

pox, sleeping sickness, schistosomiasis, measles, and yaws. Malnutrition, reportedly rising in fast growing towns, is being fought with rehabilitation centers for small children.

Things looked better in the Americas, where 391 projects helped 32 countries. Twenty have adopted national health planning and are integrating such plans into overall development, including new housing, schools, water and sewage treatment and other schemes, as Dr. Candau recommends.

To illustrate the dangers when public planners, engineers and doctors don't coordinate, Dr. Candau reports that many of the thousands of irrigation and dam schemes have only brought more disease. Snails that carry schistosomiasis, already infecting about 200 million people, often thrive in badly engineered waterways (SN: 4/1).

In Southeast Asia, WHO had 154 projects, emphasizing, as elsewhere, the training of personnel from auxiliary worker to postgraduate physician. The western Pacific had 123 projects.

Europe received 162 projects in 31 countries, highlighting chronic and degenerative diseases—heart and cancer—highway accidents and environmental hazards such as pesticides.

Sanitation, especially new community water supply, featured the program in the eastern Mediterranean, where 20 countries were helped with 210 projects. Cholera has been raging through the Levant.

David Alan Ehrlich

FROM GERMANY

Lab Fights Birth Defects

As a result of the thalidomide disaster, the West German Research Society will set up an ultramodern laboratory in Freiburg to test chemical substances that might cause birth defects.

The initial budget, less than a million dollars, allows for a staff of 25 scientists and technicians who will routinely check several hundred chemicals annually. Some substances used in foods, cosmetics and drugs are suspected of contributing to defects in children.

The compounds will be tested on bacteria, fungi, fruit flies and human tissue cultures. The Research Society hopes the lab will produce test methods that can be adopted by pharmaceutical laboratories.

After several years of investigation of the thalidomide scandals, in which the drug, administered to pregnant women, caused birth defects in their children, several officers of the pharmaceutical firm that made the drug have been indicted. Their trial is still several months off.

Nature Note

Foehn

In certain mountainous regions, a hot, dry, violent wind, different from any other, drives down the slopes. This is the foehn, a wind that can raise atmospheric temperatures 31 degrees in three minutes, melt deep snow in a few hours, ripen grapes and corn, give people headaches and nervous disorders, split wooden walls and floors and engulf hillsides and towns in fire.

Unlike other warm winds, the foehn (pronounced fern) does not gain its warmth from direct rays of the sun or contact with warm surfaces like desert sands or tropical oceans. The foehn generates its own heat—by compression. According to the basic physics, when air or a gas expands, it becomes cool; when compressed, it heats up. A foehn starts when the wind, flowing from an area of high pressure into one of low pressure, is blown up the windward side of a mountain. As the air rises, it becomes cooler, dropping its moisture in the form of rain or snow, then curls over the mountain crest and flows down the other side. As the air

descends to lower altitudes, it becomes compressed and heated at a rate of 5.5 degrees F. for every 1,000-foot drop, arriving in the leeward valleys as a warm, dry wind.

Foehns were long a mystery in the Alps where they were first noticed. Many people thought they were hot winds driven from the Sahara Desert across the Mediterranean. Now this type of wind has been recognized in many different countries, where they go by various names. In the United States such a wind is common along the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains, where it is called by the Indian name, Chinook, or "snow eater." The dreaded foehn called Santa Ana drops through the Cajon and Santa Ana passes in southern California, sucking moisture from the land and causing severe fires. Foehns are called Zondas in Argentina and southern Chile where they blow down the slopes of the Andes Mountains; Bohoroks in Sumatra, and Warm Braus in the Schouten Islands of the South Pacific.

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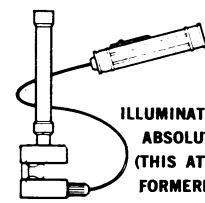
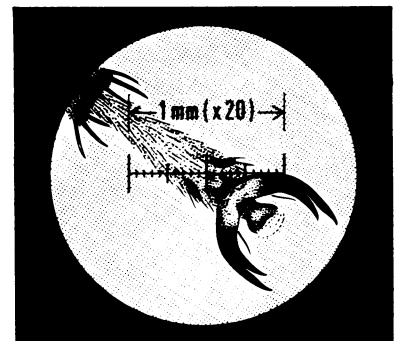
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