

International Intelligence

Scottish parliament goes after feudal land rights

Scotland's new parliament is saddled with the task of challenging over a century of feudal land ownership, according to a report in the Jan. 13 London *Financial Times*. Scotland's Parliament, which came into being this year, is planning land reform that includes correcting "Highland clearances of the 19th century, during which hundreds of thousands of crofters [tenant farmers] were evicted from large estates," reports the *Times*. The huge estates that were thus created still exist, and often encompass dozens of villages, which have no say when the estates are sold or change hands through inheritance. "For a First World country, the concentration of land ownership in Scotland is shocking. About 600 individuals—usually aristocrats or reclusive foreigners, or fat cats from the City—own 50% of the land," admits the mouthpiece of the City of London.

Scottish Secretary Donald Dewar has proposed that local communities should have "first refusal" on buying big estates when they come up for sale, at a price set by a government-appointed value, rather than by the market. Money from the National Lottery would be available to help. However modest, this land reform raised a cry from landowners who claim that it would bankrupt agriculture—meaning their right to hunt deer and grouse on vast estates.

Next door in England, 80% of the land is still owned by the aristocracy, a very large part of it by the Crown.

Senior MP blasts 'New Labour' as 'old Tory'

Senior Labour Party Member of Parliament Derek Foster charged that British Prime Minister Tony Blair is "prostituting" the party's traditional trade union-based philosophy with his "Third Way" ideology, in an interview with the Jan. 17 issue of Newcastle's *Sunday Sun*. Foster, who represents the Bishop Auckland district in England's impoverished Northeast, has been a Labour

Party activist for four decades (almost longer than Blair has been alive), including Chief Whip from 1985-95 and parliamentary private secretary to Labour MP Neil Kinnock. He currently heads the Parliamentary Working Group on Manufacturing Industry.

A week earlier Blair had given a speech hailing New Labour as the party of the expanding middle classes. Foster responded that Blair's statement was a "prostitution of the vision which created Labour out of the trade union movement." He charged that "this New Labour government is not fit to polish the boots of the postwar Labour government" headed by Clement Attlee. "New Labour are neither new nor Labour in my book. They look like old Tory."

"Unemployment and poverty" are the main issues now facing Britain, Foster asserted, adding that, under Blair, Labour "has lost its grasp of the common thread. . . . I don't think there is an economist in the Cabinet. . . . Tony Blair wants a coalition with the Liberal Democrats, he wants to forget us. . . . Labour doesn't seem to take manufacturing industry seriously. Monetary policy is designed for the prosperous financial services businesses in the south and southeast."

The *Sunday Sun* covers Foster's comments as its lead story, under the banner headline: "Blair Doesn't Even Like Labour."

Raúl Salinas convicted in Ruiz Massieu murder

On Jan. 21, a Mexican judge found Raúl Salinas de Gortari, the older brother of former President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, guilty of helping to order and plan the 1994 murder of José Francisco Ruiz Massieu, the Secretary General of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Salinas received a 50-year prison sentence. He was also found guilty of unrelated charges of using false documents and making false declarations. The *Wall Street Journal* quoted an unnamed senior law enforcement official: "This is the most wonderful thing. It means there is one less rat on the street."

"It couldn't have been any worse," was

the comment of Salinas family lawyer Juan Velásquez.

But, it can get much worse, especially for the Salinas family, Citibank, and President Salinas's political friends, former U.S. President George Bush and his sons, Texas Gov. George Bush and Florida Gov. Jeb Bush. Mexican authorities are still pursuing drug-trafficking charges against Raúl Salinas, following up on the Swiss government's official finding in October 1998, that the money he stashed in Switzerland, was paid to him by top leaders of Colombia's Cali and other drug cartels. Salinas was paid millions, the Swiss found, to secure protection for the transformation of Mexico into a major cocaine transshipment route, at a time when President Carlos Salinas and President George Bush were laying the groundwork for the North American Free Trade Agreement, which vastly facilitated drug smuggling.

Romania's fascists manipulate miners

Romania's fascist parties are manipulating the legitimate rage of the nation's coal miners and other unionists, for the purpose of overthrowing the government of Prime Minister Radu Vasilyev and President Emil Constantinescu. In the past two years, because of International Monetary Fund (IMF) "reforms," 100,000 miners have lost their jobs, and another 100,000 are now slated for lay-off. In response, miners were sucked into making a protest march on Bucharest by trade union head Miron Cozma, who happens to be an executive member of the fascist Greater Romania Party (PRM). The protest was timed to coincide with the opening of talks between the government and the IMF, making it more difficult for the Bucharest government to offer compromises to the unionists.

