

Business Briefs

Poland

Remove privatization minister, deputies say

On Oct. 26, seventy-three deputies from the Polish Peasant Party (PSL), the Labor Union, the Confederation for an Independent Poland, and the Polish Socialist Party demanded the dismissal of Privatization Minister Wieslaw Kaczmarek, a member of the post-communist Democratic Left Alliance (SLD). Kaczmarek is accused of continuing his predecessors' disastrous policy of privatization, selling Polish industry for a song, and breaking the already-liberal privatization rules.

Privatizations are part of the free trade policy that has been forced on Poland and other eastern European nations, with disastrous effects on the physical economy.

One Polish parliamentarian told *EIR* on Oct. 28 that the demand is another attempt to stall mass privatizations planned to take effect through the 13 so-called National Investment Funds, which in many cases are managed by foreign banks and consulting firms. The funds will allow a small group of people, mainly old nomenklatura officials and foreigners, to acquire shares in about 450 of the best of the remaining industrial enterprises.

The motion demanding Kaczmarek's dismissal has been filed with the speaker of the Sejm (parliament). Debate and a vote to decide the fate of the minister is expected within two weeks.

Maritime Trade

Australian-built vessels revolutionize shipping

Australian firms such as Incat and Austal Ships are building marine cargo vessels capable of 40 to 50 knots, in an effort to meet the shipping needs of Southeast Asia, the *Australian* reported on Oct. 27.

Adelaide-based South Australia Ships Pty Ltd. plans to build fast mini-freighters for the Australia-Asia, intra-Asia, and intra-Europe shipping markets. These plans are even ahead of the Japanese in cost-effective design. Incat, in Sydney, has plans for wave-piercing cata-

marans capable of carrying up to 3,500 tons (7.72 million pounds) of freight at 30 to 50 knots for up to 3,000 nautical miles. Such a vessel would be able to make the Darwin-Japan round-trip voyage in one week, halving the normal sailing time.

Incat designed the Tasmanian-built *Spirit of Great Britain* ferry, which holds the record for the fastest crossing of the Atlantic by a passenger vessel.

Agriculture

European set-aside policy under attack

Calls for ending the European Union (EU) agricultural set-aside policy, which takes land out of production, is coming under increasing attack as the severity of world food shortages grow. "The European Union has imposed restrictions far more severe than those demanded by GATT [the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade]. We should have . . . stopped this set-aside policy. That way, we would not find ourselves now trying to *manage shortages*," Henri de Benoist, president of Céréalières de France, told the Oct. 27 French daily *Le Monde*.

Bruno Catton, head of SIGMA, the Cereals Cooperatives Union which is responsible for 70% of French harvesting and export operations, rhetorically asked *Le Monde* if it is reasonable to start building emergency reserves. World stocks of wheat, for example, now at 92 million tons, the lowest level in 20 years, have reached the so-called "security threshold." Next year's harvest will be crucial for world food security: Cereal output must rise by 5% to meet expected demand; replenishing stocks to "minimum safe levels" would need an 8-9% increase in production.

The EU recently suspended wheat sales for two months. "Our chief concern, is to ensure that the internal market is supplied," one high official told *Le Monde*. Demand this year has already exceeded supply by 10 million tons.

The European Commission has decided to tax future exports of wheat "to prevent the outflow of wheat to the world market," *Agra-Europe* for the week of Oct. 23 reported. In the future, European grain traders will no

longer ask the EU for the highest possible export subsidies, but for the lowest possible export taxes, the commission said. There will most probably also be a tax on exports of rye, if the current price hikes continue, it announced. The commission declined all export demands except to developing countries in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific, the so-called AKP countries, with which the EU has special relations.

Africa

Mugabe hits IMF, warns of return of 'black death'

Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe attacked International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank policies toward Africa, and said that the net result of neglecting starving refugees may be a new "black death," in a speech to the United Nations on Oct. 24. The IMF and the World Bank act "as dictatorial taskmasters of the world's rich and powerful nations, their harsh and punitive measures thus wreaking havoc on our poor societies still struggling to wriggle out of the colonial legacy of misery and developmental neglect," he charged.

"I fear if we today neglect the tragedy of the millions of starving poor and refugees, we shall tomorrow surely reap the whirlwind of another black death," Mugabe said. "Genocide taking place in Rwanda is treated by the world with less significance than genocide in Bosnia. Somalia is left burning while catastrophe stalks. . . . Where, we ask, is the brotherhood of man?"

Zimbabwean Health Minister Timothy Stamps, meanwhile, warned that 100,000 Zimbabweans will die of AIDS in the next 18 months, the Oct. 21 *Sunday Gazette* in Harare reported. "We are burying AIDS victims at a rate of 300 every week," he said. "At present . . . 25 to 30 bodies of victims of AIDS are put daily into mortuaries of Harare and Mpilo hospitals where authorities are now failing to cope with the congestion." Health officials estimate that up to 1 million Zimbabweans are HIV-infected.

