

International Intelligence

Russian armored losses rival World War II

Gen. Aleksandr Galkin, head of the Russian Defense Ministry's Main Armored Directorate, gave figures showing that Russia suffered losses of armor in Chechnya not seen in Europe since the Second World War. General Galkin's statistics, released on Feb. 21, indicated that a total of 225 Russian tanks and armored personnel carriers (APCs) have been destroyed in fighting to date. He added that "90%" of these losses occurred over the three-day period of Dec. 31-Jan. 2, during the first disastrous attempt to take Grozny.

In those three days alone, 200 Russian tanks and APCs were destroyed. This would point to a figure substantially higher than the total losses given by Defense Minister Pavel Grachov of 534 Russian soldiers killed.

John Paul II calls illiteracy 'hidden evil'

Pope John Paul II's 1995 Lenten message is titled "Illiteracy: The Hidden Evil." The message was dated Sept. 7, 1994 and released by the Vatican on Jan. 26. Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, the traditional Christian 40-day season of penance, this year fell on March 1.

The message reads in part: "During the season of Lent, I would like to reflect with all of you on the hidden evil which deprives a great number of poor people of many possibilities for progress. It likewise deprives them of victory over marginalization and hinders them from attaining true freedom. I am speaking of illiteracy. . . ."

"This terrible affliction helps to keep vast multitudes of people in a state of underdevelopment, with all the scandalous misery which that brings. . . . [W]here there is illiteracy there is more hunger, disease and infant mortality, as well as humiliation, exploitation and all kinds of suffering, than there is elsewhere."

The illiterate worldwide, he said, "is the human through which reaches out to us, ask-

ing us for a gesture of brotherhood. . . ."

"Actions undertaken to favor access to reading and writing are the first condition for helping the impoverished to mature intellectually and to lead their lives more independently. Literacy and education are an essential duty and investment for humanity's future, for 'the fulfillment of the whole man and of every man,' as Paul VI said (*Populorum Progressio*, 42). . . ."

"In the midst of the people, the greater the number of those enjoying a sufficient education, the better will the people be able to take their destiny into their own hands. In this, literacy training helps cooperation between nations and peace in the world. The equal dignity of individuals and peoples requires the international community to take steps to overcome the damaging inequalities which the illiteracy of millions of human beings still causes."

Greenpeace caught again in 'whale' of a lie

On Feb. 22, the Japan Whaling Association exposed another instance of bald-faced lying on the part of Prince Philip's spinoff, Greenpeace. Greenpeace had announced to the press on Feb. 14 that it had "caught the Japanese whaling fleet hunting whales in the newly created Antarctic whale sanctuary."

However, as a press release from the Japan Whaling Association pointed out, the ships "caught" by Greenpeace were on a research mission announced to the International Whaling Commission last May, cleared with the IWC Scientific Committee, and authorized under Article VII of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling.

Moreover, there is no "newly created Antarctic whale sanctuary." It was not approved by the IWC Scientific Committee, the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, or the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research. Even if it had been approved, only commercial whaling was to be banned, not whales taken for scientific research. Ja-

pan takes about 300 minke whales—an abundant species with 760,000 in the Antarctic, for research every year.

There is no evidence of any decline in any whale stocks in the past decade, according to the Japanese press release, which likened Greenpeace interference with research operations to the destruction of research and medical laboratories by animal rights terrorists.

NATO opens discussions with North Africa

NATO opened its dialogue with five Middle East and North African states on Feb. 24. NATO Secretary General Willy Claes held talks with representatives from Morocco. NATO sources said separate meetings would follow later in the day with Israel, Egypt, Mauritania, and Tunisia.

U.S. State Department spokesman Christine Shelly said on Feb. 24 that "NATO doesn't have any position against the religion of Islam," but NATO had agreed to begin a dialogue with some of the Mediterranean countries on a range of issues, including security issues. Asked about fears in Europe regarding "Islamic fundamentalists," Shelly replied: "It's not Islamic fundamentalism per se, it is the risks and threats which are posed by radicals and extremists, who then would employ or could employ violence or violent means, terrorism, in order to try and achieve their political ends." She added, "It's the risks to security of those nations in the Mediterranean area" which will be discussed.

Belgium like Italy? Agusta scandal spreads

The "Agusta" affair is pushing Belgium to the brink of an Italian-style disintegration, the daily *La Libre Belgique* warned in a Feb. 24 editorial. At issue is the new revelations and rumors in the resumed investigation of the 1988 bribery scandal around the Belgian government's purchase of helicopters from the Italian Agusta firm. The daily warned

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that the integrity of the political system and of the state as a whole is in danger.

