

International Intelligence

China's Li Peng assesses ties with United States

Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng both criticized the United States, and welcomed better ties between the United States and China, in an interview with the *China Information Bulletin* also published by the official Xinhua news agency on Feb. 4. "We could never agree to the U.S. claiming leadership over the world, and I am afraid most countries in the world won't agree to that," he said. "We cannot tolerate U.S. interference in the internal affairs of other countries."

Li Peng was speaking as his second term as Prime Minister ends; he will step down from office at the beginning of March.

"The United States always tries to place its domestic laws beyond international laws, and requires other countries to abide by U.S. laws. This is the divergence between us and the United States," he said.

Li Peng criticized some U.S. Senators, in whose minds "China is still the backward image described in old movies and novels, and they know very little about the present China, or what they have learned is a pack of completely distorted facts."

"China has much more knowledge about the United States than the United States has about us," he said. "Only after they have been to China, did many U.S. Senators find that the situation is totally different from what they had in their minds."

Prefect of Corsica killed in mafia-style hit

On Feb. 8, Claude Erignac, the prefect of Corsica, was murdered by two men who shot four bullets into his head. Everything indicates that the prefect was murdered because of his determined actions against corruption on this Mediterranean island, a province of France.

French Interior Minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement denounced the murder as part of the "semi-mafiosi" drift in the province. Erignac was first designated prefect of Corsica in 1996 by then-Prime Minister Alain

Juppé, and was charged with the task of cleaning up corruption, particularly that connected to the political parties and to the so-called nationalists.

According to most press reports, Erignac had quietly, but firmly, proceeded to clean up the scene. *Le Canard Enchaîné* details the actions he undertook against mafia networks connected to the Gaullist party, the RPR (undoubtedly not only those, however). A month ago, Erignac opposed the installation of 40 new gambling slot machines at the Ajaccio municipal casino, alerting the police to the fact that the funds used for these machines were of suspicious origin.

Erignac also recently opposed the sale of military real estate in an area called Bonifacio. Some of the land was to be sold to Italian investors linked to a company called Codil, the head of which is a Miami-based Italian-American. In January 1996, a military intelligence report said that this company was a "true office of the Italian mafia."

Le Canard lists several other investigations that the prefect was either carrying out, or preparing to carry out.

Appeal for food aid to North Korea

An urgent appeal for governments to send aid to North Korea was aired on Feb. 6 on German radio, Deutschlandfunk. Their Asian correspondent recently visited the country and reported that there is hardly any food, no fuel, no firewood, electricity is cut most of the day, and people are freezing at temperatures of $\square 18^{\square}C$ ($0^{\square}F$).

The correspondent reported that he was beseeched by an official of the North Korean Foreign Ministry to mobilize aid from the German government, telling him that "our children are just dying." Last year's aid prevented mass starvation, but it is almost depleted.

According to Unicef, 80,000 children are immediately threatened. Food rations are being stretched out, and decrease week after week; they are down to 250 grams per day in most regions, and will drop to 80 grams per day until the end of March.

The UN World Food Program has sent in over 1 million tons of food, mainly for children, mothers, and hospitals. But last year's harvest was hit hard by heat and drought; the whole rice harvest and half of the corn harvest were destroyed.

The United States will donate 200,000 tons of food, in response to the World Food Program's Jan. 6 appeal, the U.S. State Department announced. The WFP had called for 657,972 tons of food aid worth \$378 million—the largest appeal ever made by the WFP. The first delivery of U.S. food was slated for April, "when the food shortage is expected to become acute," said the State Department Agency for International Development.

NGOs in India shift focus to Northeast

India is concerned about the level of interest being shown in the northeastern states, by international non-governmental organizations which have established links with banned separatist outfits in the region, according to a report by Seema Mustafa, in *The Asian Age* on Feb. 6.

Official sources said that the NGOs' shift in attention from Jammu and Kashmir, on the Pakistan border in India's northwest, to the northeast, has become increasingly apparent over the past two years. These organizations are using pamphlets, documentaries, television programs, human rights reports, and resolutions to whip up international sentiment against what they call human rights violations by the Indian government in the region.

For two years, a London-based organization, Liberation, has smuggled activists of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) to address the Human Rights convention in Geneva. Among these is Anup Chetia, who was recently arrested by Bangladesh authorities. India has requested his extradition. Assam Watch, another London-based NGO, has open links with the ULFA, and has been supporting the extremists.

