

International Intelligence

Venetian separatists raise 'Serenissima' flag

Armed separatists seized the bell tower in Venice's St. Mark's Square on May 8, hoisting the banner of the longtime world center of oligarchism: the Most Serene Republic of Venice. The commando hijacked a boat and used it to land a minibus and war-surplus armored car in the square in front of St. Mark's Cathedral. The flag they raised, of the Serenissima Repubblica Veneta, bears the historical name of the Venetian Republic, which dissolved 200 years ago, in 1797. The official commemoration of the bicentennial took place on May 12.

The commando was arrested by the police. The same group has twice recently broadcast interruptions of national TV programming to proclaim Venice's "independence from the centralist state," mimicking tactics used in 1972, in the beginning of the Red Brigades terrorist assault. Northern League separatist boss Umberto Bossi has distanced himself from the actions of his Venetian confreres, characterizing the St. Mark's action as a provocation against the League.

Papua New Guinea cracks down on NGOs

Papua New Guinea (P.N.G.) police forces carried out pre-dawn raids on May 5, on the offices of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that participated in the March rallies protesting the government's hiring of a mercenary outfit tied to Executive Outcomes to quell separatist unrest on the island of Bougainville. The protests culminated in the resignation of Prime Minister Sir Julius Chan, who had staunchly opposed the World Bank austerity conditionalities.

What was described as "a potentially explosive situation" was averted when the police were able to quash rumors among soldiers, that sacked Army Commander Brigadier General Singirok was going to be arrested. Singirok had taken a leading role in the March protests, and may face charges of treason.

The NGOs raided were Melanesian Solidarity (Melsol), Individual and Community Rights Advocacy Forum (ICRAF), P.N.G. Trust, and P.N.G. Watch. The secretary of Melsol, Jonathon O'ata, was arrested and charged with three counts of unlawful assembly, for allegedly organizing and leading the March protests. The NGOs have protested the police action bitterly.

This action comes at the same time as an official inquiry is being held into the decision by the P.N.G. government to hire Sandlines, a subsidiary of Executive Outcomes, to achieve a military solution on the civil-war-torn island province of Bougainville. The inquiry has revealed that General Singirok was in fact party to the original decision to hire Sandlines. The Sandlines affair began a period of intense destabilization for P.N.G., following repeated resistance by Prime Minister Chan to the International Monetary Fund.

Sinn Fein's Adams agrees to meet with PM Blair

Gerry Adams, the leader of Ireland's Sinn Fein party, said on May 17 that he would accept the offer made by new British Prime Minister Tony Blair to meet, without demanding as a precondition a renewed ceasefire by the Irish Republican Army. Under the Major government, such a condition had been the *sine qua non* for allowing Sinn Fein to participate in the peace talks.

Blair was, however, clear that he was not proposing British withdrawal. "I believe in the United Kingdom, I value the Union," he said at the Royal Ulster Agricultural show. He also said, "those that wish to see a united Ireland without coercion can argue for it, not least in the talks. If they succeeded, we would respect that. But none of us in this hall, not even the youngest, is likely to see Northern Ireland as anything but a part of the United Kingdom," adding, "a political settlement is not a slippery slope to a united Ireland."

An editorial in the London *Guardian* on May 18, hastened to point out that Blair has actually proclaimed "continuity, that what had been bravely begun under John Major

in 1993 would continue under his Labour successor." The *Times* reported that Blair had, in fact, cleared his offer with Major before issuing it, which "should provide a nervous Unionist majority with the reassurance it seeks."

Rafsanjani will remain active after elections

Iran's President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani "will remain the second man in Iran" after the Presidential elections select his replacement on May 23, according to remarks by his adviser to the Arabic daily *Al Hayat* on May 17. Gholam Hussein Kurbashi, the President's adviser, explained that Rafsanjani is the executive director of the newly formed Assembly for Determining the Expediency of the System (ADES), "and nobody else can carry out the functions in the executive authority. But, from the standpoint of popular support, Rafsanjani will remain the second man, even if he had not become the chairman" of ADES. In April, Rafsanjani was chosen by Iranian religious leader Ali Khamenei to head the ADES, which will act as the main policymaking institution in Iran.

Of the Presidential candidates, Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri was leading in the polls, followed by Mohammed Khatemi, who is running on the slate of Cadres for Reconstruction, Rafsanjani's traditional faction. Kurbashi told *Al Hayat* that he believes "100% that Khatemi will win," and said that Rafsanjani's followers "endorsed Khatemi because they believe that he is the best candidate to continue the reconstruction of the country and the economic development plans."