The scandal has, indeed, the potential of wiping out the entire leading strata of the Socialist party, one of the three parties in the government coalition, immediately before early general elections. Regionalist and separatist parties that are based on anti-socialist populism, such as the right-wing Vlaamse Blok, may benefit from the paralysis of the Socialists.

This is expected to increase tensions with Wallonian regionalist movements, splitting the nation in two. There will be repercussions among Belgium's neighbors, to which the most radical currents among the regionalists are politically attracted: the Walloons to the French; the Flemish to the Netherlands and to Germany.

On Feb. 23, former Economics Minister Willy Claes confessed in an interview with Belgian national television that he did recall a meeting of the Socialist Party leadership in early 1989 during which the prospect of an Agusta "donation" to the party was mentioned. On Feb. 28, an opinion poll was published by a Belgian daily, clamoring for Claes to step down from his current post as NATO secretary general.

Dutch-style euthanasia bill introduced in Australia

The "Rights of the Terminally Ill Bill," which purportedly allows patients to terminate their lives in a humane manner, was introduced into Australia's Northern Territory Parliament on Feb. 22 by Chief Minister Marshall Perron. The private member's bill has the full support of the federal government, as shown by statements from the Minister for Health and Human Services Dr. Carmen Laurence. Bishop Collins of the Northern Territory Catholic Diocese and the Territory's head of the Australian Medical Association, Tom Kyle, have both have spoken out against the bill.

The legislation is identical to the infamous Netherlands law, except that a "medical practitioner" or a "health care provider" can administer the prescribed fatal sub-

stance. The health care provider does not have to be medically qualified and is defined as a "hospital, nursing home or other institution . . . and any nurse or other person whose duties include care of the patient." Patients need only be over the age of 18 and have a terminal illness from which they are expected to die within 12 months, to come under the legislation. This will grant the physician or other appointed "health care provider" immunity from prosecution, as in the Netherlands.

The legislation has been referred to a parliamentary committee to receive submissions until May. A senior staffer from Perron's office said, "We got material from the Voluntary Euthanasia Society for the drafting of the bill."

Peru-Ecuador spat gets used against sovereignty

The foreign ministers of Peru and Ecuador met with international mediators from the Rio Protocol in Montevideo, Uruguay on March 1, where a second cease-fire was signed to allow for the withdrawal of troops from both sides and for the deployment of neutral observers to the Peru-Ecuador border on March 8. An earlier cease-fire agreement had failed to stop bloody warfare in the contested jungle area.

Despite these renewed efforts to solve the border conflict through the channels of the existing treaty protocol, there are continuing efforts by forces outside the region to use the conflict as a battering ram against national sovereignty. Thus, the *Economist* from London editorially commented on Feb. 18 that, "coming so soon after the Mexican economic debacle, it [the conflict] is an untimely reminder of the enduring strength of another jaguar-trap in the path of the region's modernization: Latin American nationalism." The *Economist* goes on to propose that "in an ideal world, Ecuador and Peru might agree to cede the area on both sides of the Condor Cordillera as a demilitarized reserve for the jungle Indians who are its main inhabitants."

● **BILL CLINTON**, in his Feb. 23 address to the Canadian Parliament, criticized Quebec separatism. But on the same day, he became the first U.S. President to meet with members of the Bloc Québécois, the leading separatist group.

● **BORIS YELTSIN** on Feb. 25 cancelled his planned visit to Copenhagen, for the mid-March United Nations social affairs summit there, where he was supposed to meet with German Chancellor Kohl, among others. The Russian President's decision was interpreted as a sign of poor health and the deepening power struggle in Moscow.

● **EGYPTIAN** authorities have banned the distribution of Conrad Black's *Jerusalem Post* in Egypt. The move, announced in late February, was a reaction to a *Post* editorial charging that Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa and Egyptian Secretary General of the Arab League Abdel Meguid are anti-Israel.

● **IN SWAZILAND**, the southern African enclave, AIDS is a factor in the majority of illnesses of babies admitted to hospitals, it was announced on March 1 by Health Minister Derek von Wissell. He previously warned that 1 in 5 children aged 15-19 already has the HIV infection.

● **AMNESTY** International, the British intelligence-run "human rights" front, is running into morale problems on its staff. The *Times* of London reported on Feb. 28 that Amnesty used funds to pay hefty school and nursery fees for the children of top executives.

● **JACQUES FOCCART**, a top aide to the late Gen. Charles de Gaulle, has just released his memoirs in the form of a 500-page interview. It is said to contain the first admission by a French official of a French role in the assassination of Cameroon opposition figure Felix Moumie in 1960 in Geneva.