

International Intelligence

London Times taking aim at Cambodia

In its April 28 issue, under the headline "Opposition Chief Says Cambodia Faces Civil War," London *Times* author David Watts opens up column inches to Cambodia's former finance minister, Sam Rainsy, a darling of the same British nobility who run Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi, and who is a principal beneficiary of the International Republican Institute's largesse, through IRI's Phnom Penh office. In an interview with Watts, Rainsy, an unabashed advocate of the IRI's globalization and privatization insanity, issued a call for an international campaign to link foreign aid credits for Cambodia to that devastated nation's progress toward "democracy" and "good governance."

In the interview Rainsy charged that co-Prime Minister Hun Sen is out "to seize absolute power by any means," and return the brutalized country to Communist control. As proof, Rainsy points to a grenade attack on March 30 on a KNP rally, which killed 16 and injured 100, including Rainsy and IRI cohort Rod Abney. Rainsy complained there are no strings attached to the \$500 million in foreign aid (which the former finance minister overstates by \$200 million) that Cambodia receives per year, "the largest per capita international assistance in the world," because the West has a "bad conscience on Cambodia."

Vatican reaffirms good Church-Islam relations

Cardinal Achille Silvestrini, who heads the Vatican Congregation for the Oriental Churches, told Milan's *Corriere della Sera* on April 19 that "relations between the Catholic Church and Islam are more than good. In fact, few popes had such cordial relations." The cardinal rejected forcefully any attempt to impose a clash of civilizations-style confrontation between Muslims and Christians. His interview appeared in the midst of a furious campaign, that included "revelations" by the Italian intelligence ser-

vice, Sismi, which alleges that there is a "Muslim fundamentalist plan" to assassinate the pope, a campaign which gained prominence when the Holy Father visited Sarajevo last month, and which continues with his scheduled visit to Beirut, Lebanon this month.

Silvestrini told the daily: Relations with Islam are "more than good. . . . Furthermore there is the personal mark of the pope: There has been a crescendoing since that first extraordinary meeting in 1985 with the young Muslims of Casablanca. Every time the pope visits an Islamic country, he stresses the common values: the faith in the one merciful God, prayer, the giving of alms-giving, fasting, the love for fellow human beings, and peace." He added, "The fundamentalist is a believer that wants his religious faith to be applied integrally. It cannot be considered in itself as terrorist."

Interestingly, the same issue of *Corriere* carried an interview with the U.S. Republican Party's provocateur "terrorism expert" Yosef Bodanski on the fabricated "fundamentalist offensive and its alliance with the mafia."

Egypt, Iran make headway in cementing relations

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati met with Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak in Cairo on May 5, the highest level such meeting in 19 years, since before Iran's Islamic Revolution and Egypt's signing of the peace accord with Israel. Velayati was carrying a letter of invitation for Mubarak from Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani to attend the summit meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, in Teheran in December. Velayati was also to meet his counterpart Amre Mousa to discuss bilateral relations and the situation in the Middle East. This new move will also have a great impact on Egyptian-Sudanese relations. Egypt has made many attacks against Sudan's cooperation with Iran in the area of "regional terrorism."

For the last two decades, Iran has been in thrall to its unproductive relationship with Hafez al-Assad's Syria, which was the only

Arab country to "mediate" between Iran and the Arab world. Iran has now constructed firm diplomatic relations with Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, and is building a process of reconciliation with Iraq to settle the accounts of the 1980-88 war. Moreover, Saudi Arabia and Egypt are considered the United States' closest allies in the Arab world.

Israeli secret service behind suicide bombings

The Palestinian Information Ministry organized a press conference on May 4, where a member of the terrorist organization Islamic Jihad publicly admitted that he had been organized by officers from the Israeli security forces, Shabak, since 1988, and that he had received material and instructions from them to organize suicide bombings against Israelis.

Ibrahim Ismael Taha Al-Halabi admitted that he organized the two suicide bombings which took place at the Israeli settlements Kafar Darum and Netzarim in March. Al-Halabi told the press that he was called by his Israeli contact to come to Erez Crossing—the checkpoint between Gaza and Israel—where he was given Palestinian police uniforms and the explosives with instructions on when and where the bombing should take place. He added that he organized the two suicide bombers and sent them to the target site, and that both bombs, destined to explode against a schoolbus carrying Israeli children, detonated prematurely, killing only the bombers. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Israeli secret services immediately blamed the Palestinian Authority, and its President, Yasser Arafat, personally, of encouraging terrorism, and "giving the green light" to Palestinian terrorists to kill Israeli civilians.

