

International Intelligence

Main British, U.S. Churches Oppose War

The heads of more than 60 Christian organizations of the United States and Britain issued a statement on Oct. 11, saying that war with Iraq is unjustified on both moral and practical grounds. "We do not believe," they said, "that pre-emptive war with Iraq is a last resort; could effectively guard against massive civilian casualties; would be waged with adequate international authority; and could create a result proportionate to the cost."

The statement came after some 450 religious leaders fanned out across Capitol Hill, to urge Congress to vote against the Iraq war resolution. The statement was signed by the heads of Habitat for Humanity and Bread for the World, as well as two Catholic bishops, and deans of several schools of theology. The British signers included 17 bishops of the Church of England, the president of the Baptist Union and the head of the Scottish Episcopal Church.

Some of the religious leaders also criticized the Bush Administration's rush to war and the cowardice of the Democrats who didn't resist it. "We are convinced that the current move towards war is generated by fear," said Sister Carole Shinnick, executive director of the Catholic Leadership Conference of Women Religious, "fear that has been carefully nurtured by the present administration. Fear of another Sept. 11. Fear of not being re-elected."

Philippines, U.S. Set Up War Games

Six hundred U.S. Marines from Okinawa, Japan, arrived at the former U.S. Subic Bay naval base in the Philippines on Oct. 13, en route to the former Clark Air Base in Pangasinan, North Luzon, reported the Oct. 14 *Philippines Inquirer*. They will join 200 U.S. troops who arrived earlier, for "Talon Vision 02" training exercises with Filipino soldiers from Oct. 14-28. The exercise in

northern Luzon is designed to improve special skills and to exchange techniques in staff planning, aviation, light armor operation, jungle survival and artillery firing, according to U.S. Marine officials.

Those Marine officials said Talon Vision was not directly connected to previous exercises. "It is being conducted as a result of an invitation extended by the Philippine government in early 2001," they said.

The Marines arrived a day after the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group killed 11 Filipino soldiers and wounded 26 others on Jolo Island, in the heaviest fighting in recent months in Mindanao. In early October, a U.S. soldier and two Filipino civilians were killed, and more than 20 injured, in a bomb attack in Zamboanga City, also blamed on the Abu Sayyaf. The Communist New People's Army (NPA) has also stepped up actions, attacking police stations in two provinces and stealing dozens of rifles from their armories.

AIDS Has Caused Africa's Famine

Steven Lewis, UN special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, told the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington on Oct. 4 that he and other experts were shocked by the relationship emerging between AIDS and the southern African famine. Lewis described his meeting the week before with James Morris, head of the World Food Program (WFP), who had returned from a fact-finding mission to southern Africa and was "reeling from what he's seen. He had instantly recognized that food was only part of the problem."

Lewis quoted the WFP mission report: "What the mission team found was shocking. There is a dramatic and complex crisis unfolding in southern Africa. Erratic rainfall and drought can be identified as contributing factors to acute vulnerability, but in many cases the causes of the crisis can be linked to other sources . . . Worst of all, southern Africa is being devastated by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. . . . The relationship between the

HIV/AIDS pandemic and the reduced capacity of the people and governments of southern Africa to cope with the current crisis is striking."

Lewis, who consulted with others on the WFP mission, said "I think it is reasonable to argue that AIDS has caused the famine; that what we all feared one day would happen, is happening. So many people, particularly women, have died, or are desperately ill, or whose immune systems are like shrinking parchment, that there simply aren't enough farmers left to plant the seeds, till the soil, harvest the crops, provide the food. We may be witness to one of those appalling, traumatic societal upheavals where the world shifts on its axis. We've been predicting that you can't ravage the 15- to 49-year-old productive age group forever, without reaping the whirlwind. The whirlwind is in southern Africa."

Lewis reiterated how he continues to be "strangled by the double standard between developed and developing countries," and by the monies available for the war on terrorism, "and doubtless to be available for the war on Iraq, but somehow never available for the human imperative." Lewis referenced the "Next Wave" report—just released—that focusses on the national security implications of the spreading epidemic on the people of Nigeria, India, China, and Ethiopia. "I know only that if the Next Wave is to escape the wretched fate of the last wave, then the world and its governments will have to come to their senses."

Mexico Plans for High-Speed Rail Net

A plan may be under way to build a network of high-speed "bullet" trains in Mexico, with the first stage to cover the route between Mexico City and Queretaro, about 150 kilometers northeast of the capital, by 2006. According to an article on Oct. 15 in the Mexico City daily *Reforma*, the plan is, eventually, to connect Mexico City all the way to Monterrey in the north, and to Guadalajara as

well. The project would involve the various intervening state governments, and the European Union has already been approached regarding financing the project, which would be built by the Spanish high-speed railway construction firm CAF.