Briefly

● **RUSSIAN** and Chinese companies held talks on exporting natural gas from Siberia to China, a source reported on Oct. 23. Some of the gas would be exported through Chinese ports to Asian markets, according to Cao Zhengyan, of the department of communication and energy of the State Planning Commission.

● **SOUTH AFRICAN** Archbishop Desmond Tutu has called for writing off the debts of poor nations to mark the U.N. 50th anniversary. "One of the ways in which we want to celebrate is to consider the jubilee principle in the Bible, which is a time every 50 years of liberation, when debts are cancelled, when slaves are set free," he told BBC Radio on Oct. 24.

● **CHINA** has prepared a 15-year plan to bring its railway system up to international standards, Minister of Railways Han Zhubin announced on Oct. 21, *China Daily* reported. China will continue importing foreign technology for this program, he said.

● **BERLIN** banks are engaged in an emergency effort to prevent a collapse of real estate values in the city. Some 600,000 square meters of office space (10%) are now unrented, and another 1.5 million are under construction. Prices have fallen already by 30-40% or more.

● **PAKISTAN** devalued the rupee by 7% and increased domestic oil prices by the same margin, in a move that promises to exacerbate civil strife. The measures, which Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto had protested in September, are being instituted after the return to Pakistan of pro-International Monetary Fund former minister Mahbubul Haq.

● **INDIA-BRITISH** trade ties are dramatically increasing, as a result of the Indo-British Partnership Initiative, according to British High Commissioner in India Nicholas Fenn, the Oct. 28 Hyderabad *Business Standard* reported. In the two years of the partnership, 365 joint ventures have been signed.

Dope, Inc.

Swiss officials alarmed at organized crime

Leading law enforcement and banking officials of Switzerland warned against an increased stream of organized crime money flowing from eastern Europe and Russia into Swiss banks and financial institutions, in a press conference in Berne on Oct. 24, the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* reported. The decision by Urs von Daeniken, chief of the Federal Swiss Police, and Hans Theiler, of the Swiss National Bank, to issue the warning in such a public manner, was considered highly unusual by Swiss standards.

The so-called "parabanks," which are run by insurance companies and real estate and funds managers, were singled out for particular concern.

Further, illegal money transactions have spread increasingly to the regions, where efforts to control dirty money flows have been less focused. According to observers, if authorities are to gain control over these activities, they will have to concentrate their investigations on a federal level, instead of leaving it to the cantonal (regional) authorities, as has been the case up till now.

Public Health

Mandatory AIDS testing urged for women, infants

Helen Mathews Smith, former editor of *MD* magazine, called for mandatory HIV testing for the human immunodeficiency virus (which causes AIDS) for all pregnant women and infants, in an op-ed in the Oct. 25 *Wall Street Journal*. She counterposed the criminal February 1987 Center for Disease Control (CDC) policy of protecting "human rights," to the public health policies followed by President Franklin Roosevelt 50 years earlier—testing and notification to successfully check a raging epidemic of syphilis, before the discovery of penicillin.

Smith quoted Arthur Ammann, the director of research at the Pediatric AIDS Foundation in Novato, California, saying: "Once

treatment for HIV-infected babies was available in the late 1980s, anonymous testing by the CDC should have been abandoned immediately, and all those infected identified." He pointed out that by 1994, it had been discovered that AZT could prevent the transmission of HIV from an infected mother to her unborn child, making the CDC policy of anonymous testing even more criminal.

Smith compared the CDC policy to the Tuskegee syphilis experiment in the 1930s financed by the Public Health Service. The experiment followed the progression of syphilis in 400 black sharecroppers in Alabama, even after penicillin had become available in the 1940s and could have cured them.

Infrastructure

Trans-Balkan highway set from Albania to Istanbul

An agreement to build a trans-Balkan highway was concluded on Oct. 23 by four Presidents, Albania's Sali Berisha, Bulgaria's Zhelyu Zhelev, Turkey's Suleyman Demirel, and acting Macedonian President and Parliament Speaker Stojan Andov. The project, whose cost is estimated at \$1 billion, will link the Albanian port of Durres with Istanbul, Turkey, via Macedonia's capital, Skopje, and Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria. President Demirel said that construction will take four years, the French news agency AFP reported.

Construction of the highway is being undertaken at a time when Macedonia President Kiro Gligorov is in a hospital, in serious condition after an attempt on his life. Gligorov has been the key advocate of this and other infrastructure projects which would save Macedonia from geographic and economic isolation, and which represent the only viable approach that would guarantee peace in the Balkans, i.e., through development and cooperation among neighboring countries. Gligorov argued that economic development in the Balkans could succeed only if it were connected to an economic development push from central Europe, such as that represented in the proposal put forward by American economist Lyndon LaRouche for a "Paris-Berlin-Vienna Productive Triangle."