

Pope in Asia: target of Prince Philip's gamekeepers

by Lydia Cherry

The Roman Catholic Church must be prepared for the task of evangelizing Asia in the 21st century, and the Christians in the Philippines will play a crucial role in that process, Pope John Paul II told an audience of 4 million in Manila on Jan. 15. The crowd that gathered for mass to close World Youth Day was the largest crowd of the pope's 17-year papacy, larger even than on his return to his native Poland for the first time as pontiff in 1979. The largely Roman Catholic Philippines was the first stop of an Asian tour that also included Papua New Guinea, Australia, and Sri Lanka.

Addressing, in particular, the youth gathered in the enormous crowd, Pope John Paul insisted that they face "the challenge of having a purpose, a destiny and of striving for it." He urged them to reject the "false teachers" in science, culture, and the media, who try to convince them there is no definite truth and no sure path to happiness. He continued that they must "be a sign of hope for the church, for your countries and all humanity. Your light must spread out from Manila to the farthest corners of the world."

Making light of the British-launched campaign to discredit him as old and sick, the pope waved his cane, at the Jan. 14 prayer vigil for World Youth Day, at the youth stretched far beyond his sight. Later he conducted a song with this silver-handled cane, then began twirling it, to the delight of the teenagers.

In Australia, the pope called upon his audience to take responsibility for relieving poverty and disease in Asia as a whole. "Your advantages and resources put you in a position of responsibility in Oceania and the Pacific region, and toward the vast and quickly developing continent of Asia. With God's help, you must continue to work with others to advance the cause of peace, foster integral human development, and relieve, as far as possible, the oppression of poverty, hunger, and disease."

Assassination threats: Cui bono?

Beginning in the days leading up to the tour of Asia, there have been almost non-stop threats against the life of the pontiff. (The only parallel would be the number of threats against President Clinton in recent months.) The most serious of these threats involved Manila police uncovering an alleged plot against the pontiff, when they raided a Manila apartment on Jan. 6, and seized maps of the routes the pope was to take during his tour around the city. Also taken from the apartment were timing devices, computers, Bibles, crucifixes, buttons with the papal insignia, and pictures of the pope, according to a Manila police spokesman. After discussions among the intelligence services of several countries, it was determined that some of the alleged "Islamic fundamentalist leaders" of the plot against the pope were also wanted in connection with the Feb. 26 bombing of New York's World Trade Center.

In the World Trade Center bombing, questions were raised about the close relationship of the FBI to some of the alleged terrorists, prior to the bombing. Other Muslim "fundamentalist" plots, after investigation, have turned out to be covertly steered by British intelligence. One of the terrorists claimed to now be in custody in the Philippines, according to sources, is Ahmed Salem, who was originally on the payroll of Graham Knowles, a British New York City-based "private security consultant." Salem was apparently fired by the FBI in late 1992.

Somewhat confusing were news reports that the Vatican had furnished the Filipino government with a list of 109 names of foreigners who might try to enter the Philippines to disrupt the trip, and that the Philippines police were following up on the Vatican leads. However, Catholic News Service quoted papal spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls, vigorously denying these reports. President Fidel Ramos seemed to indicate, in discussions with press, that the Philippines



Pope John Paul II (left) with German President Richard von Weizsäcker, during a visit to Germany in 1987. During his current Asian tour, the pope has been subjected to non-stop threats against his life.

was in close contact with intelligence services of other countries and that they were of help in constructing this terrorist list.

In his 1994 book, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, the pope makes clear that his strategy is to appeal to the mind and conscience of the individual, an approach which the oligarchs loathe and fear.

There is a further, strategic dimension to the pope's diplomacy. He is focussed on Christendom's entrance into its third millennium, and part of his evangelization drive concerns righting the wrongs of the past. For example, in an apostolic letter released by the Vatican on Nov. 14, he proposed that the international debt burden on poorer countries be either cancelled or greatly reduced in the year 2000. In recent months, the pontiff has twice referred to the right of poor countries to have access to nuclear power.

Since May 1990, John Paul II has been a public target of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, because of the pope's rejection of the malthusian dogma pushed by the Prince's World Wide Fund for Nature. The pope's global organizing against the United Nations depopulation conference in Cairo last September heightened the eagerness of circles headed by the prince to eliminate the pope from the scene. This news service has shown that the World Wide Fund for Nature overlaps with the assassination capabilities of British intelligence, such as the Permindex organization (see *EIR*, Dec. 9, 1994, "Permindex Ties Revealed to JFK Murder, 1001 Club").

Biggest hot-spot: Sri Lanka

The real hot-spot, however, was the shortest and last leg of the trip, to Sri Lanka. As the pontiff arrived there on Jan. 20, great controversy surrounded his presence. Sri Lanka is

home to a major assassination capability which operates with impunity. In the past few years, a Sri Lankan prime minister and a defense minister were assassinated. In November, the presidential candidate of a major party was murdered in a terror bombing. Investigation into that killing has gone nowhere.

In addition, it is believed that the murderers of India's former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who was killed in May 1991, were based in Sri Lanka. The separatist Tamil Tigers, who have been engaged in a terror war against the central government for 20 years, have been blamed for Gandhi's murder—an assassination that benefitted the war against the Southern Hemisphere being conducted during the administrations of George Bush and Margaret Thatcher.

The pope arrived in Sri Lanka just at the point that the Tamil Tigers were being forced into another round of negotiations with the government. The previous week, a Tamil leader who favored the negotiations was murdered.

The atmosphere in Sri Lanka has also been stirred up against John Paul II. The Buddhist Sangha—the national leadership body of Buddhists and major ideological opponent of the Hindu Tamils—warned on Dec. 21 that they would boycott their meeting with him, unless he apologized for comments on Buddhism made in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*. The Buddhist priests described the comments as "mischievous, misleading, and maliciously misinterpreted." Then on Dec. 31, a conference of the Federation of Buddhist Organizations resolved that they were not satisfied with an apology from the Vatican, and that his visit would be an act of aggression if he did not withdraw his remarks. The Sri Lankan Buddhists have multiple ties to the World Wide Fund for Nature, which notes in its propaganda that in Sri Lanka, Buddhist monks "act as natural gamekeepers."