Amnesty International has started a mailing campaign against alleged human rights

ISRAELI Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu charged, in an interview with the *London Times* on Feb. 13, that Iran is a far greater threat than Iraq. "Right across the border in Iran," he said, "that country is developing freely, without any interference, without any pressure, without any inspectors, ballistic missiles and atomic weapons."

MARY ROBINSON, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and former President of Ireland, told the press in Phnom Penh at the end of January that she will "seriously address and respond" to official Cambodian government complaints that the UN Center for Human Rights in Phnom Penh was guilty of "illegitimate and arrogant behavior," and of practicing "psychological warfare."

THE KABILA government of Congo-Zaire is blaming France and the Vatican for the war in Kivu province. Internal Affairs Minister Gaetan Kakudjis said they were supporting the insurrection in the eastern provinces. The entire area, cordoned off to all international agencies and the international press, is on the border with Rwanda, and there is reportedly heavy fighting.

THE WORLDWIDE Fund for Nature warned Australia that it risks "harsh international scrutiny" unless it fulfills its promise to improve the conservation of the country's wetlands, *The Age* reported on Feb. 2. The government has provided Aus \$8 million for wetland projects, but WWF manager Jamie Pittock thinks that was not enough.

RUPERT MURDOCH'S News Corporation Ltd. has been under a two-year investigation by the Australian Tax Office, to ascertain whether the firm is evading taxes. A secret meeting on the matter took place in December, with tax investigators from Britain, the United States, and Canada, the *Australian Financial Review* reports. Since 1991, the News has paid only 8.2% taxes on its operating profits; the normal rate is 36%.

violations by the Indian security forces in the northeast, with specific focus on the state of Tripura. Amnesty has issued a report titled "India, Official Sanction for Killings in Manipur," another state in the northeast.

The banned National Socialist Organization of Nagaland also has the support of a number of foreign organizations. The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples' Organization (UNPO), with its headquarters in The Hague, has been supporting the group, and devotes considerable attention to criticizing the Indian government for alleged atrocities in the state of Nagaland.

The European Parliament has taken up resolutions against the Indian government for reported violations in Nagaland, and the Baptist Churches Alliance in Atlanta, Georgia, is believed to be trying to mobilize public opinion against India. The interest shown in the region by foreign television crews has also increased.

The official sources said the shift in interest has been evident since the installation of a popular government in Jammu and Kashmir, and the subsequent drop in militants' activity in that state.

Prince Philip patronizes summit on religions

On Feb. 18-19, an important gathering took place at the Church of England's Lambeth Palace in London, bringing together the highest echelons of the World Bank and leaders of major world faiths. The event is being initiated by the Alliance of Religion and Conservation, an offshoot of the World Wide Fund for Nature. WWF International President Prince Philip, the British Royal Consort, is patronizing the gathering. Attendees are to include World Bank President James Wolfensohn and various Bank senior vice-presidents; the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr. George Carey; Cardinal Roger Etchegaray of the Catholic Church's Justice and Peace organization; and senior representatives of the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople, of the Russian Orthodox Church, and of India's Hindu and Sikh religions.

The event is described by one of its coordinators as the next phase, after the 1986 conference in Assisi, when the WWF brought together environmentalist groups and the major world religions. The idea is to get at the "underlying philosophical assumptions and axioms in economics," and thereby to shift economic thinking in a certain direction. As this source said, "Religions must play a global role in shaping economic policy for an era when the nation-state is crumbling, and must be superseded. . . . Religions have played such a role since before the time of Rome. . . . They have certainly lived a lot longer than the Third [Communist] International."

Fireworks in store for Brazilian election

Land invasions, marches, and demonstrations by Brazil's narco-terrorist Landless Movement (MST) are expected to be a key element in the 1998 Presidential campaign of Inacio Luis "Lula" da Silva, the former head of the Workers' Party (PT), and a founder of Fidel Castro's São Paulo Forum.

MST national coordinator Gilmar Mauro said on Feb. 3, "We'll do what we know how to: Occupy land in the four corners of Brazil, to show that [President] Fernando Henrique Cardoso isn't carrying out land reform." The MST is targetting areas where there is high unemployment, in order to recruit desperate people as cannon fodder in their violent actions.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the Ninth National Conference of the MST, liberation theologian Tomas Balduino compared the group to Mexico's terrorist Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN). "Both groups," he said, "with their differences, have a broad-reaching program for land occupation." Balduino is the head of the Pastoral Land Commission, which set up the Landless Movement, and his statement gives an idea of what the MST intends for 1998.

The *New York Times* on Feb. 5 hailed the MST as "the fastest-growing representative of the poor, and those newly dispossessed by the global economy."