

Beijing and Moscow enter a 'new era' in relations

by Linda de Hoyos

There is one reason why the Dec. 17-18 state visit of Russian President Boris Yeltsin to Beijing attracted so little attention in the western press: The visit and the array of prepared agreements signed by Yeltsin and his Chinese counterparts points to the abject failure of Anglo-American policy toward the East. The "shock therapy" administered to the Russian Federation by the International Monetary Fund has propelled Moscow to turn to the communist superpower, the People's Republic of China. As Chinese commentaries pointed out before the visit, Russia was promised \$24 billion in aid by the West, but has received in fact only \$1 billion.

On the other side, the western-promoted policy of free economic zones in China and development of labor-intensive consumer industries for export has enabled the Chinese to accrue a hefty pot of foreign exchange (\$65 billion) and enabled the Chinese communists to emerge in the 1990s as the preponderant power in Asia. President Yeltsin's visit to Beijing has bolstered that position.

The immediate beneficiary of the bilateral relations is China. Most significant is the high level of transfer of military technology to Beijing. President Yeltsin revealed during the visit that in 1992, China was the recipient of \$1.8 billion in armaments. "There have been attempts to keep this secret," he told the press in Beijing. Agreements signed by the two countries allow for that flow to increase, and also assure Beijing of spare parts for any military transfers in the future.

Moreover, Yeltsin's visit to Beijing, marks a major diplomatic success for Beijing, as did the visit of Japanese Emperor Akihito in October. To impress upon Yeltsin the might of the potentate he was dealing with, upon arrival, the Russian delegation was hustled off to the Great Wall for "sight-seeing."

Every detail of the trip had been prepared beforehand, including by a secret four-day visit to Beijing by Moscow

intelligence chief Yevgeni Primakov. Yeltsin came to Beijing for the formal signing of over 20 agreements for cooperation in all fields. His delegation of 100 people, requiring three planes, indicates the importance Moscow placed on the upgrading of relations with China. Yeltsin was accompanied by Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, Security Minister Viktor Barannikov, Internal Affairs Minister Yerin, Atomic Energy Minister Mikhailov, Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandr Shokhin, Academy of Sciences President Arkhipov (a former ambassador to China), and leaders of other republics.

The planned three-day trip was to have included a visit to the Shenzhen free economic zone in the South, but Yeltsin cut his stay short for domestic reasons. This was no snub to Beijing, but only underscored Russia's own weakness and instability compared to China.

Yeltsin was there long enough to sign all prepared agreements, the centerpiece of which was a Joint Declaration of principles for bilateral relations. According to the pro-Beijing Hong Kong daily *Weh Wei Po*, Russia had wanted this document to be a "treaty," but Beijing declined the offer. The Chinese word used to describe the document is "joint declaration," while the Russian word translates as "manifesto." The declaration, as reported by Chinese President Yang Shangkun, affirms "non-antagonism, non-alignment, good-neighborly relations of friendship and mutual benefit and cooperation based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence."

The document also includes a clause committing both sides to oppose "hegemonism" and global power politics, which Japan's Kyodo wire service interpreted as a "strong message to Washington that the United States should not assume it is the world's only superpower and global policemen." Chinese President Yang further emphasized to Rus-

sian correspondents Dec. 15 that both China and Russia are permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, and both play significant roles in world affairs. As nuclear powers, the two countries also pledged in the "manifesto" their commitment to nuclear non-proliferation.

Cooperation across the board

The joint declaration is the foundation for the 20 other agreements signed between the two governments.

A Memorandum of Understanding on Military Cooperation was signed, reportedly on the insistence of Prime Minister Li Peng, affirming Russian delivery of spare parts for military equipment. The memorandum also affirmed the continuation of talks to turn the 4,000-kilometer border between the two countries into a zone of peace and security, leading to the "real disarmament of the Asia-Pacific region."

Back in Moscow, Yeltsin told reporters that there was no linkage between the START talks between the U.S. and Russia and defense agreements with China. There will be no creation of a Russo-Chinese military bloc against the West, he said.

