

International Intelligence

Irish republicans meet Blair at 10 Downing St.

Sinn Fein representatives told Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair on Dec. 11 that a united Ireland is the best solution to peace for Northern Ireland, at a meeting at the prime minister's residence at 10 Downing Street. It was the first time since Michael Collins led a delegation to Downing Street in 1922, that Ireland's republicans met in London to negotiate the fate of their country.

Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams also told reporters, "It is 75 years since a previous generation of Irish republicans spoke to a British prime minister in London. The subsequent imposition of partition failed to resolve the causes of conflict, and resulted in almost eight decades of instability, injustice, an absence of democracy, oppression and intermittent conflict." Adams added that his delegation would state unequivocally that it is their position that Britain must give up its constitutional claim to Ireland's six counties in the North.

Palme prosecutor wants to open new trial

Amid a new maelstrom of misinformation coming out about the unsolved assassination of Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme on Feb. 28, 1986, the state prosecutor announced to a Stockholm press conference on Dec. 5, that he has submitted a request to the Supreme Court, to open a new murder trial against Christer Pettersson, on the basis of "new evidence." In 1989, Pettersson was found guilty by the District Court, and, later that year, was acquitted by the Court of Appeal. The Supreme Court will probably rule in a few months.

The prosecutor's "new evidence" aims to prove that Pettersson was at the scene of the murder, when it occurred, but two of the four witnesses are already dead, and the other two are not very credible. (Immediately after the murder, a Soviet disinformation campaign blamed Lyndon LaRouche for the murder, a lie which was given inter-

national currency by NBC-TV and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.)

Further, a new book, *The Contract*, just released in Sweden, not only spins more fantastic scenarios, but the author's pseudonym, John Grow, has sparked speculation as to his true identity. A film version is already set for release in March-April 1998.

The scenario projects that an American millionaire recruits a powerful industrialist/banker in Sweden to the plot to kill Palme. A British mercenary is hired to organize the murder, who, in turn, hires the hit man, with whom he maps out a plan, including disinformation to cover their tracks. One element of the disinformation is to ensure that a number of strange people are seen around the site at the time of the murder. The scenario continues, that groups inside the police department are aware of the murder plot, but do not intervene.

Victoria invites foreign firms to run hospitals

Foreign companies are going to be allowed to bid for contracts to run three new private hospitals being planned by the state government of Victoria, Australia. The new hospitals are part of the Mont Pelerin Society privatization of the state health system, and are being planned at the same time as the government of Mont Pelerin poster boy Premier Jeff Kennett is slashing spending in public hospitals. The three new hospitals will be developed under the new privatization craze: "build, own, and operate." The health spokesman for the state opposition, John Thwaites, attacked the plan, saying: "Privatization of our hospitals will mean decisions about health care are made by shareholders in foreign countries, not by the public of Victoria."

Meanwhile, across the country, in Perth, Western Australia, the staff at the King Edward Memorial Hospital have been asked to allow donations to be automatically deducted from their wages, so the hospital can buy medical equipment. Western Australia's government has mimicked the slash-and-burn budget methods of Victoria's Ken-

nett. The request, made via the hospital newsletter, provoked outrage among the unions, who pointed to it as symptomatic of the financial crisis in the hospital system.

U.S., Iran, others, work to end Afghan fighting

The London *Guardian's* Pakistan correspondent reports that the United States is engaging in "quiet diplomacy with Iran" and others among Afghanistan's neighbors to end that country's bloody civil war. "Karl Inderfurth, the assistant secretary of state, has held three rounds of talks in New York with ambassadors from Iran and Afghanistan's neighbors, China, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, as well as Russia," according to Jonathan Steele, in the *Guardian* of Dec. 12. Steele writes that this new group, known as "Six plus Two," stems from Washington's desire to stop arms supplies to the Taliban, who have seized power in Kabul, and their opponents, and to begin talks on forming a governing coalition. Moreover, "the exclusion of Britain and other European countries from the new U.S.-sponsored negotiations forum on Afghanistan has caused irritation in [the U.K. Foreign Office] Whitehall."

The *Guardian* also states that Washington wants to end illegal drug cultivation in Afghanistan, and its use as a base for "Muslim" terrorist training camps. Steele names two well-known terrorists who are protected by the Taliban (although he leaves out their British sponsorship): Osama bin Laden, the Saudi financier who claimed responsibility for the bombing of U.S. military bases in Saudi Arabia, and Mustafa Hamza, a mastermind behind the Islamic Group's massacre of 60 tourists in Luxor, Egypt, in November.

