

government effort backing the development and commercial exploitation of computers, found nowhere else in Europe. Key projects include the financial support of her largest manufacturer, International Computers and Tabulators, support for Elliott Automation in its efforts to introduce computer control for many different industries; a large effort in numerically controlled machine tools and computer-aided design; and the setting up of a National Computing Center, opened last month.

At the opening ceremony of the Center, Prime Minister Harold Wilson remarked "In the field of computer technology we have much to offer Europe. Many of the major advances have originated in British minds. And there are, of course, clear advantages in pooling our ideas and our resources with those of our fellow Europeans. . . . Computers can be a most important element in the contribution we can make to the technological advance of Europe as a whole."

David Fishlock

FROM MEXICO

Heat Exacts a Toll

Every year children and adults die of dehydration in Mexico's spring heat waves; every year authorities promise to do something about it.

Although the federal, state and local governments involved refuse to release any figures on the number of victims of heat and water shortages, thousands of children have been hospitalized so far this year, and at least 75 babies under age three are dead.

Officials deny that there is any major problem, but reliable sources report that the government's Anti-Disaster Committee is beginning a study of the recurrent heat waves.

The heat this year struck with particular virulence in the northern Mexican cities of Monterrey and Chihuahua. There, according to unofficial estimates, more than 50 have died and some 1,500 children have been hospitalized for heat-related illness.

In Saltillo, 30 infants have died; more than 950 were hospitalized in Mexico City at the Children's Hospital. A major cause of death is dehydration resulting from improper care of children with diarrhea.

Authorities are also becoming alarmed by a spiraling suicide rate during heat spells. Within one 24-hour period recently, 10 persons killed themselves.

Many cases of dehydration can be traced to poor families without a sufficient supply of potable water. They often do not realize that children with

diarrhea need to drink more than usual.

In areas such as Monterrey where the problem is of long standing, efforts have been made in the past by health authorities to get parents of dehydrated children to bring them to hospitals. The parents are often reluctant to do this or do not realize that effective treatment is available.

Each year, and especially within the past five years when the water situation has become graver, city authorities and government have talked about bringing water from outlying watersheds. Nothing has been done with the exception of a half-hearted effort to try to get citizens not to waste water. With this failing, the recourse is to cut off water anywhere from three to four hours to 15-16 hours as they do in Cuernavaca.

The heat wave also hit the southwestern United States; temperatures of up to 110 degrees have been recorded in Texas. In Mexico City, temperatures at this time of year rarely reach 90, but in Monterrey, 100 or more is not uncommon.

Emil Zubryn

FROM BRITAIN

Computer Diagnosis

A computer at the City University, London, has been used to diagnose tumors in the human brain.

The project began 18 months ago, but the first trials—carried out on the University's ICT 1905 computer—were only recently concluded.

Two programs are prepared for the computer, one which holds information on all previous intra-cranial tumors and which is updated with each new set of data, and the other which stores the information on the tests carried out on the patient under examination.

On the first program, the information covers three basic types of tumor, each of which is broken down into sub-groups of classification. These sub-groups cover such facts as position of the tumor, kind, size and number.

The basic examinations made of the patient include X-ray, angiograms, scintillation scanning and various types of encephalographic measurements. The total number of facts obtained for the second tape is about 400.

The computer then checks each of these in turn, making comparisons against the data on the first tape. Further tests are next suggested by the machine before the final diagnosis.

The computer can assimilate numerous seemingly-unimportant facts and use them to assist in the diagnosis, something which a clinician often finds difficulty in doing.

F. C. Livingstone

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