On Jan. 21, the protesting coal miners were stopped about 100 miles from the capital by a large contingent of special police. Cozma, together with PRM head Vadim Tudor, have called for a general strike and the overthrow of the government in retaliation. Other parties backing the PRM action are

HELGA ZEPP-LAROCHE aired a short TV ad in the German state of Hessen, where her party, the Civil Rights Movement Solidarity, is running in the Feb. 7 state elections. She detailed the danger of the coup d'état in the United States, urging, "President Clinton must, together with China, Russia, Germany, and other nations, initiate a New Bretton Woods System. The way out of the world economic crisis must lie in the construction of the Eurasian Land-Bridge. These questions determine our life and our future."

THE PHILIPPINES Supreme Court ruled on Jan. 20 that convicted child rapist Leo Echegaray should be put to death "without further delay," clearing the way for the first judicial execution in 23 years. Fourteen more people are scheduled to be executed.

THE SUDAN government and Sudanese People's Liberation Army agreed to extend their cease-fire over certain areas of southern Sudan, particularly the famine-stricken Bahr el-Ghazal region, in mid-January. The extension, worked out through a special envoy for UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, is the third three-month cease-fire in the area, and military operations are dormant for now.

THE GERMAN "Gauck" agency, responsible for investigating the crimes of the East German secret police (Stasi) and foreign intelligence (HVA), has deciphered the latter's decoding manual, which now opens the door to discovering where the HVA planted its operatives in both foreign government agencies and other organizations.

CAMBODIAN Premier Hun Sen has said that he may consult South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu on how to put on trial leaders of the Khmer Rouge. Hun Sen gave firm backing to a trial, but demanded that justice also be applied to the Khmer Rouge's global supporters. "We should find justice for those who died from 1970-75, from 1975-79, and from 1979-98," he said.

the ultra-chauvinist, anti-Hungarian National Unity Party of Romania (PUNR) of Gheorghe Funar, and the former Communists, the PDSR, of Ion Iliescu, which have become National Bolsheviks in outlook.

Romanian living standards are so horrendous that the country is a powder keg. Even official statistics show 68% of the population below the poverty line. Monthly pensioners get roughly \$10-12, teachers earn \$50, while the "average wage" (which includes the nouveaux riches) is a pathetic \$100.

Iran, Russia discussing strategic partnership

Manfred Quiring, writing from Moscow for Germany's *Die Welt* on Jan. 16, reports on plans for a strategic partnership between Moscow and Tehran. Quiring's main source is his discussions with Rajab Safarov, who is the Vice President of the Coordinating Center for the Russian-Iranian Program, and an adviser to Russia's State Duma (lower house of Parliament) on security questions. Safarov commented on the U.S. decision on Jan. 12 to sanction three Russian scientific institutions for, as U.S. National Security Adviser Sandy Berger put it, allegedly supplying "sensitive missile or nuclear assistance to Iran." According to Safarov, the United States decided to sanction the institutions precisely to prevent a Russia-Iran strategic partnership, and he denied that the institutions had any direct contact with Tehran, or that they had anything to do with missile and nuclear development.

Safarov pointed to Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov's recent proposal for a strategic triangle among China, Russia, and India. He said that the Chinese had reacted coolly to the idea, but that Iran could take part. "The strategic partnership among Russia, India, and Iran is a realistic thing," he said.

Safarov said that the Russians had earlier hesitated to give this idea an official form, out of deference to the West, but that now "the idea is being discussed on a very serious level." He said that he thought the eventual loss of the \$300 million Russian-American missile trade would be compensated for by

a strategic partnership with Iran, but noted that Russia might risk losing its important trade with the European Union. Among the projects Safarov says are being discussed are the establishment of a legal status for the Caspian Sea (on which topic the two nations essentially agree), a pipeline from the Caspian Sea via Iran (and not Turkey), as well as a Russian air defense system from the Persian Gulf to Central Asia, a broader defense system including "an electronic early warning system, and modern coast guard ships."

African wars displace millions in two months

Under a shroud of international silence, millions of Africans have been displaced by wars in the last two months:

- **Angola:** As of the beginning of January, the UN suspended aid flights to Angola, where presently 800,000 people have been displaced because of the renewed war by the British-backed Jonas Savimbi against the Angolan government. Starvation is now a possibility for thousands of refugees in Huambo and Kuito. Food stocks have completely run out in the provinces of Bie, Huambo, and Malanje, and the war has blocked all access to the people there. Savimbi's UNITA is laying siege to the cities of Malanje, Huambo, with 300,000 people; and Kuito, with more than 300,000 displaced residents.

- **Congo:** Congolese refugees are fleeing into the Central African Republic and Uganda. In the latter country, they were forcibly returned to Congo, in violation of international law.

- **Somalia:** More than 5,000 Somalis, displaced by fighting between forces allied to Aideed and the Rahaweyn Resistance Army in the Bay and Baykool regions, have fled to Kenya, where they are now in dire need of food. The refugees started flooding into Kenya in early December.

- **Sierra Leone:** Thousands of people have been newly displaced in Sierra Leone, where the capital city Freetown was swollen with hundreds of thousands of displaced who were fleeing the December blitzkrieg of the British-backed Revolutionary United Front.