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To Defeat Famine:
Kill the WTO
by Marcia Merry Baker

The World Trade Organization--the agency and the thinking behind it--must be killed. We are at the point of famine today, because only 13 years ago, in January 1995, the WTO was allowed to come into existence, resulting from ten years of UN GATT talks (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), 1984-94, on ``reforming" world agriculture for free trade. This culminated a process of drastic takedown of world food production potential, from its prior build-up during the FDR period and after World War II. The inevitable result was today's worldwide food crisis. The WTO was evil from the start. Nations were bullied and threatened into going along with it. Tolerating it today is committing evil. The following is an accounting of the crimes of the WTO-era, and of actions by agencies and figures leading up to it....

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Feature

- **To Defeat Famine:**
Kill the WTO

Marcia Merry Baker gives an accounting of the crimes of the World Trade Organization era, and of actions by agencies and figures leading up to its formation in 1995. The conditions for today's vulnerability of millions of people to hunger and famine, were masterminded by networks with the intent to subvert nations and cause depopulation. The capstone of the whole downgrading process was the biofuels craze, with Al Gore as the top biofool, campaigning to 'save the planet.' Don't play the game. Bury the WTO!

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British Empire

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British Imperial Policy Means Famine

The British Empire developed the deliberate use of famine and food control as the principal means of rule. **Paul Glumaz** wrote this article in 1991, on the implementation of this policy in India from 1764 to 1914.

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From American System economist **Henry C. Carey's** *The Slave Trade, Domestic and Foreign: Why It Exists, and How It May Be Extinguished*. (1853), excerpts from Chapter XII, 'How Slavery Grows in India.'

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The bankers, emboldened at seemingly having survived the first quarter, have begun posturing to the effect that, to quote Lehman Brothers CEO Richard Fuld, 'the worst is behind us.'

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by **Mohd Peter Davis**, a biochemist at Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Kuala Lumpur.

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Sources in Baghdad and Washington trace the escalation of the campaign in Iraq against Shi'ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, back to Vice President Dick Cheney's recent visit to Baghdad. Cheney remains committed to military strikes against Iran, and is looking for pretexts.

- **Ambassador M.J. Mapuranga:**

- **Why the British Hate Zimbabwe**

Dr. Machivenyika J. Mapuranga, the Zimbabwean Ambassador to the United States, gave this interview to The LaRouche Show on April 12. The host was **Lawrence Freeman**, and **Portia Tarumbwa Strid**, of the LaRouche Youth Movement, joined in by telephone from Berlin.

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Britain's Malthusian Agent

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- **New York AG Subpoenas Banks in Probe of Criminal Speculation**

Some People Never Learn: The Case of LTCM's Meriwether

April 17 (EIRNS)—The name John Meriwether may not mean much to you, but it is well known in the annals of financial catastrophe, for Mr. Meriwether was the founder of Long-Term Capital Management (LTCM), the hedge fund which collapsed in 1998 and spread panic across the financial world. Founded in 1994, the fund lasted only four years—only on Wall Street could that be considered "long-term"—and LTCM was not Meriwether's first brush with disaster. As vice-chairman of Salomon Brothers at the time it was caught manipulating the market for Treasury securities, Meriwether was fined \$50,000 and left the company.

LTCM, whose partners included a couple of Nobel Prize-winning economists, Robert Merton and Myron Scholes, was the epitome of a quant shop, making huge bets according to arcane mathematical formulae which turned out to have no correlation to reality. LTCM crashed in September 1998, when Russia postponed some of its debt and sent the derivatives world into a panic. The Fed orchestrated a bailout of LTCM to protect the derivatives market, and the firm was quietly put to sleep.

Now Mr. Meriwether is in trouble again, this time with his JWM Partners, whose main fund is down 28% for the year, and facing a run by his "investors." At least this time, surrounded by much bigger and more bankrupt institutions, Meriwether doesn't have to worry about being accused of blowing up the financial markets. That job has already been done.

New York AG Subpoenas Banks in Probe of Criminal Speculation

April 18 (EIRNS)—New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo subpoenaed 18 banks and securities firms in an investigation into the collapse of the \$330 billion auction-rate bond market which could lead to criminal indictments.

