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WARN WARNING: TOPIC: DOMESTIC ECONOMIC, DOMESTIC POLITICAL

SERI SERIAL: CEP20010831000016

COUN COUNTRY: RUSSIA

SUBJ SUBJ: TAKE 1 OF 2--Russian press review for 31 Aug

SOUR SOURCE: Caversham BBC Monitoring in English 0000 GMT 30 Aug 01

TEXT TEXT:

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Russian press review for Friday 31 August 2001

The NATO mission in Macedonia will take longer than expected, one paper says. Another says the Afghan refugees off Australia may undermine the law of the sea, while in Afghanistan itself the Taleban are engaged in a war of nerves. The anti-racism conference in Durban may spark off anti-Semitism in Russia, according to one *paper. A tabloid plots an elaborate crop circle hoax, while researchers discover the premature ageing effect of driving a lorry.

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DATE: JUL 2002

Pessimism on NATO operation

The influential daily IZVESTIYA says NATO has finally admitted what was "obvious to many observers", that it will take more than 30 days to disarm ethnic Albanian rebels in Macedonia.

Furthermore, IZVESTIYA says, "the initial results of NATO's Essential Harvest are not too optimistic". The paper says most of the Albanians are handing in obsolete weapons and "the border with Kosovo, from which the Albanian units were supplied with arms and probably will go on being so in the future, remains as 'transparent' now as it was before". IZVESTIYA says NATO troops are fired on if they attempt to interfere with this traffic.

IZVESTIYA quotes Macedonian Interior Minister Ljube Boskovski as saying the NATO mission will fail. The paper says the Macedonian government has a fall-back plan to restore control of all rebel-held districts as soon as the NATO operation is finished.

Refugees undermine sea law

The daily NOVYYE IZVESTIYA is concerned about the fate of the Afghan refugees on the Norwegian container ship Tampa off Australia. "The West is more and more reluctant every year to take refugees," the paper says, "and Australia has until now had the reputation of being the last hospitable country."

But Australia's doors too have been "gradually closing", the paper says, predicting that Norway will eventually have to take the refugees. NOVYYE IZVESTIYA says Australia is "feverishly drafting" tougher laws against illegal immigration as the Tampa lies offshore.

The implications for the law of the sea are even more dangerous, according to the paper. What the Afghans did in using threats and virtually seizing the ship "will be cursed by the hundreds who will perish at sea". In future cases captains may ignore SOS messages and will not pick up refugees if there is no prospect of their being accepted at the nearest port.

"Those wrecked at sea will see the ships sailing past but none of them will come to help them," the paper predicts.

Taleban's war of nerves

The weekly OBSHCAYA GAZETA reports that the Taleban authorities in Afghanistan intend to proceed with the trial of foreign aid workers for missionary activities. The paper says the Taleban "risk losing all international humanitarian aid altogether". Their behaviour, says OBSHCAYA GAZETA, is like that of "a passenger who decides to walk to spite the conductor" and recalls that the regime has been in conflict with the UN several times since it blew up the Buddha statues.

The Taleban have embarked on "a war of nerves that they are bound to win", the weekly says. "If the world community steps up its pressure on the Taleban the latter will simply carry out their threat to reject humanitarian aid altogether", the paper says.

The Taleban will now do exactly what they like, the paper says, predicting that reprisals will be stepped up against the Hazara, an ethnic and religious minority the Taleban regard as "unreliable". The residents of whole provinces could be moved into the desert to starve to death, OBSHCAYA GAZETA predicts.

Anti-Semite theatre in Durban

The independent daily VREMYA NOVOSTEY reports that a delegation of rights activists from Russia is to attend the UN conference on racism in Durban. The paper says the delegation intends to table a

resolution against what it calls "disguised forms of racism" in Russia. This is said to include using illegal migration as an excuse to discriminate on racial and ethnic grounds.

VREMYA NOVOSTEY also predicts that Russia "will have to listen to accusations of ethnic discrimination" over its conduct in Chechnya at the South African forum.

At the same time, the paper says, the Russian delegation is concerned about the agenda of the conference. A call by some delegates to pay compensation to the descendants of slaves in the USA is seen as "not constructive" by the Russians.

The Russian delegates also "categorically disagree" with a draft resolution equating Zionism with racism and intend to support the USA and Israel on this issue. One delegate told the paper the resolution would have "direct and very negative consequences in Russia in the form of an increase in anti-Semitism".

The head of the Israeli delegation, which cancelled its attendance at the conference at the last minute, told the paper it was likely to be "a theatre of the absurd". VREMYA NOVOSTEY says the Zionism resolution has also been criticized by the Russian Foreign Ministry as "discriminatory and focusing attention only on what is of interest to Arab politicians".

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The official ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA reports that a children's club in Moscow has broadcast a radio message into outer space. The message, beamed to a specific star, was sent from a space control centre in Crimea. According to the paper, it includes music, an encrypted greetings message in Russian and an English-Russian dictionary "to help the aliens translate the Russian text".

The tabloid KOMSOMOLSKAYA PRAVDA, on the other hand, is
 *delighted to have successfully hoaxed the UFO experts. A team from
 *the paper spent 10 months creating an authentic-looking crop
 *circle, using over-doses of fertilizer and a mechanical device on a
 (MORE)

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