

# Russia opposes NATO expansion



BRUSSELS, Belgium (AP) — Russia stunned a NATO meeting Thursday by protesting plans to give membership to East European nations and backed out of a program to improve cooperation between Moscow and the alliance.

Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev was expected to endorse the plan approved just hours earlier by NATO foreign ministers.

Instead, he criticized it, saying the decision to draw up conditions for future NATO membership would create a new division in Europe.

His comments cast a pall over the meeting and over NATO's attempt to draw its former Warsaw Pact enemies into its alliance. However, some diplomats said they believed that he was playing to an audience back in Russia, where the government is contending with a strong nationalist opposition.

In an effort to overcome Russian objections to its eastward expansion, NATO allies had agreed to a special relationship with Moscow and insisted they had no intention of forming a hostile bloc.

"If the strategy of NATO has changed, then that is something which requires further discussion," Kozyrev told a group of grim-faced foreign ministers of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Kozyrev refused to endorse a wide-ranging program of military and political contacts with Moscow, intending to ease Russia's fears of an eastward drive by the alliance.

He said he read the ministers' statement on membership and immediately called Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

"This communique raises more questions than it answers," Kozyrev said in impromptu remarks that were broadcast to reporters.

U.S. State Department spokesman Mike McCurry said Kozyrev gave no advance warning that he wanted clarification of the schedule for considering new NATO members next year.

"I would be tempted to say it has to do with domestic politics in Russia," McCurry said.

Kozyrev's outburst only added to the alliance's woes. There have been unprecedented strains in recent weeks between the United States and its European allies over Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In an effort to heal the wounds, Secretary of State Warren Christopher swung behind the European view that diplomacy, not force, is the best way to deal with the conflict. It was a major policy switch by Washington under pressure from the Europeans, led by Britain and France.

NATO has been anguishing in recent years over whether — and when — to open its doors to former foes in central and eastern Europe.

At a summit last January, President Clinton and other allied leaders approved a U.S. initiative, Partnership for Peace, to bring former foes closer, but without membership.

Twenty-three nations, including Russia, have enrolled in the project, which allows them to take part for the first time in military exercises and other alliance activities.

## Serbs reach economic agreement with Croatia

KNIN, Croatia (AP) — Rebel Serbs approved an economic agreement with Croatia's government Thursday, but they still hurled artillery shells at each other.

The agreement calls for resuming water and electricity supplies and reopening oil pipelines and the highway connecting Zagreb, the Croatian capital, and the Yugoslav capital Belgrade. Two sections of the 220 mile highway are controlled by Croatian Serb rebels.

It is the first accord between the foes since they agreed March 29 on a formal cease-fire.

The self-styled Croatian Serb assembly approved the economic accord late Thursday. Croatian authorities had already approved the deal, which was crafted with the help of international negotiators.

The two sides will not meet face to face to sign the deal Friday, the United Nations said in a statement. The Croats will sign it at U.N. headquarters in Zagreb in the morning while the Serbs will sign at U.N. headquarters in Knin, their capital, in the afternoon.

The diplomatic moves coincided with battlefield action.

Artillery duels continued Thursday near Lake Peruca, about 19 miles southeast of Knin, said Paul Risley, a U.N. spokesman in Zagreb. Croatian Serbs denied there was any serious military action Thursday.

## Mexico's president takes oath of office

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Ernesto Zedillo was sworn in as Mexico's president Thursday, vowing to spread prosperity to Mexicans untouched by free-market reforms, make peace with Indian rebels and curtail his own nearly absolute powers.

Even as the 42-year-old economist was taking his oath of office, more than 10,000 people shouted slogans against him at a rally protesting his Institutional Revolutionary Party's 65-year rule.

"Out with Zedillo!" shouted the protesters who jammed the plaza surrounding the Monument of the Revolution that commemorates Mexico's bloody 1910-20 revolution. They raised banners calling for a civil insurgency.

Outgoing President Carlos Salinas de Gortari handed over the red, white and green sash of office in a midday ceremony at the Chamber of Deputies. The 1,500 guests included Vice President Al Gore and Cuba's President Fidel Castro.

"Our most important challenge is to provide dignified living conditions for every Mexican family," said Zedillo, whose election capped a year that saw the opening of Mexico's economy in the North American Free Trade Agreement.

He promised better lives for millions of Mexicans who haven't seen any benefit from the economic changes wrought by Salinas, vowing to use NAFTA "to help generate the jobs we need and raise living standards."

The dignitaries were then taken in a caravan of gleaming black limousines to the National Palace, trailing Zedillo's auto as it was

showered by confetti thrown from balconies.

"Zedillo! Zedillo!" people shouted.

"We think he will be a good president!" said housewife Carmen Valencia, 60, a ruling party supporter. "He came from below and understands poverty."

Things were different at the Monument of the Revolution.

"Zedillo No! Zedillo No!" shouted the protesters, hundreds of them supporters of the Zapatista National Liberation Army, a guerrilla force that rebelled on Jan. 1 in the impoverished southern state of Chiapas.

The crowd grew by the hour, but police made no move to intervene.

Some protesters, mostly farmers in straw hats, had clubs and machetes.

Opposition leader Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, who came in third in the election behind Zedillo, told the crowd they now had to strengthen his party's base while challenging controversial elections.

Many Cardenas supporters believe he was cheated of the presidency in 1988, the year Salinas was elected, because of ruling-party vote fraud.

Mexico's ruling party recently had to defend itself against fraud charges in elections in southern Chiapas, Veracruz and Tabasco states.

## German terrorist released after 22 years

LUEBECK, Germany (AP) — Irmgard Moeller, the Red Army Faction terrorist who blew up three American soldiers with a car bomb 22 years ago, walked out of prison Thursday after being freed early from her life sentence.

Wearing jeans, a leather jacket and red sweater, Moeller smiled, waved and gathered up bouquets from fans, who were singing 1960s anti-Vietnam War songs and chanting revolutionary slogans outside the prison's blue steel gates.

"It still feels unreal," she said, her words nearly drowned out by the crowd of 200, who carried red flags, champagne bottles and Christmas presents.

Moeller, 47, appealed for freedom for other "political prisoners" and thanked her supporters and friends for helping her cope with years in prison.

Moeller was convicted of driving one of two explosives-laden cars that blew up May 24, 1972, at U.S. Army Headquarters in Heidelberg. The blast killed Capt. Clyde R. Bonner

and two enlisted men, Charles L. Peck and Ronald A. Woodward.

Moeller was arrested six weeks later and sentenced to life in prison plus 15 years.

The longest serving female prisoner in Germany, she was freed because of her poor health, although she has shown no remorse and refused to cooperate with psychiatric evaluations.

A court in the state of Schleswig-Holstein, where the prison is located, placed her on probation for five years.

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