

International Intelligence

Chile's Ruling Parties All Want Nuclear Power

All of the parties belonging to Chile's ruling coalition, the Socialist Party, the Christian Democracy, the Radical Social Democracy (PRSD), and the Democracy Party have all advocated study and development of nuclear energy, given that Argentina cannot provide Chile with the required amounts of natural gas, and Chile doesn't have sufficient hydroelectric and other resources to meet growing demand. Argentina's recent announcement that it will expand its nuclear program has provoked many leading members of Chile's scientific community, as well as legislators, to also urge the government to act quickly to start the process of building a nuclear plant.

Commenting on President Michelle Bachelet's Sept. 4 statement that she would order feasibility studies on the issue, but would *not* adopt a nuclear energy program under her administration, physicist José Maldifassi of the Adolfo Ibañez University warned that such an approach would mean that Chile could only have a nuclear plant ready by 2015 or 2016. If the energy crisis is bad now, given oil prices and natural gas shortages, "it will be far worse in ten years," he said. "Authorities must go with a short-term approach for nuclear development."

Russia Nixes Maneuvers With U.S. Forces

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Kostyshin confirmed on Sept. 5 that the "Torgau-2006" U.S.-Russian military exercises, scheduled for Sept. 21-Oct. 8 in the Nizhny Novgorod area, are now off the agenda. The official reason is "legal technicalities" concerning foreign soldiers on Russian territory. Russian commentators cite two real factors: a mobilization by Russian political forces, and anger at U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, after his recent talks with Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov. About 300 American officers and soldiers had been slated to take part.

The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) and the Anti-Globalist Resistance denounced and demonstrated against the maneuvers. Former Defense Ministry official Gen. Leonid Ivashov, in an Aug. 28 webcast on KM.ru, said it was outrageous to name maneuvers after the town where Soviet and American forces met up on the Elbe in 1945, but to hold them on the Volga, deep inside Russia. Nizhny Novgorod city officials vowed "No second Feodosiya!"—referring to anti-NATO protests in Crimea last Spring that deep-sixed the Sea Breeze-2006 NATO exercises with Ukraine—and the CPRF claims to have achieved exactly that.

Gazeta.ru on Sept. 7 quoted Alexei Arbatov, a defense expert based at the Institute of the World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO), on a link between the cancellation and Russian anger at Rumsfeld. At Rumsfeld's recent meeting with Ivanov, Arbatov said, "they couldn't even reach any preliminary agreements." Inside Russia, he added, "there is an intensifying campaign against any kind of military cooperation with the U.S.A. whatsoever."

French Premier Rejects 'Clash of Civilizations'

French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin told the French National Assembly on Sept. 8 that the current crises in the Middle East "are doing the work of the terrorists for them. . . . [Terrorism] seeks to strike inside or beyond our borders, grafting itself onto conflicts and exploiting people's suffering. It is not a war that has to be fought against terrorism, but . . . a determined struggle based on constant vigilance and effective cooperation with our partners. We will never bring this plague to an end except by also fighting against injustice, violence, against crises. . . . It is the duty of France and Europe to show that the clash of civilizations is not an inevitability. It is only we—French and Europeans—who bear this wisdom inherited from history. It is only we who bear this hope for a region that many believe condemned to violence and fanaticism."

Two days before, Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy told Radio Monte Carlo that Paris "cannot accept a war of civilizations" between the West and the Muslim world. "Good and evil are not decreed by Westerners in a given country or on a given continent." He also criticized the Bush Administration's policy of holding prisoners at Guantanamo without trial.

Lavrov Backs Mideast 'Comprehensive' Peace

In Israel on Sept. 8, after diplomatic visits to Lebanon and Syria the previous day, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov endorsed the Arab League proposal for a conference to seek a comprehensive peace in the region. He urged Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to call such a conference, "with the participation of all the parties." He said, "I came here from Beirut and Damascus. And today everybody wants peace more than ever. . . . Everyone wishes to reach a decision that would be suitable to all, certainly to Israel."

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni rejected the idea, saying that Israel "does not believe that all issues of comprehensive settlement should be considered as a whole, which means that Israel does not support the idea of the conference," according to RIA Novosti. Livni did say, however, that there need not be any conditions placed on a meeting between Prime Minister Olmert and Palestinian President Abu Mazen (Mahmoud Abbas), a shift from Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres's statements earlier in the week, that no such meeting could be held until the return of the Israeli soldier seized in Gaza on June 25.

While travelling in Africa with President Putin, Lavrov on Sept. 6 also addressed the latest developments around Iran, stating that Russia would seek "the optimal way for advancing towards the goal of non-proliferation of WMD," but that the UN Charter must be the basis for any measures that are taken. Lavrov added that the Charter "states unequivocally that economic measures exclude the use of force."