Terror bombings wrack Russia's North Caucasus

A wave of terror bombings in Russia's North Caucasus region during the last week of April marks a concerted attempt to destabi-

lize a crucial section along the Eurasian Land-Bridge. On April 28, a bomb exploded in the railway station at the resort town of Pyatigorsk, killing two people and wounding at least 20. On April 23, a bomb exploded at the railway station of Armavir, killing two and wounding at least two dozen more. As a result, the tension between Russia and the Chechnya region of the North Caucasus has reached its highest point since the war began raging there. The terror wave has all but killed any hope for restarting long-stalled negotiations that could lead to a real peace agreement, and otherwise wrecks the climate for any serious start of infrastructure projects in the region, including pipelines.

All signs point to a British operation using controlled or manipulable networks among the Chechens and in Moscow. One week before the bombings, Chechen extremist-terrorist Salman Raduyev proclaimed the start of these terror bombings against Russia on Russian territory, and specifying that railway stations would be the targets. Raduyev had initially taken credit for the Armavir bombing, but then retracted it, after the explosion at Pyatigorsk.

African 'First Ladies' hold meeting in Nigeria

The wives of 18 of Africa's national leaders opened talks in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria, on May 5. The conference, dubbed "the first summit of African First Ladies on peace," was reportedly the brainchild of Nigerian President Gen. Sani Abacha's wife, Maryam. General Abacha addressed the meeting, saying that the participants should focus on "conflict prevention and improving the deplorable economic conditions of our people, because economic deprivation is one of the causes of conflicts in our continent." Both General and Mrs. Abacha insisted in their addresses that Africa must take its destiny into its hands. "Our intention is not to duplicate the commendable efforts of African leaders in brokering peace," said Mrs. Abacha, adding that the conference would work out practi-

cal ways of mending fences among warring African nations.

Among the First Ladies attending were those of Namibia, Angola, Niger, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Gabon, Burundi, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Guinea, Chad, and Zambia. Other First Ladies attending are from Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Tanzania, plus the interim head of state of war-ravaged Liberia, Ruth Perry. Organization of African Unity Secretary General Salim Ahmed Salim also attended the conference.

Hongkong official happy over return to China

Challenging the Samuel Huntington "Clash of Civilizations" thesis by name, Hongkong Solicitor General Daniel Fung said at a Washington, D.C. press conference on May 1 that he would like to posit a contrary thesis—"cross-cultural cooperation." Fung said that he would look at the reversion of Hongkong to China from the standpoint of what he calls the "sherpa paradigm"—that post-reversion Hongkong can help guide China to surmount the difficulties of entering the 21st century.

Hongkong will maintain a fully convertible currency, he said, and it will have fiscal and judicial autonomy. He pointed out that it does not now have full judicial autonomy, since the court of final authority is the Royal Privy Council. Fung, who has been Solicitor General since 1984, said that the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration on Hongkong is a "spelling out" of the "one country, two systems" policy of Beijing, and that this could eventually become a model for Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang.

Unlike Martin Lee, the outgoing head of the Hongkong legislature, who came to Washington two weeks earlier to warn of impending doom and a human rights catastrophe, Fung was quite optimistic. He did offer criticism of China's creation of the provincial legislature, which he described as a "retrograde" move, but he said that this is only an interim measure until elections are held within 12 months. "Two steps forward, one step backward," he commented.

QIAN QICHEN, China's foreign minister, told visiting Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz on May 5 that China wants to see an end to the UN sanctions against the latter country as soon as possible. Qian said he hoped the UN would "objectively and justly appraise Iraq's efforts to carry out relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council in order to ease and gradually lift the sanctions on Iraq," according to Xinhua news agency.

PALESTINIAN President Yasser Arafat accepted an invitation to meet with Israeli President Ezer Weizman on May 6, in an effort to restore some hope for the peace process. On May 5, Arafat met with U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross, who returned to the region with some new proposals from President Clinton.

SINN FEIN President Gerry Adams won back his West Belfast seat in the British House of Commons in the May 1 elections. His opponent was Joe Hendron of the Social Democratic and Labor Party, a frequent critic of SDLP leader John Hume's contacts with Adams and Sinn Fein.

PAKISTAN experienced renewed sectarian violence between Shia and Sunni Muslims on April 18, when two unknown gunmen shot dead an 80-year-old Shia leader in Lahore. Over recent months, Sunni terrorists have led a sectarian terrorist war against the Shiite minority in Pakistan, which has triggered repeated protests from (Shiite) Iran. The same day, a leader of the main Sunni group orchestrating the violence was killed, in the same manner, in Lahore. The group, Sipah-e-Sahabah, is largely composed of former Afghan mujahideen.

JACQUES DELORS, a leader in the French Socialist Party and former, longtime European Commission president, was assaulted by a man claiming to be against Maastricht, as Delors was about to make a campaign speech in Grenoble, on behalf of the left alliance headed by Socialist Party leader Lionel Jospin.