The prominent place of JPMorgan Chase on Cuomo's subpoena list is probably related to the bond default crisis of Jefferson County and Birmingham, Alabama, according to one New York financial source, who said that Cuomo had received critical information about this case. Jefferson County, the population and political center of Alabama, has technically defaulted for the past two months on \$3.2 billion in debt, as a result of a Chase "advisor's" negligent and

perhaps criminal speculation with the county's debt. The bank drew the county into large-scale derivatives contract speculation—which its officers did not understand, and on which it lost heavily—on its own debt now totalling \$4.6 billion.

Lyndon LaRouche on April 11 recommended an investigation of JPMorgan Chase by the State of Alabama and perhaps the Federal government as well, and officials are discussing his proposal. During the default crisis, both the Alabama legislature and the Birmingham City Council passed resolutions calling for LaRouche's Homeowners and Bank Protection Act (HBPA), the first step out of the destruction caused by the global financial crash.

Bloomberg.com reported today that "Cuomo is also asking for information about how bankers persuaded borrowers to issue the [auction rate municipal] bonds, and how the banks came to decide when to stop bidding in mid-February."

Others subpoenaed include Merrill Lynch, UBS, Bear Stearns, Goldman Sachs, RBC, Citigroup, and Bank of America. Cuomo, along with state attorneys and regulators in nine other states have formed a task force.

Global Economic News

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City of London Better Watch Its Back

April 13 (EIRNS)—Bankers in the City of London and Wall Street had better start watching their backs, the *Financial Times* warned in its lead editorial April 12. "This week, the world's leading banks ... concurred with a conclusion reached by the rest of the world: they screwed up, the credit crisis is largely their fault, and everybody else is suffering for their errors. The admission may not be enough to prevent a dangerous backlash," the *FT* warned. "Bankers may have realized, too late, the dangers of the banker caricature many people now believe."

The paper tries to defend the bankers from the perception that they are crooks who "manufactured toxic derivatives of subprime loans," but warns that too many "ordinary citizens" are questioning what has happened to the entire banking system—which clearly is not working any more. "Politicians have noticed too." Bankers, by proposing some so-called regulatory measures, are trying to avoid further control, but they should be a lot more scared than that, the *FT* warns. They "will not succeed. The political atmosphere has become too febrile for that: the mob is at the gates baying for justice."

Bankers may be able to "blunt a few pitchforks and snuff out a blazing torch or two" for now, but the problem is much bigger, the City of London mouthpiece admits. Governments, under all the pressure, "face a deeper challenge: to make a principled stand for free markets, appropriately supported. It is not just the credit crisis. Popular fears of globalization, discontent with high oil and food prices, rising income inequality within nations all have contributed to an uncertain time for capitalism. The capitalists have certainly not helped."

British Empire's Macquarie Bank Intensifies Assault on China

April 17 (EIRNS)—Macquarie Bank is spearheading an Australian-based, but British-directed financial assault on China by a complex of Australian banks and insurance companies. Macquarie, the world's leader in corporatist/fascist public-private partnerships (PPPs), has held talks with "key Chinese ministries, regulators and investors about establishing China's first domestic infrastructure fund," reported the April 15 *Sydney Morning Herald*. Fronting for Macquarie and other British speculators, Mandarin-speaking Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd lunched with Chinese executives and regulators in Beijing this week, to push the idea. "One of the core propositions that I am putting to the Chinese government for consideration is to expand the number of Australian funds managers who are able to operate here in the Chinese market," Rudd said.

Macquarie, first established as the British imperial Hill Samuel Bank's Australian subsidiary in 1969, bought the brokerage business of the Anglo-Dutch ING Barings in 2004, and advised the China Railway Construction Corporation in a \$5.6 billion Hong Kong and Shanghai stock offering, China's largest float this year and "the second-largest globally," according to the *Herald*.

The *Herald* also notes that Macquarie is working with Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley to secure a role in "future floats and acquisitions involving some of China's largest companies." Z-Ben Advisors, a Shanghai-based advisory firm, reports that Macquarie et al. are targeting China's three main sovereign wealth funds: the \$200 billion China Investment Capital Corporation; the government's main pension fund; and the China-Africa development firm. These three funds are forecast to triple in size by 2010, to \$729 billion; the scale of the China-African development firm as one of the three, bespeaks the magnitude of China's positive role in Africa, one which has drawn the wrath of the British Empire as Lyndon LaRouche has emphasized recently. This Australian-based financial warfare against China flows from the use of Australia as the British Empire's stepping stone in Asia, as per recent calls to that effect by British Foreign Secretary David Miliband and Trade and Investment Minister Lord Digby Jones.

