

International Intelligence

Northern Ireland: organizing the peace

Leading up to the May 22 referendum election in all of Ireland, political parties, North and South, are debating the pros and cons of the April 10 "Good Friday" accord. Most significantly, on April 18, the Ulster Unionist Party's 800-person ruling council endorsed the accord by a majority, 540-210. The UUP, led by David Trimble, is the largest Unionist party in Northern Ireland.

Sinn Fein's party congress on April 18 decided to hold two weeks of constituency meetings before endorsing the accord, due to concerns that the accord does not explicitly provide for a united Ireland. It is expected to announce a party position by May 8. Sinn Fein's chief negotiator, Martin McGuinness, told the meeting that the measure of success must be whether "weakening of the British link, while defending the right of Irish men and women," will result from this accord. He noted that it creates new laws affecting the North's constitutional status, superseding the 1801 Act of Union and the Northern Ireland Constitution Act of 1973, both of which secured British usurpation of the six Ulster counties.

Addressing concerns that a united Ireland is not the end-product, McGuinness said, "There is no absolute commitment, no raft of parliamentary Acts to back up an absolute [British] claim, but only an agreement to stay until the majority decides otherwise. This is a long way from being as British as Finchley." He highlighted the change to Article 29 of the Irish Constitution mandated by the accord. "There is . . . constitutional expression for the establishment of North-South bodies which have an all-island remit."

Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams, who expects to see a united Ireland in his lifetime, added, "We've always made it clear that a united Ireland wasn't going to come out of [these negotiations], because we were the only party arguing for that." But, he concluded, "the document could open up a new, very defined phase of struggle."

Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern spoke to the Irish parliament, saying that the May

22 vote "will represent a concurrent act of self-determination by the people of Ireland as a whole, for the first time since 1918." He called for "a united, not a partitionist, approach."

Brid Rodgers, who led the Social Democratic Labour Party negotiations at the peace talks, toured the United States and noted, "There is a huge international goodwill abroad for what has been achieved here in Ireland. It must be harnessed and translated into economic support for the North."

Zedillo says EZLN is main paramilitary threat

Mexico's President Ernesto Zedillo, during a visit to Venezuela, was questioned by a reporter from the Venezuelan daily *El Nacional* about "paramilitary groups" operating in Mexico. In reply, he gave an unusually sharp characterization of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), according to the newspaper's account on April 13. "The most important grouping of this kind is the EZLN," Zedillo said. The EZLN appears to be "interested in seeing the government take recourse to repression. . . . They want to see the government repressing Indians, which would be their greatest political triumph. . . . They are betting on violence."

The EZLN was again in the international spotlight on April 15, when three Norwegian citizens were expelled from Mexico after they were caught helping Zapatista supporters set up a roadblock near San Miguel Yalchiptic, Chiapas. Mexican law prohibits foreigners from engaging in domestic politics. The Norwegians claimed that they were merely "observing" what was going on.

Of the 12 foreigners who had been kicked out of the country on April 12 for setting up an "autonomous town," two of the Spaniards involved turned out to be closely linked to the Basque separatist/terrorist group ETA. One, Julen Cobos Herasti, had been a candidate for ETA's "political" party, Herri Batasuna, in 1995.

The EZLN's tactic in its "autonomous" towns, is to prohibit all government services

(including schools and health facilities), on the grounds that the government represents repression. The *Houston Chronicle* wrote on April 5, that in one such "autonomous town," the closed school has been converted to sleeping quarters for foreigners who come in to "support" the EZLN.

President Zedillo commented on April 7, "Nobody who is genuinely on the side of the most unprotected, can block access to the health services to which they have a right. . . . No one who says that they care for Mexico, can desire a worsening of its population's health."

Ukraine's Vitrenko hit with dirty tricks

A court in Konotop, Ukraine has attempted to annul the March 29 election victory of Dr. Natalya Vitrenko, elected to the Supreme Rada (parliament) from that district. Vitrenko, co-author with Helga Zepp-LaRouche of the "Appeal to President Clinton to Convoke a New Bretton Woods Conference," is popular in her country as the fiercest foe of the International Monetary Fund's murderous austerity policies. At the time of the court's action, an IMF delegation was in Kiev to present a package of 92 conditions, including budget cuts and increased electricity fees for the poverty-stricken population, in exchange for an IMF credit line.

The local court's ruling, based on allegations that Vitrenko had insulted her opponent during the electoral campaign, smacks of a political dirty trick by friends of the IMF. Even before the ruling, the parliament's newspaper omitted the names of Vitrenko and her colleague Volodymyr Marchenko from a published list of newly elected deputies. The Konotop decision, by cancelling all votes for their Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine in that district, would drive the PSPU below the 4% threshold required for parliamentary representation as a bloc, and thus remove 14 other PSPU members from the Supreme Rada.

