

Editorial

A new strategic deterrent?

The Soviet government has evidently perceived something the United States government has not. That "something" is the awesome magnitude of the threat posed by AIDS.

Notable are, severally, *Izvestia's* publication of statements by Viktor Zhdanov favorable to international cooperation on AIDS, followed by Mikhail Gorbachov's call for such international cooperation during his recent visit to Prague, followed by the Western news media's black-out of those statements.

Such expressions of seriousness on the AIDS issue by the Soviets would indicate that concerted public health measures are being undertaken in the East bloc—and we don't mean distribution of condoms and dirty pictures to schoolchildren. News reports buried on the West's back pages confirm that estimate: block-by-block screening and testing of populations in Poland, mass testing of the Red Army, etc.

At first glance, Soviet bloc public-health action on AIDS, and the lack of effective such action in the Western nations, gives a decisive strategic advantage to the Russian empire in the near-term. The doubling-rate of the infection assures not only that AIDS will be the decisive issue of the 1988 U.S. elections, but that, as policies now stand, the Russians will respond by extending their public health measures, while the Western nations' measures remain as they are, nonexistent. The Russian empire can stand by and watch the social and political fabric of Western society be torn apart, in a manner anyone will appreciate who is familiar with the social side of the unfolding 14th-century Black Death.

At second glance, the incurred strategic advantage, while real, is, for the Russians, only near-term. AIDS is a *species-threatening* disease—Russian propaganda about the "decadent West" to one side. AIDS is a bigger threat to the human race than nuclear war. AIDS is out to kill that which is human. Russians, contrary to their behavioral habits, are human.

The Russians' medical professionals sit atop the

relevant departments of the World Health Organization, for example. They are in a position to know this, and clearly, they are beginning to recognize this. Else they would not be proposing international cooperation.

Also: They would not be proposing international cooperation if they did not have a certain strong sense of dependency upon the useful, even essential, medical-biological instruments which the Western nations have a distinct advantage in producing and supplying.

That factor, properly deployed, could serve as a new strategic deterrent to war approximately as effective as a nuclear arsenal.

Therefore, *EIR's* editors propose:

1) The President should immediately announce his view that Gorbachov's recent statement is a "very constructive signal," and his readiness to discuss international cooperation with Moscow, now that Gorbachov has opened the door to this.

2) The President and other government spokesmen should publicly welcome every significant East bloc statement and public health measure against AIDS.

3) The U.S. government should quickly explore with the government of France, or Italy, the feasibility of their hosting a meeting, sponsored by governments, of Eastern and Western public and private medical, biological, and health professionals to define an agenda for East-West negotiation of forms of international cooperation on AIDS and related pathologies—limiting the agenda to definitions of such cooperation.

One included result of such action will be, as indicated, a shift in the political-strategic situation in most useful ways. It will reinforce Soviet perception of the awesome threat posed by AIDS, the Soviet sense of dependency on the West, and the deterrent value of that. It will accelerate a shift in public consciousness of the AIDS crisis, and associated "reverse cultural paradigm shifts." And, it will provide this President with a propitious opportunity to establish a memorably honorable name for his administration.