China Grain Supply Getting 'Tight'

April 16 (EIRNS)—China has enough grain for the time being, but stabilizing its supplies will get more and more challenging, State Administration of Grains (SAG) director Nie Zhenbang said at an agriculture meeting in Beijing April 14. "We should always keep alert in guaranteeing grain security," Nie was quoted by Xinhua today. China is more and more integrated into the world economy, and changes in the world market are increasingly affecting the domestic situation, Nie said. On top of this, limited arable land, water shortages, and internal transport problems are all affecting grain supply stability, Nie also wrote in a signed commentary for the *Peoples Daily*. "We now have less room to increase acreage planted with grains, and it is becoming more and more difficult to steadily raise yields," due to shrinking amounts of arable land and water shortages, Nie wrote. "It is increasingly difficult now to keep domestic grain market and price stability." China already has one of the lowest arable land and water ratios per person in the world.

Maize and soybean supplies have tightened, and in some big grain markets, there are even shortages. Cooking oil is a special problem, and China will not be able to change its dependence upon imports, which is now 42% of yearly demand. In January, Nie had told a Beijing agriculture conference that "As consumption grows and shortages spread, grain imports have been increasing. "There is huge pressure to secure the supply of cooking oil and keep prices stable."

Deputy SAG director Zeng Liying also said that pressure on grain prices in China is increasing due to deficient supplies, soaring agricultural product costs and fluctuations on international futures markets. China's grain situation has improved drastically in recent years, Zeng Liying said, with its grain deficit sinking from 50 billion kilos in 2003 to 15 billion now. This year will be difficult, however, due to the worst winter in over 50 years and severe drought in the north.

Nie told the Beijing conference April 14 that uneven stock distribution in producing areas and selling regions is also a problem. The *China Economic Observer* reported today that important grain-growing regions such as Heilongjiang are badly hampered by lack of sufficient transport and storage facilities for their crops, and this is lowering prices because farmers cannot get their crops to markets.

China's Food Trade Deficit

April 16 (EIRNS)—China's trade in agricultural products has gone from surplus to deficit in the first months of 2008, as the growth rate of imports "dwarfed" the rate of exports, Xinhua quoted a Ministry of Agriculture official today. Beijing began to restrict food exports already late last year, by ending export rebates and then imposing a 5%-25% export duty on 57 agricultural products from January. The measures are taking effect. Overall, China's net food exports fell 84.8% to 295,000 tons this year. Rice exports were up by 56% to 207,000 tons. China produced about 186 million tons of rice this year, several million tons more than is needed, the *Chinese Economic Observer* reported today—but maize exports were down 96.5% and wheat exports by 17%. Edible oil exports were also down. The agricultural trade deficit was \$2.06 billion, a big shift from the \$1.15 billion surplus last year. In 2007, China had sharply increased exports of wheat, maize and soybeans. Wheat exports were up 200% until the policy shift in December, the *China Daily* reported.

China's State Council has made curbing grain exports a top priority, and, in addition to the export duties on grain, will also impose export quotas on wheat, maize, and rice flours. But China had to increase imports of soybeans, a key source of protein and animal feed, by 36% in volume, to 7.8 million tons, but that meant a 140% increase in the cost, as soybean prices have nearly doubled in the past year. China bought about 25% of the US soy crop last year.

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Justice Department May Block BAE-Saudi Eurofighter Deal

April 18 (EIRNS)—There is currently an internal debate within the Bush Administration over whether to approve a BAE Systems contract to supply Saudi Arabia with Eurofighter Typhoon planes, according to the London *Financial Times*. The U.S. State Department must approve the transfer of U.S. technology on the fighter before Britain can export the planes to Saudi Arabia. The State Department reportedly wants to approve the deal, but the Justice Department, which is

investigating whether BAE violated U.S. laws by bribing Saudi officials over the Al-Yamamah arms deal, is arguing that approval could hamper this investigation.