Uygur separatist threatens civil war

Uygur separatist-terrorist Erkin Alptekin threatened to plunge China's Xinjiang Autonomous region into civil war in a Dec. 11 interview with Italy's *Il Giornale*. The region is a "hub" of the Silk Road, where

NORTH KOREA'S severe winter, combined with lack of medical supplies, is hiking the death toll in the famine-stricken nation. Lack of fuel has made it impossible to heat homes, schools and hospitals, and temperatures have dropped below zero. Snow is being cleared by hand, as vehicles are idled for lack of fuel and spare parts.

THE CANADIAN government has hired Neal Sher, ex-head of the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Special Investigations, the so-called "Nazi-hunting" unit that framed up John Demjanjuk, to advise the Ottawa Justice Ministry in its effort to round up a purported 300 Nazi war criminals said to be living in Canada.

POPE JOHN PAUL II will meet with Fidel Castro, during the first-ever papal visit to Cuba. The four days will include celebrating mass in Havana and three other cities, as well as a visit to a lepers' hospital. Castro will greet John Paul II at the Havana airport on Jan. 21 and, together with members of his cabinet, will later meet with the Pope.

ULSTER UNIONIST leader David Trimble told Irish television on Dec. 14, that he could possibly meet with Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams. "We have seen actually in the past, people who have forsaken terrorism and genuinely changed into democrats. . . . It is perfectly possible that Gerry Adams can follow that path. And in that sense, I do not rule out" a face-to-face meeting.

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU'S office released the text of a support letter on Dec. 14, that was delivered to Israeli-Soviet spy Jonathan Jay Pollard, who is serving a life sentence in the United States. The letter read, in part, "The entire nation is concerned by your continued imprisonment. I hope that our efforts on your behalf will help and that you will be a free man soon." This goes beyond previous Israeli requests to have Pollard transferred to Israel, where he would serve out reduced jail time.

China, in cooperation with neighbors Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, is planning large-scale infrastructure development. *Il Giornale* quoted Alptekin saying that Xinjiang is "a time bomb" where there is "the danger of an explosion of guerrilla warfare in one of the world's most sensitive areas." Indeed, Xinjiang separatism has become a *cause célèbre* for the human rights crowd, along with Tibet.

Alptekin said that "the Uygurs are rationing food and medicine, because a large-scale revolt is possible. Chinese armored cars and special police units are patrolling the main cities in the country 24 hours a day."

He added that "the former U.S.S.R. republics are not able to oppose China, but if the Uygurs are forced to choose armed struggle once and for all, then many fear the worst. The revolt could spread like wildfire into Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Tibet, and Mongolia. If the Chinese do not accept dialogue, they will be in danger of bringing about one of the biggest conflicts in Central Asia."

China's Jiang visits Canada and Mexico

Chinese President Jiang Zemin's trips to Canada and Mexico demonstrated China's enhanced role in international relations. Foreign Ministry spokesman Shen Guofang said in an interview to *Wen Wei Po* in Mexico City, Dec. 5. Jiang Zemin's discussions with Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo, showed "the desire of the world's developed and developing countries to establish a new type of state-to-state relationship with China, oriented toward the 21st century," Shen said. In the current international situation, the role of economic factors in international relations and state-to-state relationships has become increasingly evident, Shen said, and, since China pursues an independent foreign policy of peace, various countries of the world have attached greater importance to China and wish to cooperate with it.

He cited as an example, that state leaders particularly mentioned the financial crisis in Southeast Asia, and wanted to hear the views of Chinese leaders on this issue, since China had successfully prevented the financial crisis from impacting on the course of its economic development, Shen said.

Russian homeless, poor die in unusual cold

Amid the economic collapse in the former Soviet Union, Moscow and many other areas of Russia experienced the coldest weather for mid-December in 95 years. Over 20 people died in Moscow, according to official acknowledgment, but the casualties among the homeless and destitute are likely higher than that. Overnight on Dec. 15-16, the temperature dropped to $\square 28.8 \square C$ ($\square 19.8 \square F$) in the city center and $\square 25.6 \square F$ in the outlying areas. At least five people died of exposure, and several dozen were treated for frostbite. As of Dec. 17, the official death toll had risen to 22, including deaths by fires. The Moscow fire department responded to 300 fire alarms over Dec. 13-14, many of them set by homeless people trying to warm themselves in buildings' basements. On Dec. 16, Moscow city government spokesman Andrei Varchena was quoted by wire services, saying, "What can we do about it? . . . They should live in houses, not on the street. There's no reason to live on the street."

On Dec. 8, the daily *Segodnya* reported that there are 30-50,000 homeless children living in Moscow, many of whom came from the provinces or other formerly Soviet countries. In Russia, according to *Segodnya*, there are 2 million neglected children, of whom about 600,000 are considered to be orphans; 95%, however, have at least one living parent, but the parents have either rejected their children or lost their parental rights by court decision.

The recent crash of a military transport in Irkutsk killed 80, including a number of orphans. There would have been even more deaths in the surrounding buildings, except the gas supply was turned off at the time of the crash.