However, military cooperation between the two countries will be extensive. According to a Kyodo wire of Dec. 16, the Chinese Communist Party Central Military Commission instructed the government in May 1992 to increase imports of modern weaponry from Russia, stating that "stronger military cooperation with Russia and other former Soviet republics is a prerequisite for breaking the western embargo on military technology." The 1992 military budget was increased 40% over 1991 to aid in military modernization through such imports. China has already bought 24 Su-27 military aircraft from Russia and is reportedly interested in acquiring state-of-the-art MiG-31 fighter jets. Russian Ambassador to China Igor Rogachev also indicated that there would likely be agreements to modernize some of the munitions plants the Soviet Union had established in China in the 1950s. According to the Russian Interfax news agency, China wants to acquire aircraft carriers from Russia, but their sale is unlikely. However, China invited Russia to give "technical assistance" for the building of Minsk and Novorossysk type aircraft carriers, and Chinese delegations have already been to Russia to begin the process.

Russia is willing to sell tanks and submarines to China, reported the daily *Komsomolskaya Pravda* Dec. 11, but China is expected to also acquire the S-300, which is reportedly superior to the U.S. Patriot missile. The paper also reported that in November, Russia signed a secret deal to supply China with components for satellites. Military sales for 1993 are expected to exceed \$2 billion. However, according to the article, only 35% of the military sales to China were paid in hard cash. The rest of the payment came in the form of Chinese-made consumer goods—"Chinese running shoes, parkas, canned meat, and other goods. What can you do, if it is easier to get hold of aircraft in our country than pants?" The Russian side is unhappy with the quality of the goods,

but forced to accept them nonetheless.

Cooperation will extend to other strategic areas:

- *Intelligence.* Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky reported that Security Minister Baranikov would sign a cooperation agreement with China's Public Security Ministry covering terrorism, illegal arms sales, drug control, and crimes involving transport and communications.

- *Nuclear energy.* Russia will help build a 2,000-megawatt nuclear reactor in Liaoning province in northern China, one of the largest construction ventures in the history of Russo-China relations. The reactor will be of the VBR, and not Chernobyl, type. Russia will also build a conventional power plant in the Shantou special economic zone in southern China.

- *Trade and economic integration.* In March 1992 Russia and China granted each other Most Favored Nation status, and trade in 1992 was over \$5 billion, the highest ever. China will now provide Russia with commodity credits worth \$51 million. This will take the form of two credits, one of which will be used to purchase Chinese grain. Chinese commentaries like to point out the "complementarity" of the Russian and Chinese economies. While Russia is able to give China military technology, "China's development, research, manufacture, and introduction of equipment are ahead of Russia and are also suitable for Russia. China maintains technological superiority in light industry, textiles, and the electronics industry." China also, Ambassador Rogachev indicated, has a key role to play in the conversion of Russia's defense industries to civilian use—aid for which Russia will pay dearly.

- *Transport.* Russia will sell China seven heavy transport planes, Ilyushin-76 MDs, at about \$20 million each. Other Russian planes, such as the Tupolev-154M and Yakovlev-42M, are also in great demand in China, reported Interfax. China is also looking to expand transport routes into Russia, as most of the trade between the two countries takes place on a local level across the borders. Heihe is building a Chinese-Russian Heilongjiang bridge which will link the railroads between the two countries.

- *Scientific cooperation.* Agreements in this area include a joint R&D project in fusion energy between the Russian Institute for Atomic Energy and the Chinese Academy of Sciences. An agreement was also signed for joint work in space exploration.

Lastly, the two countries made a commitment to forge cooperative policy toward other countries in Asia. As Russian Ambassador Rogachev put it: "Russia and China share a lot of common points on many urgent international issues," and their cooperation in the world arena, the Asia-Pacific region in particular, is "crucially important." For example, without "active involvement" and "close cooperation" by Russia and China, the Cambodia question cannot be thoroughly settled, and equally unimaginable is a resolution to the Korean peninsula issue. Russia has reportedly completely adopted the Beijing position of suzerainty over Taiwan.