Meanwhile, the London *Economist* reported on April 17 that Britain is still stonewalling the U.S. request for evidence in the BAE case, so U.S. investigators are bypassing the British government and collecting documents directly and bringing witnesses to the United States.

Dean Pressures Superdelegates To Decide Now

April 18 (EIRNS)—Appearing on the Wolf Blitzer show on CNN last night, Democratic National Committee chair Howard Dean, who just handed the operation of the Democratic Party convention website to the British-based firm WWP, demanded once again that the Democratic superdelegates make their choice for the party's Presidential nominee known now. "I need them to say who they are for, starting now. They really do need to do that. We've got to know who our nominee is. There is no reason we shouldn't know that by after the June 3 primary. We can't give up two or three months of active campaigning and healing time." Dean thus continues to act in the tradition of DNC chairman Jacob Raskob, who opposed Franklin D. Roosevelt's nomination in 1932, on behalf of J.P. Morgan and the British. Roosevelt won the nomination at the Democratic convention on the fourth ballot, and went on to win the election in November. Dean claims that his job is to enforce the rules, but where is the rule that the nomination has to be made two to three months before the convention?

Pentagon Study: Iraq War Is a 'Debacle'

April 18 (EIRNS)—A new study, "Choosing War: the Decision To Invade Iraq and Its Aftermath," released two days ago, calls the war a "major debacle" that has been very expensive in terms of blood, money, and U.S. standing, that has "severely strained" the U.S. military, has turned Iraq into "an incubator for terrorism, and emboldened Iran to expand its influence throughout the Middle East." What makes the report of significant interest is first that it was published by the National Defense University, the nation's premier institution for the education of leaders in national security affairs, and secondly, its author, Dr. Joseph J. Collins. Prior to becoming a professor of national security strategy at NDU's National War College in 2004, Collins served as the deputy assistant secretary of defense for stability operations, starting in 2001.

The study provides an assessment of the process that led to the decision to go to war, and Collins concludes that the tight link between Vice President Dick Cheney and former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, "was a key association" in that decision. Collins also highlights Rumsfeld's penchant for micromanaging the invasion planning, resulting in a force that was too small to secure Iraq after the Saddam Hussein regime collapsed, and the failure of top administration officials to heed the warnings of experts of what was likely to happen once the Ba'athist regime was removed. The only thing missing from Collins' account is an understanding of the "perpetual war" intention behind the invasion of Iraq and the continuation of that intention in President Bush's refusal, more than five years after the invasion, to even consider an exit strategy.

Study Highlights Iraq War Vets' Mental Health Problems

April 18 (EIRNS)—A study released yesterday by the Rand Corporation, which was conducted independently of the Department of Defense, estimates that, out of 1.64 million service members who have deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, approximately 300,000 are suffering from PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) or major depression, and 320,000 may have experienced traumatic brain injury during deployment (from percussion of IEDs [improvised explosive devices], etc.). That estimate is based on a random survey of 1,965 individuals from all branches of the service. The study also found that only about half of returning veterans who met the criteria for PTSD or major depression sought help (fear of the negative consequences of using mental health services is still the number one reason), and that the Veterans Administration still has serious issues with providing access to care for returning veterans. Of those who did seek care,

only slightly over half received a "*minimally adequate treatment*" (emphasis in the original).

The report estimates that PTSD cases stemming from the wars will cost up to \$6.2 billion over two years and traumatic brain injury another \$910 million. Pentagon officials are not disputing the findings. Col. Loree Sutton, an Army psychiatrist and director of the newly established Defense Center of Excellence for Traumatic Brain Injury and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, told reporters at the Pentagon yesterday, that the findings are consistent with earlier studies, both inside and outside the Defense Department, and highlight the importance of "closing the gap between knowledge and practice."

Durbin Presses Bush Administration on Food Emergency

April 18 (EIRNS)—The Bush Administration's Director of Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Jim Nussle, came under bipartisan attack when he appeared before the Senate Appropriations Committee to seek supplemental funds to aid Iraq. Sen. Richard Durbin (D-Ill.), disregarding the emergency Nussle was trying to sell to the Senators, pointed to the "real emergency." Urging Nussle to include \$500 million for the nations undergoing a severe food crisis, Durbin said: "The price of rice in the last few months has gone up 83%. There are people starving.... So, I just have to tell you, when the head of the World Food Program asks for \$500 million more in food aid, I want to ask you: Do you believe that is the kind of emergency we should include in the supplemental, to avert a crisis of starvation and political instability around the world?"

