

International Intelligence

Pope promotes plan for pilgrimage to Mt. Sinai

Pope John Paul II has called together 140 cardinals to discuss his proposal for a pilgrimage of the leaders of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism to Mt. Sinai in 1999, on the eve of the second millennium of Christianity, the London *Observer* reported on June 5.

In a letter to the cardinals, the pope wrote: "The atmosphere of the years leading up to the end of the Second Christian Millennium suggests the opportunity to follow in the footsteps of Abraham, and rediscover the Ten Commandments." The pope is also considering summoning a great pan-Christian meeting of Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox churches, the *Observer* reported.

However, the *Observer* article and another in the *European* cast doubt on whether the pope will survive that long. The *European* claims that the meeting of the cardinals is really a dress rehearsal for a conclave to elect the pontiff's successor, and quotes various officials that "this is now becoming a lame-duck papacy." Speculation is rife, the *European* claims, that the pope is going to announce his abdication. The Vatican has again refuted claims that John Paul II is ill, dying, or unable to carry out his duties. Among possible successors, the articles focus on Milan's Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini.

Top British intelligence officers killed in crash

Six senior officers of Britain's MI-5 domestic intelligence service, including the number-three man, were killed in a helicopter crash in Scotland on June 2. A total of 29 people were killed, including the head of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) Special Branch, who was effectively responsible for the security situation in Northern Ireland and the fight against the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

As the London *Independent* acknowledged on June 4, the British security establishment lost "at a stroke, two dozen of its

most valuable officers." The RUC's Chief Constable, Sir Hugh Ahnesley, admitted: "No one can pretend that this is not a catastrophic loss. It is a very, very significant setback." The *Independent* added that "some of the RUC officers lost had more than 20 years' experience in the force's Special Branch, the leading intelligence agency in the fight against the IRA."

For the moment, all official sources in Britain are ruling out sabotage. Three separate inquiry commissions have been established to investigate why the crash happened.

Andreotti blames U.S. for his indictment

Former Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti, who faces trial for alleged corruption, gave an interview to Italian television's First Channel on June 1, in which he blamed the U.S. intelligence services for setting him up for prosecution. "I think . . . the whole network of the Sicilian-American Mafia, which is a very strong . . . very protected network," he said, in reply to a question about who the "string-pullers" might be.

Andreotti explained that the network is "very much protected by a part of their [U.S.] services. This is not a slander or a manner of speaking. In Bisiach's book on Kennedy, there is a description of commissions given to Florida's Mafia to conduct operations against Fidel Castro. . . . I do not know if it is *the* secret service. It could be branches, chunks of it."

Andreotti was pointing his finger precisely at the intelligence network that has owned the Sicilian Mafia at least since World War II.

Later on, Andreotti described, as a motivation for the attack against him, the international fight around economic policy: "For sure, there exists a certain kernel of forces, blind financial interests, very powerful, who consider anything which is 'social' as a sort of communism, of pauperism. For instance, there is a difference between a free-market economy and a social free-market economy. What has been done in former communist countries . . . as if free-market

economy alone would solve all their problems, after a few years is bringing a comeback of the communist leadership."

Menem calls for defense of life at Cairo meeting

Argentine President Carlos Menem has issued an appeal to Ibero-American Presidents to "defend the right to life" at the U.N.'s Cairo anti-population conference. In a letter dated June 1, he called upon the other heads of state to work "to reaffirm a joint position to take to Cairo on certain fundamental points which are the ethical basis of our societies. One of them, without doubt, is the right to life."

Papal spokesman Joaquin Navarro Valls responded to Menem with the statement that "the Holy See appreciates this initiative" and characterized it as an important move that "could become a continental initiative," Reuters reported June 6. The Vatican released the text of the Argentine President's letter.

On June 6, at the opening speech at the First Argentine Conference on Biotechnology, Menem attacked the idea that "in order to save the lives of some women, [it is necessary] to legalize murder, because that's what we're talking about—thousands of defenseless beings, children of God, as if we were God." He warned that allowing abortion would lead to its legalization.

Solzhenitsyn scores plundering of Russia

Upon his return to Russia from exile late in May, novelist Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn denounced Boris Yeltsin's shock therapy "reforms" as "brainless." "I refuse to accept that reforms are now under way," he said. "Reform is a constructive, thought-out system of interrelated measures. There is no such reform here."

In a speech in Khabarovsk on June 2, Solzhenitsyn charged that under the banner of privatization, the national wealth is being thrown away. "Every single year, the

Briefly

● **JERUSALEM'S** Deputy Mayor Shmuel Meir declared that the Distinguished Citizen of Jerusalem Award should be given to whoever assassinates Palestinian Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat. Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert, a member of the Likud Party, refused to condemn the statement.

