

International Intelligence

World's Largest Hydro Dam Near Completion

China completed the blocking of the Yangtze River at the Three Gorges Dam on Nov. 6. This major step means that the entire project, estimated to cost \$25 billion, will be completed some time next year, according to Chinese state media.

While the anti-China, anti-technology Western media continue to gripe about the alleged 1.2 million peasants whose villages will be submerged when the project is complete, Li Peng, number-two in the Chinese Communist Party, called the dam one of the greatest engineering feats in history. Xinhua said. Li, the long-time Power and Industry Minister, watched the final damming of the Yangtze through binoculars, and told Xinhua, "The administration of a country's national affairs becomes easier when its rivers are tamed," citing an old adage.

A reservoir will be formed when the final 2,180-foot section of the dam is finished; it will stretch 1.4 miles and be 607 feet high within eight months. It will begin to fill next year, when the first of four turbines should begin generating power. The entire project is not due to be completed until 2009, at which time, it will have 26 generators providing about 10% of China's power.

Nearly Half of South American Population Poor

By the end of 2002, some 44% of the Ibero-American population will be classified as poor, according to a study just released by the United Nations Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, or Cepal, as it is known in Spanish). Seven million people have entered the ranks of the poor this year, bringing the number to 221 million. Between 1990 and 2001, the number of poor increased by only 10 million; but in 2002, Argentina's extraordinary collapse will account for much of the 7 million newly impoverished. ECLAC director José Antonio Ocampo said, that "Argentina, whose economic crisis is very severe, weighs heavily in the increased regional

poverty." Its economy is expected to decline by 16% this year.

Most dramatic is the fact that of the 7 million new poor, 6 million are "indigent": They cannot satisfy even minimal food needs. One in five Ibero-Americans does not have enough to eat.

EU and Russia Solve Kaliningrad Problem

Removing a considerable diplomatic obstacle to enhanced relations in talks Nov. 11 in Brussels, Russian President Vladimir Putin and the European Union agreed on a special visa procedure that will allow licenses for up to 900,000 trips annually by rail and another 600,000 by car, for Russians who commute, mostly via Lithuania, between the Russian mainland and the Kaliningrad enclave on the Baltic Sea.

When Poland and Lithuania join the EU in 2004, Kaliningrad would otherwise be totally isolated, because the EU, whose eastern border would be with Belarus and Russia, keeps a tight visa regime at its borders.

Furthermore, a feasibility study has been commissioned by the EU and Russia, for the project to build a new high-speed rail link from Russia to Kaliningrad via Lithuania. This is only a first step, but a step towards realizing a project of great importance, which has been under discussion for some time.

U.S. Demands Halt To Brazil-Colombia Deal

In a show of imperial arrogance, U.S. Southern Command Commander Gen. James Hill sent a letter in October to the head of the Colombian Armed Forces, demanding that a military purchase from Brazil be abandoned, or else, according to *O Estado de São Paulo* and *El Tiempo* in Bogotá on Nov. 11. The Colombian military had already ordered the purchase of 40 Emb-314 light fighter planes and other equipment made by the Brazilian state company Embraer. The planes were to have aided military pursuit of FARC/ELN narco-terrorists in the Colombian jungles.

Hill's threat arrived just three days after Colombia's Defense Minister sent a confidential letter to the Brazilian Embassy in Bogotá, opening up the bidding process on the fighter planes!

The letter from Hill to Armed Forces Commander Gen. Jorge Mora Rangel, expressed "concern over the Colombian Armed Forces expense of \$234 million to buy new fighter planes," and advised the general to desist from the deal with Brazil and meet more pressing needs—such as the modernization of the fleet of C-130 Hercules transport planes, which are U.S.-made and whose "modernization" would fall to U.S. companies. Hill's letter made clear that further U.S. military aid to Colombia would depend on compliance with U.S. "recommendations." Specifically, Hill stated: "I also feel that the U.S. Congress would not look favorably on the purchase of light attack planes as the most urgent need of the Colombian Armed Forces, and could negatively influence Congressional approval of additional financing."

Venezuela Crisis Escalates Again

As Organization of the American States head Cesar Gaviria was attempting to mediate negotiations between government and opposition figures Nov. 12, on President Hugo Chávez's "politicization" of the state oil company, out-of-control pro-Chávez mobs surrounded the Caracas city hall, pinning Mayor Alfredo Peña and others inside for several hours. National Guardsmen attempted to disperse them, leading to a bloody clash leaving at least 1 dead and 20 wounded. Peña was later assaulted by "Chavistas" while visiting some of the wounded at the hospital. Later that day, a grenade was thrown at the home of Caracas Archbishop Ignacio Velasco, another Chávez political opponent, and a tear gas canister was tossed at the office of an opposition newspaper, *Así es la Noticia*. As tensions rise, all eyes are on the Venezuelan Workers Federation (CTV), whose leaders are traveling the country building up support for an indefinite general strike to force Chávez's resignation.