When Nussle attempted to sidestep the issue, Durbin said: "I met with Secretary Rice this week, and had breakfast with her. And she said: 'We need it. Give us the authority to buy some things locally so we can stretch it even further, but we need it.' So based on that, do you believe this administration should take this world food crisis and put it in the emergency category of things we need to do right now?"

London's WPP To Control Democratic Convention Website

April 16 (EIRNS)—The Democratic Party, under its chairman Howard Dean, has given to the London-based political consulting monopoly, WPP Group, control of the creation and maintenance of the website for the Democratic National Convention in Denver, where the Presidential nominee will be selected. WPP is operating in this case through its subsidiary, Dewey Square Group. Michael Whouley, Dewey Square's president and founder, was a Democratic campaign consultant in 1992, who, immediately after Bill Clinton's inauguration, became a lobbyist for private interests pushing the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT). As one of the main promoters of London's free-trade dogma within the Democratic Party, Whouley became a prime asset to the WPP Group when they bought his company in 2006.

WPP Group's global political consulting practice emphasizes the destruction of the legacy of Franklin Roosevelt. Mark Penn, ousted as an advisor to the Hillary Clinton campaign on April 7, is chief executive of WPP's giant Burson-Marsteller subsidiary, which also includes operatives leading the campaign of Republican Presidential candidate John McCain.

McCain Gas Tax Plan Benefits Big Oil; Threatens Jobs, Economy

April 16 (EIRNS)—Who will benefit from presumed GOP Presidential nominee John McCain's proposed Summer-long suspension of the Federal gas tax? Can McCain be the "economic idiot" he appears to be from this proposal, or is he in league with Administration ideologues who want to privatize and destroy the Federal Trust Fund for highway infrastructure—or both? McCain, while speaking at Carnegie Mellon University in Pennsylvania April 15, unveiled his quick fix for "pain at the pump." He would eliminate a tax which is now only 5% of the average national price per gallon of regular gasoline, when that price itself has been run up by 45% in three years. He claims his plan would save drivers

\$10 billion. Not so, but the oil multinationals would pocket billions.

Critics quickly exposed the fraud. "Senator McCain has said he doesn't understand the economy. His gas tax proposal proves the point," charged Democratic Congressmen James Oberstar (Minn.) and Peter DeFazio (Ore.) in a statement April 15. They show how the proposal, expected to cut \$3 billion in gas taxes intended for the Highway Trust Fund, translates into a loss of \$12 billion in funding for highway infrastructure. This in turn will cost the economy a loss of 600,000 construction jobs. The giveaway to the fallacy of the McCain plan is that it fails to demand that oil companies reduce the price of gasoline. Thus, Oberstar and DeFazio note, "Oil companies would simply pocket the difference," of about 18 cents/gallon, adding to their obscene \$155 billion profits in 2007, some \$85 billion of which went into the coffers of ExxonMobil, Royal Dutch Shell, and BP. Or as the AFL-CIO's Transportation Trades Department put it, "If Senator McCain is serious ... he should lead the fight to stop oil companies from exploiting consumers."

Ibero-American News Digest

- [LaRouche in Monterrey: This Crisis Is Not Necessary](#)
- [Prince Philip's WWF Is Out To Murder Mexicans](#)

LaRouche in Monterrey: This Crisis Is Not Necessary

April 18 (EIRNS)—U.S. statesman Lyndon LaRouche today addressed a packed auditorium of 240 people, at least 200 of them students, at one of Mexico's most elite universities, the Monterrey Institute for Technological and Higher Studies (ITESM), hosted by the student associations of both the International Relations and the Economics Departments.

LaRouche, who has spoken at the Monterrey campus of the ITESM three times before, is an institution there. In introducing him, one of the student hosts told the audience that they were going to hear from one of the most important men in the world, a man who had run for President of the United States, who has ideas which are crucial.

LaRouche laid out the collapse of the world economy and his three measures to address that collapse (see www.larouchepac.com), in the context of the great conflict which has determined the sweep of history since the 1890s: the conflict between British imperial power and the United States, as expressed in President Franklin Roosevelt's commitment to eradicate imperialism from the planet.

