

International Intelligence

China-Africa Cooperation Forum Opens in Beijing

The China-Africa Cooperation Forum opened in Beijing on Oct. 10-12, with attendance by cabinet ministers from more than 40 African nations. The Forum is the first such gathering held in China. In addition, the Presidents of Togo, Algeria, Tanzania, and Zambia were scheduled to attend.

The Secretary General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), Salim Ahmed Salim, in an interview with China's Xinhua news agency in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on Oct. 7, called the Forum "a very constructive and timely initiative." African countries have many problems of stability and security, he said, but "first and foremost, obviously, we have to fight for economic and social development to end poverty in the continent, because poverty is the genesis of most disasters in our continent."

The Forum will give China the opportunity to gain a better comprehension of the reality in Africa and vice versa. It will discuss joint work in international settings and worldwide negotiations to meet the challenge of globalization, Salim said. "Africa continues to be very much dependent on production of primary commodities and raw materials, we do not even have a say in most of the prices. Neither do we control the prices of what we import." Economic unity is important to deal effectively with these problems, Salim said.

The conflicts in Africa, he continued, "take away our resources, they bleed our people, they deprive our people of the food potential that our countries have for economic and social development."

Pope Celebrates Jubilee With 2,000 Bishops

Some 2,000 Roman Catholic bishops gathered in Rome over Oct. 6-8 to celebrate the Jubilee year with Pope John Paul II, the largest assembly of bishops since Vatican II. The celebrations, entitled "The Bishop: The Servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the Hope of the World," took place in

the presence a statue of Our Lady of Fatima.

In his homily on Oct. 8, Pope John Paul II said, "The bishops as successors of the Apostles . . . must fulfill their apostolic duty as witnesses of Christ before all men." He pointed to the enormous task and responsibility that weighs on the bishops in our contemporary world, at whose center is the task to announce the "Word Incarnate," with the kind of spirit and emotional devotion St. Paul expressed.

There have been "many bishops," he said, who, over the last two millennia, have borne witness through their martyrdom and personal sacrifice, to what it means to live in the image of Christ, and to follow the path laid by the Apostles. Particularly, the 20th Century has been rich in such witnesses, the names of whose martyrs he read out.

In their final prayer, which the Pope and all 2,000 bishops addressed to Our Lady of Fatima, he said: "We men and women are living in an extraordinary time, which is promising as well as difficult. Mankind has today means of power that it never had before. It is capable of turning the world into a flourishing garden, or destroying it completely." The Pope drew a distinction between those who use science for the well-being of all, in the context of a "moral law," and those who, out of short-sighted pride, make use of a science which denies the dignity and life of man.

The Pope expressed his hope that the hearts of men would be filled with Love and Justice, and that peoples as well as nations would reinforce their mutual understanding as well as the spirit of peace.

Malaysia Shutting Down Video Arcades Nationwide

Malaysia's government has given video arcade managers two months to shut their facilities down, because they represent a "dangerous and large social problem." The move, which was supported by a broad spectrum of political groups and organizations, was announced on Oct. 5, by Deputy Prime Minister Abdallah Ahmad Badawi. Badawi

compared the social problems caused by these activities to opium addiction, saying that many youth had been turned into video-game addicts.

Kuala Lumpur had been under pressure from parents to ban the arcades, where illegal gambling and other illicit activities flourish, in full view of children. N. Siva Subramaniam, the secretary of the National Union of Teaching Professions, said, "This is the happiest news to a lot of parents. It will reduce social problems and truancy. It is the right decision and shows the government's commitment in dealing with social ills among youths." The Chief Minister of the state of Kelantan said, "A total ban is long overdue. PAS [his political party] has imposed a ban in Kelantan for a long time, due to the social problems they cause. Those addicted to the video games are not only involved in gang fights, but steal, including from their own parents, to get money to patronize the arcades."

Representatives of the "industry" protested, however, that they run law-abiding "family-based entertainment centers."

Taliban Shoot Russian Soldier on Tajik Border

A Russian soldier was killed and five Tajik soldiers were wounded in crossfire on the volatile Tajik-Afghan frontier, a Tajik Interior Ministry official said on Oct. 9. The spokesman told Reuters that the ministry had no further details about the incident, which occurred the night of Oct. 7 at the Kalay-Kumb border post, 180 kilometers east of the Tajikistan capital, Dushanbe. Tajikistan's frontier with Afghanistan is patrolled by over 10,000 Russian guards, in a bid to stop smugglers who transship narcotics through Central Asia and Russia into Europe, according to a report in the *Tehran Times* on Oct. 10.

Recent fierce fighting in northern Afghanistan has alarmed the Tajik government, which fears an influx of refugees. Another concern of Tajikistan and other Central Asian countries is the influx of militant Islamists from Taliban-controlled areas.