● **HEAVY FIGHTING** is reported around three Angolan cities—Cuito, Malange, and Huambo—which are being encircled by the rebel forces of UNITA. The government responded by bombing the headquarters of UNITA in the central highlands. On May 31, the U.N. Security Council approved extending the mandate of the 80-member U.N. mission in Angola.

● **RADOVAN KARADZIC**, the Bosnian Serb leader, was scheduled to go to Moscow on June 8 to receive the Poetry Award of the Russian Writers' League, according to a report in *Izvestia* on June 5. *Izvestia* called it a scandal that a man responsible for the death of thousands of human beings is portrayed as a "poet and humanist" by the writers' organization.

● **THE RUSSIAN ARMY** is reorganizing its forces in the Far East, according to the *World Journal* newspaper, organ of Taiwan's Kuomintang party. Russia reportedly plans to move most of its best-equipped units from their current East German bases to the new Military Supreme Headquarters of the Far East. This new headquarters will oversee the Pacific fleet.

● **TWO SEA SHEPHERD** terrorists have been sentenced *in absentia* in Norway for scuttling whaling ships. Paul Watson, founder of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, was sentenced to 120 days in prison for the December 1992 scuttling of the ship *Nybrenna*. Also convicted was Lisa Distefano, director of Sea Shepherd's Oceanic Research and Conservation Action Force, who claimed responsibility last January for sinking the whaler *Senet*.

thieves carry between \$12 and \$25 billion out of the country, and the Russian government then begs the International Monetary Fund for a loan of \$1.5 billion."

The novelist laid flowers on a mass grave in Khabarovsk which contains the remains of 14,000 people shot by Stalin's secret police in the 1930s, and carefully read through the names listed on the nearby commemorative wall.

"The country's best and brightest were killed by Stalin in his savage purges," Solzhenitsyn said. "They could have built a better life than those who stayed alive. The tragedy of the Stalin years is the underlying reason for Russia's present-day humiliation and tormented conscience."

Solzhenitsyn, who is emerging as a moral rallying point in Russia, is an incisive analyst of the crisis in his country. However, the solutions he puts forward unfortunately lie within the "Third Rome" cultural matrix which has kept Russia backward for centuries. Rejecting an approach of high-technology development in collaboration with the West, he attacks Count Sergei Witte (who fought for such a program at the turn of the century), and upholds the traditional Russian system of dictatorial authority at the top and "local self-administration" on the local level.

'Merchant of Venice' creates uproar in Israel

A performance of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* in Tel Aviv has created a storm of controversy. The performance, done in modern dress, made Shylock look like Baruch Goldstein, the fanatical Brooklyn-born settler who was responsible for the Hebron massacre of Palestinians in February. He had a beard and machine gun.

Omri Nitzan, one of Israel's most acclaimed directors, declared: "Any attempt to produce the *Merchant* in this country is like putting your hand in the fire, but I believe it is so rich and such a theatrical challenge that it had to be done. We have also kept up with our tradition of trying to make the classics relevant to the present. So far, there have been walkouts. But we are pre-

pared for a demonstration."

Nitzan commented that the *Merchant of Venice* "is far too good, and too multi-faceted to be anti-Semitic."

Despite walkouts by fanatics, the performance got very good reviews. The *Times* of London on June 1 quoted the national newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth* describing the performance as "a superb production," given "a clever, sensitive, and very beautiful interpretation, Shylock as a fanatic, and his fanaticism becomes more and more obsessive as he gets closer to obtaining his pound of flesh. . . . You see what religious fanaticism does to people, and you think, of course, about your own society."

Indians, ecologists block Hydro-Quebec site

The Coalition for Nitassinan, a supposedly indigenous group led by the Innu Indians of Quebec, began a blockade of the construction site of Hydro-Quebec's Sainte-Marguerite III hydroelectric project at the end of May.

The coalition is actually under the control of the Native Forest Network, an eco-terrorist organization which in turn is run by Earth First! Most of its members, besides being members of Earth First!, are also members of Greenpeace.

Sainte-Marguerite III is the first of three large hydroelectric dams to be built by the government of Quebec and Hydro-Quebec. Most of the electricity will be exported to the power-starved states of the U.S. Northeast. A large portion of the project will be built in Innu territory. The eco-terrorists are using a faction of the Innu tribe that opposes these projects, although many leaders of the tribe support the project and are looking forward to the economic boom it will create for their tribe.

Nobel Prize-winning terrorist-supporter Rigoberta Menchú came out in support of the Coalition for Nitassinan, in an open letter dated May 30, published by the Native Forest Network. In her letter, she supports the blockade of the dam, and proclaims, "A wound in the territory of Nitassinan is a wound in the lungs of our Mother Earth."