There is no reason for this crisis we face today, he declared; it is a result of the imperial desire to control the world through war, and to keep people and nations in backwardness. Malthusians are the curse of the planet; we must eradicate the policy of underdevelopment and anti-development, of genocide, and go back to Roosevelt. If we develop the powers of mind of our peoples, there is no reason *ever* to have an economic depression, and you, who are young, can change the planet over the next 50 years.

LaRouche's presentation followed two days of events, which included two radio shows, in which LaRouche blasted the British Empire for its crimes in creating the food crisis, and trying to steal Mexico's oil; and an indepth discussion with a delegation of the Pro-PLHINO Committee, a group from the state of Sonora which is fighting to implement a tri-state Northwest Mexico hydraulic development plan, that would direct water into arid areas which, with irrigation, could become a flourishing agricultural region once again. The Pro-PLHINO Committee was represented by Antonio Valdez Villanueva, secretary general of the CTM trade union confederation in Ciudad Obregon, Sonora; Vicente Solis, advisor to the state executive board of the CTM of Sonora; and Alberto Vizcarra and Jesús María Martínez, both members of the

LaRouche Movement in Sonora.

A full report will appear in *EIR*, May 2, 2008.

Prince Philip's WWF Is Out To Murder Mexicans

April 15 (EIRNS)—The World Wildlife Fund (WWF), headed by Prince Philip, is out to murder Mexicans as part of its global drive to reduce the world's population to 1 billion or less, by crushing the support in Mexico for construction of the Northwest Hydraulic Plan (PLHINO), a tri-state water management project which Lyndon LaRouche has championed for three decades, as a crucial part of the greater North American "NAWAPA-plus" water project, required to develop the Great American Desert on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Stopping the PLHINO, means Mexicans will die. Free trade has turned Mexico, which was once largely food self-sufficient, into one of the world's leading importers of corn and wheat, at a time when world stocks of grains are disappearing (see this week's InDepth, "To Defeat Famine: Kill the WTO," by Marcia Merry Baker). The Pro-PLHINO Committee of the 21st Century, a powerful and growing movement of farmers, labor, local, and state leaders in the state of Sonora, organized by the LaRouche movement, has gained national support for immediately initiating work towards this project which would allow Mexico to nearly double its production of grains, by opening up some 5 million new hectares of irrigated lands in this region, which has some of the greatest agricultural potential in all of Mexico.

Well-informed sources in Sonora warn that local media are under heavy pressure to launch a lying "environmentalist" campaign against construction of the PLHINO. This is coming from the WWF, which has established beachheads on two fronts, from which it hopes to crush both the PLHINO and the greater NAWAPA (North American Water and Power Alliance)-plus project: a Gulf of California project, and another for the Chihuahuan Desert. Both are considered among the WWF's 19 top priority projects globally, chokepoints which they assert they intend to seize control of by the year 2015 (see InDepth: "Want to Eat? Crush the WWF!").

The WWF's Gulf of California project has already threatened the Mexican food supply, by organizing restrictions on fishing in what it admits is the richest fishing area of Mexico, in the name of defending the ecosystem. Now, the WWF is targetting the entire eastern coastal region of the Gulf of California, which just happens to be the three Northwest states (Sonora, Sinaloa, and Nayarit) where the PLHINO's dams, tunnels, and canals must be built,

These people-haters would take down, as well, such already completed projects as the great Hoover Dam, built under Franklin Delano Roosevelt, which turned California's Imperial Valley desert into an agricultural powerhouse. The damming of the Colorado River "severely threatens" the ecosystem of the Gulf of California today, they assert.

Western European News Digest

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Italy Debates Zepp-LaRouche's Call for Lisbon Referenda

MILAN, April 16 (EIRNS)—A debate about Helga Zepp-LaRouche's call for national referenda on the European Union's Lisbon Treaty was opened today on www.affedieffe.com, the popular website of Italian journalist and author Maurizio Blondet. It opens with a piece by Blondet, entitled, "Eurocracy reintroduces death penalty. Secretly." "This is what has been exposed by Zepp-LaRouche (wife of Lyndon)," he writes, "who was warned about it by a group of famous German and Austrian jurists."

