

Summary of Situation in Altai Republic as of June, 2007

The Challenge

Because Altai is strategically and economically valuable, strong forces are vying for control of her resources as Russia is re-emerging as a world power.

Although such projects as the planned gas pipeline to China and a proposed hydroelectric dam on the Katun River will benefit federal Russia's position, they will do little to improve the lives of the local people, while risking significant damage to precious regional resources, which include three UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The Altai Republic government is 90% supported by federal money.

On the other hand, Altai is a glorious ecological and ethnocultural gem, extremely attractive to tourists, which has been stewarded by the indigenous Altai people from time immemorial – a spiritual beacon and a place of healing. Last year over a million tourists visited the region, which is about the size of Washington State and supports a local population of about 400,000, of which only about 30% are now indigenous Altai people (down from about 90% in 1950). And, of course, there is federal interest in the tourism dollars as well.

At the crux are the two issues of land ownership and social order. Rather simplistically stated, two somewhat overlapping factions – indigenous civic leaders, and federally-dependent regional officials – both would like control.

Overlaid on this is the published US State Department campaign in Russia to promulgate such “popular” movements as the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, using nongovernmental organizations as a vehicle. Thus, *all* international humanitarian and civil society development organizations and efforts are, quite reasonably, suspect. How to proceed?

Strategic Path to Inclusive Solutions

In this atmosphere, communication is fundamental to any viable solution. In fact, facilitated communication is extremely effective in finding solutions that are satisfactory for all parties.

Necessary conditions for communications are:

- means (communication infrastructure, language skills, organizational skills, funding for meetings)
- opportunity (inclusive facilitated strategic planning meetings, such as Open Space, Future Search; international forums such as Global Leadership Forum; development of informal networking)
- intention for creative solutions
- follow-through actions based on stakeholder consensus

Since last September, several diverse organizations have found opportunities to work together and directly support each other to achieve mutual communication objectives for the greater social good, especially in Altai.

- Siberian Academy for Public Administration (SAPA) (Marina Tyasto, E. Boyko, V. Chernoskutov) has hosted international events, delegations, and individuals that communication around effective governance and leadership; and has organized numerous strategic planning meetings as well as instruction on how to conduct such meetings.

SAPA has brought together the following organizations in the course of the above-listed activities:

- Governments of Novosibirsk Region and Altai Republic (Governor Tolokonsky and Vice Chair Ageev respectively; additionally, Ezher Tatin) which have expressed support for various communication-enhancing activities of this network of organizations.
- Global Leadership Forum (GLF) (Adel Safty) just completed their 9th Forum in Novosibirsk, and are now seeking ways to include Altai in the 10th Forum next year.
- Altai Mir University (AMU) (Carol Hiltner) has been effectively following up on internationally related action requests resulting from GUS/Altai Mir and Open Space Meetings regarding Altai, working with a broad Altai, Russian, and international network. The first tangible results are two international exchanges: International youths to an International Altai Ethnocultural Camp in July; and Altai young leaders to the US in September as part of the Open World program, facilitated by the National Peace Foundation.
- Eurasian Center for Siberian Projects (ECSP) and Planet 3000 (Nina Goncharova and Talgat Akbashev) have held events all over Siberia for the past decade, to enhance awareness of self and social responsibility. ECSP organized the “Children of the Earth” International Altai Youth Festival to which AMU is bringing international youths.

Next Step

Half-day meeting of representatives of these organizations (plus Altai Region) at SAPA on June 18th or during that week, to:

- briefly report on progress and plans for the next year (one hour);
- synchronize our activities for maximum mutual support and effectiveness (one hour);
- strategize on how we might better collaborate to achieve above-stated objectives (two hours).