The killing could also be a provocation

JACQUES CHEMINADE, Lyndon LaRouche's best-known associate in France, announced on Sept. 30 that he is beginning his campaign for President in 2002 now. Cheminade told the annual conference of the Solidarity and Progress group, on whose slate he ran in 1995, that, unlike the "commando" action five years ago, which caught France's Anglophiles off-guard, his lengthy campaign this time will aim at building a mass presence under the banner, "Putting an End to Injustice." To celebrate his campaign, Cheminade has issued his new book, *Roosevelt, de Gaulle, Monnet: Taking Up Their Fight*.

THE SWISS government has proposed that parliament legalize marijuana and hashish under laws that regulate tobacco. Switzerland already provides heroin to registered addicts.

TURKISH National Defense Minister Sabahattin Cakmakoglu said on Oct. 3 that Turkish-Greek rapprochement, begun after earthquake disasters in both countries, forms a basis to solve problems. Cakmakoglu arrived in Athens to attend the opening of the "Defense 2000" fair, as the official guest of Greek Defense Minister Akis Tzohatsopoulos.

NATO officially sponsored a conference in Tbilisi, Georgia on Sept. 26-28, entitled "Caucasus Today: Prospects for Regional Cooperation and Partnership with NATO." The conference was attended by delegations from the Armenian, Azerbaijan, and Georgian Foreign Ministries, among others. NATO hopes to expand into the region, and possibly establish military bases there.

THE ROMAN Historical Society is training Baby-Boomers how to re-enact gladiatorial fights. "You are slaves, and that is how I will treat you," trainer Giuseppe Coluzzi tells his students, who pay \$100 a month for the privilege. They learn "how to choreograph combat in order to savor simulated savagery and . . . to perform gladiatorial combat the way it was done in the Colosseum."

to drag Russia into a new Afghanistan quagmire, thus leading to a regionalization of the war. Opponents of the Taliban have always accused Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence officers of running the military operations in Afghanistan.

Gore Allies Organize Semi-Coup in Italy

Italian Socialist Prime Minister Giuliano Amato publicly announced late last month that he would not seek reelection in Spring 2001 elections, and that he was leaving the way open for Rome Mayor Francesco Rutelli, a co-thinker of the "Third Way" of U.S. Vice President Al Gore, to run.

The question has been raised, whether Gore may have had a hand in Amato's decision to hand the reins over to Rutelli: According to sources, U.S. President Bill Clinton has offered Amato a job next year—Clinton, too, will be out of office—as secretary general of Clinton's "Third Way" Foundation, and Amato has accepted. The offer was made when Amato met with Clinton in Washington on Sept. 20. It is unusual for a Prime Minister to prefer such an offer over his current job, unless he has already decided to stand down. It is possible to interpret this report as pressure from Clinton for Amato cede the premiership to Rutelli: As the Italian daily *La Repubblica* wrote on Sept. 26, "During his U.S. visit, Amato understood the necessity of stepping aside." Amato's announcement was made five days later, in a television interview. Until that moment, Amato had been resisting Rutelli's efforts to succeed him, and the choice between them had remained open.

Rutelli is a Gore clone, and like the Democratic Presidential candidate, is a radical ecologist. Unlike Gore, however, Rutelli is considered by Rome's oligarchical radical-chic salons to be "telegenic," enough so as to successfully compete with conservative opposition leader Silvio Berlusconi, a media magnate and former Prime Minister.

Rutelli has announced that he will copy his election strategy from Gore's "triangulation" method, which relies on public opinion polling to make policy. The press re-

ports that he will even hire Gore campaign strategist Stanley Greenberg. Rutelli has studied both Gore's platform and the 1999 program of Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Rutelli's closest collaborator, Paolo Gentiloni, says that Rutelli will transform the Italian left to become "similar to Blair's New Labour or [Germany's Social Democratic Chancellor Gerhard] Schröder's *Neue Mitte*." Rutelli will base himself on opinion polls, because said Gentiloni, "the only person who didn't use them was Pol Pot," and he will take on Berlusconi "in responding to the demands of freedom," meaning the free market.

Thai Minister Discusses Myanmar's Role in ASEAN

Thailand's Deputy Foreign Minister Sukhumbhand Paribatra skillfully responded to provocative questions regarding Myanmar (formerly Burma) and its relation to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), during his Sept. 25 press conference at Washington's National Press Club. "It is important that the problems of political transition in Myanmar be managed in a way that does not have adverse implications for the rest of the region," he stressed, adding that he has no pat, formulaic answer. "All I know is that if this political transition in Myanmar is not managed well, it will continue to have consequences and implications for the region, especially Thailand.

"One dimension of this problem of domestic political transition is the drug problem. By their own admission, the Burmese leaders say that they cannot exert central government control over certain areas of their own country, and these areas are areas where drugs, where both heroin and methamphetamines, are being produced.

"So until and unless Myanmar has a central government that can exert control over these areas and reduce or eliminate the production of drugs in these areas, domestic problems in Myanmar will continue to have consequences and implications for the rest of the region, especially where Thailand is concerned."