The website connects the fight against the Lisbon Treaty to the one for a New Bretton Woods, which is the main campaign of LaRouche's movement in Italy: "This treaty is truly dangerous, and you should really go to movisol.org as Liliana Gorini suggests, you will discover a lot of horrible things. There is a weak hope that, thanks to his friendship with [outgoing Russian President Vladimir] Putin, [incoming Italian Prime Minister Silvio] Berlusconi will at least oppose the entrance of Ukraine and Georgia into NATO. Berlusconi was upset when he heard that and said 'I made such an effort to get Putin close to us and this is the result?' Will he be a follower of de Gaulle? Also Tremonti speaks of Bretton Woods and is beaten up by the *Financial Times* for it. So let's open a discussion about the Lisbon Treaty."

10,000 Irish Farmers Protest the EC, Lisbon, and WTO

April 17 (EIRNS)—Ten thousand Irish farmers converged on Dublin to denounce European Commissioner Peter Mandelson of the U.K., who is negotiating a European Commission (EC) deal with the World Trade Organization, which, they charge, will "wipe out beef and dairy farming in Ireland." The farmers marched from the European Union headquarters to Dublin Castle, where EC head José Manuel Barroso was addressing the National Forum on Europe, trying to sell the WTO deal and the Lisbon Treaty. The agricultural workers outside the castle protested that some 50,000 farmers would be put out of business, with a further 50,000 processing jobs at risk by Mandelson's proposals.

In addition, 16 agri-businesses in Donegal closed their doors for three hours to show support for the farmers' protest in Dublin, and the Donegal county council voted their support.

Sarkozy Pushes Maastricht Austerity

April 15 (EIRNS)—After having granted Eu75 billion in various tax reductions for the rich in the early part of his Presidency, French President Nicolas Sarkozy is now moving to bring France into conformity with the Maastricht Treaty's criteria governing budget deficits and indebtedness. For a couple of weeks, the government has been adopting, one by one, the measures of a global austerity policy which should allow it to reduce its spending by Eu5-7 billion per year.

The first measure confirmed, was that only one out of two civil servants retiring will be replaced, which means a loss of some 33,000 jobs. Second, the government will no longer subsidize a "large-family discount" for French National Railways, but will leave it up to the company to subsidize it, which means that in a short period of time, the company, which has no obligation to the common good, will drop it. Rail travel in the era of high-speed TGVs has become quite expensive, and this discount allows large families to travel together throughout the country. Other changes targetted at the lower 80% of family income-brackets include cuts in Social Security and unemployment benefits.

Carla Del Ponte Denounces UCK Organized Crime in Kosovo

April 17 (EIRNS)—The former general prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (CTFY), Carla Del Ponte, has written an explosive 400-page book called *La Caccia* (The Hunt). In it, she reports on an investigation that never was completed for lack of proof acceptable to the tribunal. The crimes were taking place, during the Summer of 1999, in clandestine clinics in Kosovo, involving Serbian prisoners of war, whose useful organs, such as kidneys, were taken to be sold on the international market. The prisoners, once emptied of their marketable organs, were executed.

Although the investigation was never carried out, according to Del Ponte, the crimes really happened and the trade was protected by the leaders of the Kosovo Liberation Army—KLA, or UCK). Del Ponte writes that the leaders at the medium and top level of the UCK were informed and actively involved in the organ trafficking.

The revelations are a bombshell, since the UCK leaders at that time were Agim Cekun, who became the Prime Minister of Kosovo between March 2006 and January 2008, and Hashim Thaci, the current pro-European Prime Minister, both being assets of the US/NATO/EU trans-Atlantic operation against Russia.

Del Ponte, who was always covered by the international media when exposing Serbian war crimes, is now being told to shut up, and the Swiss government told her that promoting her book was incompatible with her new function as the Swiss ambassador to Argentina.

Gordon Brown Less Popular than Chamberlain in 1940

April 14 (EIRNS)—British Prime Minister Gordon Brown's political support is so battered by the financial crash and his own ineptitude, that his popularity has crashed further and faster than Neville Chamberlain's after the Nazi invasion of Norway, the tabloid *Daily Mail* reported today. Less popular, it would be hard to get!