UN embargo killed 800,000 Iraqi children

"More than 800,000 Iraqi children have died since Desert Storm," as a result of the UN embargo, the chairman of Iraqi Child Care Agency, Sultan Al-Shawi, told a press conference in Baghdad on May 16. Al-Shawi explained that these children died because

LEO KREUZ, the spokesman for Germany's Development Ministry, ranted that Germany cannot be expected to help relieve the famine crushing North Korea, because "our resources are used up," in a May 13 radio interview. He complained that the famine was the fault of "these stone-age communists."

IRISH PRIME MINISTER John Bruton told Parliament on May 15, that he intends to go to Irish President Mary Robinson to request permission to dissolve the Parliament, and to hold elections on June 6. Parliament would reconvene on June 26.

UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy called for the UN to establish an international criminal court with a permanent prosecutor's office on May 9. She cited, as reasons for her call, recent examples of human rights violations against children in Algeria, Zaire, Burundi, and Rwanda. "Whole societies lose their bearings when children are sacrificed on the altar of adult hatred," she said.

CHINA'S President Jiang Zemin told CNN on May 9: "Concerning music . . . I often listen to Mozart, to Beethoven, and to Schubert. I also regard it as very good rest." He also recommended reading Shakespeare, Goethe, and Balzac. "I am always thinking," he said, "how to enable part of the people, part of the regions, to get rich first. And then to finally achieve the objective of common prosperity. This is always the most important task for us."

BRITAIN'S new Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, has signaled the Labour government's intent to back the destabilization of Indonesia, by pushing "human rights" in East Timor. Cook, in his first news conference, said Britain would work with Portugal to find a "satisfactory, peaceful and democratic outcome to the situation in East Timor." He refused to comment on Indonesia. Portugal abandoned its East Timor colony in 1974, leaving Indonesia to step in to stop a civil war bloodletting.

the seven-year-long embargo denied medicines and equipment to Iraq. "The embargo has caused the death of 839,400 Iraqi children between August 1990 and April 1997," he said.

According to the Iraqi Health Ministry, the death rate among children has risen to 140,000 annually since the imposition of the sanctions, from 30,000 before. Some 300,000 of these were children under the age of five. Medicine and medical equipment shipments imported in exchange for Iraqi oil exports, according to the "oil for food" resolution, only began arriving in Iraq in mid-May, the first since the sanctions were imposed in August 1990.

According to UN Resolution 986, Iraq is allowed to sell \$1.3 billion worth of oil every six months. Only \$210 million of that can be allocated for medical purchases, and the rest goes to wealthy Kuwaiti sheikhs as war reparations, and into the coffers of the United Nations.

Germans blast 'clash of civilizations' lie

Former German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher strongly rebutted Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" lie that the West and, variously China or Islam, are on collision courses, in a commentary for *Tagespiegel* on May 9. Germany and Europe, he said, should spurn Huntington's confrontationism, and cooperate with China, for the sake of peace and stability in the next century.

Genscher wrote: "More and more, China is taking its position in world political and economic affairs. Nobody can prevent that from happening, and nobody should try to prevent that. Whoever would deny China an equal status in a cooperative world order today, will pay a high price for that tomorrow." Genscher also called cooperation with China the missing link in a future peaceful world order, from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

Similarly, speakers at a symposium held by Germany's Society for Foreign Policy Research, held on May 14 at Bonn's America House, all denounced the "clash

of civilizations." A Professor Kindemann zeroed in the British role, saying that, far from the West's facing a "yellow peril," the Chinese had rebelled against a "white peril," i.e., British-imported opium. He pointed to the Christian education and strong American connection of Sun Yat-sen as the paradigm for modern China. Another speaker, Udo Steinbach, pointed to the fact that thousands of Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims stood side by side in Beirut to welcome the Pope, as proof that the "clash of civilizations" is a lie, and gave strong backing to Germany's "critical dialogue with Iran."

Israeli film exposes Nazi euthanasia machine

Israeli film director Nitzan Aviram has made a film directly tying Hitler's program for "physician-assisted suicide" to the mass murders in the concentration camps. The film, "Healing by Killing," was made in collaboration with Israeli Cable TV and the Israel Film Board. Aviram told the *Jerusalem Post* that, while the story of the Holocaust is "well-known," the history of the euthanasia program (implemented in October 1939 under Hitler's direct authorization, in an order he backdated in his own hand to Sept. 1, the first day of World War II) is "a story not as often told."

Aviram documents that 100-200,000 people are estimated to have been killed in the various euthanasia programs. Aviram begins his narrative describing the sterilization of "slow learners," which was followed by Hitler's 1939 order to kill patients diagnosed as "incurable," leading "lives not worthy to be lived." Those killed included the physically handicapped, the "mentally deficient," and those who had been diagnosed as terminally ill, to provide them a "merciful death." The film follows the career of Dr. Irmfried Eberl, a mediocre medical student who received a position at the euthanasia center at No. 4 Tiergartenstrasse in Berlin. Eberl easily crossed the line from healer to killer, earning a promotion after 1941 to be commander of the death camp Treblinka.