Vitrenko has appealed to a higher court, which is, however, temporarily not in ses-

JORDAN'S King Hussein sent a letter to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, saying that if the peace process continues to fail, he could be the "first victim," *Ha'aretz* reported. Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Nsour said, "His Majesty appealed to the Israeli Prime Minister in the strongest, clearest, and biggest words, that the failure of the peace process would not only endanger this side or that, but the whole area."

THE AUSTRALIAN government has started a program to train junior-ranking Chinese Army officers in the Australian Defense Force, the *Canberra Times* reported on April 17. A spokesman for Australian Defense Minister Ian McLachlan said that this was a way of securing contacts for the future, when these junior officers would be in positions of influence within the Chinese military.

THE VATICAN is putting the Inquisition on trial, according to the *Los Angeles Times* of April 17. The central archives were opened in January 1998, making approximately 4,500 volumes available to scholars. Author Richard Boudreaux writes that the Pope had to push this decision over objections from a "reluctant Vatican bureaucracy." The Pope said, "The Church has no fear of historical truth."

JOHN GARANG'S rebel forces are responsible for the hunger catastrophe in southern Sudan, according to the German daily *Die Welt* on April 18. "Colonel Garang's rebels have themselves contributed to the misery of the population." In January, the rebels "attacked garrisons in the south, and thereby created further refugee flows."

AN UPROAR was created in the parliament of the German state of Baden-Württemberg, when an MP shouted out, "Down with the Royal House of England!" The Greens were particularly incensed, defending Prince Charles as "the biggest organic farmer in the world."

sion. Sources in Kiev say that her popularity is rising since the attack on the PSPU.

EIR of April 24 carried a post-election interview with Dr. Vitrenko, under the headline, "Our First Goal, Is to End Ukraine's Pact with the IMF."

Sculpture by Leonardo found in Tuscan church

A long-forgotten sculpture of a standing angel, which had been kept unguarded in a small country church in Tuscany, Italy, has been identified by Carlo Pedretti, Italy's leading expert on Leonardo da Vinci, as the master's work, the *Washington Times* reported on April 21.

The polychromed, terra-cotta sculpture, previously attributed to the Florentine workshop of Andrea Verrochio, Leonardo's teacher, was discovered in the Romanesque church of San Gennaro near Pistoia, northwest of Florence. Pedretti says he is "very sure" of his identification of the sculpture as that of Leonardo, based on detailed studies of Leonardo's drawings in museum collections, and the identification of a similar terra-cotta as that of Leonardo.

Iran's crisis is under control, at least for now

The crisis which had been created around the detention of Tehran Mayor Gholam-hussein Karbaschi has subsided for the time being, since his release on April 15. In a speech to the heads of the three branches of government, as well as military and civilian leaders, the highest authority in Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei, stressed the need for "unity and solidarity" in the country, a theme picked up the following day by former President Hashemi Rafsanjani. Both leaders hinted at outside interference in the crisis.

Karbaschi is a representative of the moderate faction associated with Rafsanjani and his political movement, the Servants of Reconstruction. During the Presidential elections of May 1997, Karbaschi was the lead-

ing power campaigning for Mohammad Khatami, who won an overwhelming mandate, against the conservative Speaker of the Parliament, Nateq Nouri.

Karbaschi's case will be heard in a public trial in several weeks. He is not personally accused of embezzlement or other wrongdoing; some lower-level officials under his supervision have been accused. Press accounts stress the importance of reviewing the charges in an atmosphere of calm. Speaker of the Parliament Nouri has stressed the importance of judging the case in the spirit of "justice and the law." It is expected that the factional strife which broke out, will continue, but in a more law-abiding form, where social unrest will be avoided.

Myanmar seeks U.S. help in anti-drug plan

The government of Myanmar has told the U.S. government, that with Washington's assistance, Yangon believes it can eradicate all opium production within its national territory within five years, according to Christopher Wren, writing in the *New York Times* on April 17. Myanmar is cited as responsible for 60% of the world's opium production.

Lt. Col. Hla Min, deputy director of the Office of Strategic Studies, is quoted saying, "We think we can get rid of 60% of the heroin going into the U.S. in 12 months' time." The United States cut off all counter-narcotics assistance to Myanmar after 1988, but the latest State Department drug control report admits that the United States has no evidence of involvement of the Myanmar government in drug trafficking on an institutional basis.

A positive U.S. response to Yangon's offer would be signal of crucial collaboration with regional powers to put an end to the British permanent destabilization scenario for Asia. Not mentioned in the article is that U.S. UN Ambassador Bill Richardson had wanted to visit Yangon on his current regional tour, but could not, because of travel restrictions imposed by Yangon in response to U.S. sanctions last summer.