The train would be modelled on the AVE train in Spain, which travels at speeds of 250 kph, and which CAF helped to build. The director of CAF in Mexico, Maximiliano Zurita Llaca, said that once the feasibility studies are approved and the funds assured, the first phase of the project could be completed in three years. The entire network could be built in three and a half years, "if the funds were unlimited," he added. He also pointed out that such a "bullet train" could compete with air travel, especially in price.

Venezuelans Stage Huge Counter-Marches

Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez pulled out an alleged 1 million of his own supporters to march on Oct. 13 through the capital city of Caracas, in response to the huge Oct. 10 opposition march of an estimated 1-2 million people. Chávez boasted publicly about the size of his march, and forced several news stations to show only scenes of the greatest concentration of his supporters. The battle of numbers between Chavistas and the opposition cannot disguise the fact that there are vast numbers on both sides of the divide, and that the country is severely polarized.

Chávez addressed his supporters, the largest number of whom came in 800 buses from the interior of the country, on his refusal to step down before December 2006, when his term formally ends. He denied that the general strike against him planned for Oct. 21 will be successful, since "we are the workers, and we will not strike! Let them try to bring the country to a standstill!" he dared them. The opposition march had demanded that Chávez resign by the next week, or face a 12-hour national strike. It remains to be seen whether the oil sector will join the Oct.

21 action, as it did in April when Chávez was (temporarily) ousted from office.

In response, reportedly, to pressure from the U.S. State Department, Organization of American States Secretary General Cesar Gaviria spent a week in Caracas, trying to convince Chávez to sign a commitment to negotiate with the opposition. But when Gaviria announced plans to return Oct. 14 to continue his appeal for "dialogue," Chávez advanced his plans for a five-day trip to Europe, and left on the day Gaviria was to have arrived, thereby forcing the OAS head to cancel his trip. Chávez is to visit France, Italy, England and Norway, and return to Caracas on Oct. 19.

China Is Now Korea's Top Export Market

Seoul's Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Energy reported on Oct. 14 that China has been Korea's top export market this year so far. The pattern is emerging throughout Asia, even between China and Japan, as the U.S. market contracts. It is the opposite of what happened in the 1997-99 "Asia crisis" when the Asian economies were split and became more dependent upon the United States.

The Seoul ministry said exports were \$15.750 billion to China and \$7.169 billion to Hong Kong, as of Sept. 20. The United States imported \$22.792 billion worth from Korea, \$82 million less than China and Hong Kong. The U.S. share of Korea's exports fell to 20.2%; the share of China, including Hong Kong, rose to 20.3%.

"The change came about as shipments to China grew by 20.1% during the year, while those to the United States stopped at 2.4%," a ministry official was quoted. "Given the current state, it's very possible that exports to China will only grow."

The Bank of Korea also called exports to China "a blessing" for Korea, considering the losses in the U.S. market. It said that "stagnation" of the U.S. economy had undermined its historical domination of Korea's export markets.

EGYPT'S President Hosni Mubarak delivered an "address to the peoples of the world," at the inauguration ceremonies for the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. Presidents of France, Italy, Croatia, Greece, Romania, Moldaves, the Governor General of Australia, Queen Rania of Jordan; representatives of King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, a representative of U.A.E.'s President, the Kazak President's wife, the Lebanese Prime Minister's wife, and Nobel Prize laureates were among the 800 prominent personalities, of the 3,000 attending the event. Celebrations will run over three days on official, popular, and cultural levels. The library will start its activities on Oct. 20, 2002 by a number of forums and seminars in which outstanding cultural and scientific figures will take part.

UKRAINE'S President, Leonid Kuchma, had a criminal case opened against him by a court in Kiev on Oct. 15, one day after British and U.S. experts began investigating allegations that he had approved the sale of a Kolchuha radar system to Iraq. Opposition lawmakers brought the case. They charge Kuchma with violating 11 articles of the criminal code.

UNEMPLOYMENT in Israel will top 12% by the end of the year, the Israeli Manufacturers Association estimated, putting the number of unemployed at over 310,000. This is the highest in Israel's national history. The Association also foresaw a negative growth rate of -1.9% for 2002, another undesirable historic first for the country.

RUSSIAN arms exports were a record \$4.4 billion in 2001, and also very high in 2002, reported *Russian Entrepreneur* on Oct. 13. Deputy Defense Minister Mikhail Dmitriyev said that China and India were Russia's leading strategic customers, followed by Southeast Asia and South America.