

International Intelligence

Gerashchenko Bid For President Rejected

As expected, the Central Electoral Commission of the Russian Federation ruled on Jan. 22 that Victor Gerashchenko could not be a candidate in the Russian Presidential elections without petitioning, even though he was nominated by the Russia's Regions Party, from within the Rodina bloc, which won representation in the Duma. "Parliamentary" parties are not supposed to have to petition, but Rodina is an alliance, not a party. Rodina announced it would appeal the ruling to the Russian Supreme Court.

The CEC decision leaves Rodina leader Sergei Glazyev as the sole candidate from Rodina. He filed his independent candidacy at the beginning of this month. Interviewed by NTV tonight, Gerashchenko affirmed that he and the rest of Rodina would support Glazyev if the appeal fails, "since there are no contradictions among us, at least regarding the problem we would want to raise during the Presidential elections—government economic policy."

Six non-party candidates, including President Putin, are attempting to collect the required 2 million valid signatures in Russia in the dead of Winter, by Jan. 28.

Iran Plans Six More Nuclear Plants

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid-Rezy Asefi announced on Jan. 18, that Iran would tender bids for the six new nuclear power plants. He reiterated Iran's plans for the peaceful use of nuclear technology, and referred to the protocol to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) signed by Tehran.

Hassan Rowhani, head of Iran's National Security Council, who negotiated the NPT protocol agreement with the European foreign ministers delegation, is currently in Paris. In an interview to *Le Figaro*, he also stressed the peaceful use, and added that, "We demand of the industrialized countries that they place nuclear technology at our disposal, for peaceful use, in accordance with

the NPT."

Rowhani went on to call for a nuclear-weapons-free Middle East, saying, "If Israel's arsenals of weapons of mass destruction are not destroyed, the countries of the region will be encouraged to start an arms race." Rowhani displayed confidence that relations with the United States would be restored.

China State Firms Laying Off Millions

Some 3 million workers will be laid off from China's state industries over the next three years, Xinhua reported last week. "Re-employment" is a big challenge, China's Labor Minister Zhang Silin said, even if the restructuring of the state-owned industry is completed by 2006. There are still 2.7 previously laid-off workers who have yet to get new jobs, and layoffs will go on, he said. Some 4 million laid-off workers did get a new job last year, Zhang said.

China started the re-employment agencies in 1998, and since then, some 27.8 million state industry employees have lost their jobs. These workers are not included in official unemployment figures, since they get a (very small) government stipend.

In addition, China has to generate 24 million new jobs in 2004 just to absorb this year's school graduates and the "surplus" rural workers who leave the countryside for the cities. This level of employment pressure will continue in China for the next 20 to 30 years.

Morales Threatens New Bolivia/Chile War

Following the lead of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, George Soros's favorite coca-producer, Evo Morales, told an Argentine radio station on Jan. 15 that there could be another war between Bolivia and Chile, and suggested Bolivia impose a trade embargo on Chile until it agrees to give Bolivia an outlet to the sea. Bolivian territory extended to the Pacific Ocean, until Chile seized Bolivia's coastline in the 1870's war known as the War of the Pacific, in which

Chile waged war against Peru and Bolivia, on behalf of British interests. Regaining access to the sea remains a hot issue within Bolivia, and a cause of long-standing hostility towards Chile.

Synarchist agent Chávez sparked the latest flare-up of the border issue last November, with a speech given at the Ibero-American Heads of State summit in Bolivia, declaring Bolivia's right to the sea the key to securing justice for Bolivia. Left-wing elements within the Mesa government jumped onto Chávez's provocation, suddenly declaring the border question *the* key to Bolivia's security and development today. Bolivia's President Carlos Mesa and Chile's President Ricardo Lagos exchanged sharp words over the issue at the Monterrey Heads of State summit, and Chile's Interior Minister José Miguel Insulza pronounced on Jan. 15, that "there isn't much room or climate for constructive solutions" between the two countries any more.

Indian Kashmiris Want No More Violence

The Indian-part of Kashmir's main political separatist group, the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC), and the Indian Deputy Prime Minister, L.K.Advani, jointly urged on Jan. 22 an end to violence in Kashmir. Advani was meeting the APHC leaders, and the statement was issued after the very first meeting.

The unprecedented meeting took place two weeks after India and Pakistan agreed to resume bilateral talks in February over a range of disputes, including Kashmir, which lies at the heart of more than five decades of enmity and the cause of two wars.

"The Hurriyat delegation stressed that an honorable and durable solution should be found through dialogue," said a senior Hurriyat official, Abdul Ghani Bhatt. "It was agreed that the only way forward is to ensure that all forms of violence at all levels should come to an end," he said, adding that further talks would be held in March.

Indian intelligence believes the APHC does not have control over armed militants who come in from Pakistan across the border.