, the spacecraft will first be sent out to

Jupiter where it will obtain a gravity assist from the giant planet which will throw it outside the ecliptic plane.

Scientists hope to study the plasma physics processes which produce the fusion energy of the Sun, the solar wind of high-energy particles which are thrown off from flares, and the interplanetary environment above and below the Sun. The last set of space instruments to observe the Sun, which revealed an active and violent star, were the X-ray telescopes aboard Skylab in 1973.

Economic Policy

British Columbia to 'build' out of recession

The government of British Columbia in Canada plans to "build" its way out of a recession. The initiation of \$20 billion worth of capital projects—such as school, hospital, and public works construction projects—will be sped up, according to provincial finance minister, Mel Couvelier.

Couvelier intends to finance the projects with long-term borrowing. Normally, such projects as these would take a decade to get going, but Couvelier wants to "prime the pump" to avoid a recession.

"We certainly are going to do everything we possibly can do to make sure that the early 1980s are not repeated in the early 1990s," he said.

Health

Encephalitis outbreak hits Florida coast

The coastal areas of Florida have been hit by a major outbreak of St. Louis encephalitis, with 26 cases reported in recent weeks, according to press reports.

The only response from the state's Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services has been to say, "This is a phenomenon of nature. Every 10 to 15 years in Florida, we have these

outbreaks. We knew late in the spring and in early summer that we would have many more cases. It has not been classified as an epidemic and it won't be until we feel preventive measures aren't working," said spokesman Ernie Durfee.

In fact, such outbreaks usually occur when long droughts are followed by sudden wet periods—and Florida is still experiencing a drought.

State officials have advised that residents in the southern two-thirds of the state minimize their evening outdoor activities, wear protective clothing, and use mosquito spray. Had Florida not cut back its spraying programs due to budget cuts and environmental extremism, such outbreaks would rarely occur.

Labor

One in 4 N.Y. blacks in jail or on parole

One in four young black men in New York State are in custody, according to a new study by the Correctional Association of New York and the New York State Coalition for Criminal Justice. On any given day, nearly 45,000 of the state's 193,000 black males between the ages of 20 and 29 are either in state prisons, local jails, or on probation or parole—more than twice as many black males of the same age that are enrolled in colleges and universities in New York.

The study found that 12% of young Hispanic men are also under the control of the "criminal justice system," but only 3% of young white men are. Some 82% of New York State's inmate population are either black or Hispanic.

A national survey done by the National Institute for Drug Abuse found that blacks account for 11% of illegal narcotics users, Hispanics 7%, and whites for over 80%. State Corrections Commissioner Thomas A. Coughlin III told the *New York Times*, "The law enforcement community is really not targeting drug use, per se. What they're targeting is the violence associated with the lifestyle. The Wall Street guys who do cocaine in the board rooms are not out in the street shooting each other for turf."

Briefly

● **THE SIEMENS-KWU** group in Germany will retrofit the two 440-megawatt Soviet nuclear reactors at Mochovce, Czechoslovakia with the most modern safety technology available, to speed up the completion of the complex by 1993. The complex was delayed after the Soviet nuclear accident at Chernobyl.

● **FIAT OF ITALY** and General Electric Company of France have announced a huge cooperative plan under which they will swap shares, merge related units, exchange directors, and form a joint holding company to explore future combined ventures. The deal is one of the largest international agreements of its kind. Cesare Romiti, Fiat managing director, said the companies intended to "construct and maintain strategic links."

● **JAPANESE INVESTORS** are beginning to sell off U.S. real estate, further accelerating the collapse of commercial real estate values, the *Wall Street Journal* reported. The trend is fueled by both the decline of U.S. property values and increasing attractiveness of rising Japanese interest rates. Japanese banks must also meet international capital standards by 1992.

● **U.S. TRADE** Representative Carla Hills is making an inquiry into the \$500 million the European aircraft consortium Airbus, and General Electric, extended to Northwest Airlines in September. Hills has said, according to the Oct. 8 *Washington Times*, that the loan might be an unfair inducement by Airbus to get the airline to buy its planes.

● **AEROFLOT**, the Soviet national airline, is negotiating to buy or lease 13 Lockheed L1011 widebody aircraft from Eastern Airlines. It is estimated that the deal could be worth more than \$150 million to the bankrupt American carrier. The aircraft are between 13-18 years old. Aeroflot will need an okay for the deal from the federal bankruptcy court in New York.