The hapless Brown is being—rightly—blamed for the banking and real estate crisis looming over the pitiful remains of the British economy, since he presided for ten years as Tony Blair's Chancellor of the Exchequer over the creation of the huge "New Labour" Party financial bubble. He became Prime Minister barely ten months ago. Now, Brown "is less trusted to steer his country through the global financial crisis than any other major western European leader," the *Mail* reported—a pretty dismal rating, considering the competition.

Brown's leadership will be tested in mayoral and other local elections in Britain on May 1. The *Mail* quotes one senior member of Blair's last Cabinet, saying after a recent meeting of both Brown's supporters and those of his predecessor and rival Blair, to assess the Labour Party's prospects: "We all agreed that we are f**ked."

Goldsmith Urges Appeal Against BAE Ruling

April 14 (EIRNS)—The British are moving quickly to squash any chance that the British Serious Fraud Office will reopen its investigation of massive bribes by BAE in the sale of military equipment to Saudi Arabia. Their fear is that any serious investigation of the BAE "bribery" scandal would quickly become what *EIR* has called "the scandal of the century"—the \$100 billion slush fund growing out of the Saudi-BAE deal which was used to finance terrorism, covert arms deals, and secret wars around the world.

Indications from Downing Street are that Prime Minister Gordon Brown is planning a "hands on" operation to ensure that the government faces down any attempt to reopen the inquiry. The Conservative Party reportedly would also back killing

the case once and for all.

Demanding an inquiry, Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg has written to Brown, objecting to plans to strengthen the role of the attorney general, to block criminal investigations. He told Sky News: "I want it restarted because we cannot allow the precedent to be set that blackmail by other powers or individuals should stop the course of justice."

Under the British system of justice, the appeal will be heard by the House of Lords, which functions as Her Majesty's supreme court.

Russia and the CIS News Digest

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Direct Dalian-Moscow Land-Bridge Link

April 17 (EIRNS)—A new direct Eurasian land-bridge train between Dalian, China, and Moscow and St. Petersburg, is going into service, the Russian Railways website reported April 14. Dalian is the Chinese port on the Yellow Sea which gained strategic importance after the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railroad and Chinese Eastern and South Manchurian Railways at the beginning of the 20th Century, and was grabbed by the British-allied Japanese during their 1904 war against Russia.

Dalian lies on the Liaodong peninsula, between the Bohai and Yellow Seas. Formerly the biggest port in what was China's industrial northeast, it is now rapidly expanding capacity as Chinese trade with South Korea, Japan, and Russia grows. China has made redevelopment of the northeast one of its strategic economic goals.

The new container service is designed to cut transport time from Northeast Asia to Europe. The *Hong Kong Shipping Gazette* reported the new service as marking that "a new Asia-Europe land bridge starting from Dalian is taking shape."

The trains go to the Russian Zabaikalsk station next to the Chinese border town of Manzhouli, where cargo is transferred to the wide-gauge Russian system, for direct delivery to Moscow or St. Petersburg. These new arrangements will cut time on the route to 18 days overall, 20 days less than by ship and 10 days less than the Siberian land-bridge route. Hitherto most shipments from China, Japan, and South Korea to Russia and Europe were handled by shipping services or by the Siberian land-bridge via the port of Vostochny, Russia. Dalian Port Group is now expanding container capacity in Harbin, the biggest city along the route in China, and Manzhouli.

Putin Builds Energy Relationships With Libya, Italy

April 18 (EIRNS)—Russian President Putin arrived yesterday in Sardinia, Italy, for talks with Prime Minister-elect Silvio Berlusconi, after having paid a historic visit to Libya, the first visit of a Russian leader since 1985. Putin's trip is part of an effort to integrate the North African, European, and Russia economies in the field of energy and other infrastructure and industry projects. The British Empire, which wants to block this land-bridge development, signalled that its pawns at the European supranational centers in Brussels are "nervous" about such a partnership. Singling out the already launched Southstream gas pipeline partnership, to be built by Russia's Gazprom and Italy's ENI, the *Financial Times* of London wrote April 18 that "to many in Brussels, the pipeline is seen as a dangerous move to increase the dependence of the European Union on Russian energy supplies."

The British will be more nervous, after the new deals concluded by Putin. Putin discussed with Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi an increased role of Gazprom in building gas pipelines from North Africa to Europe, via Italy. Gazprom is already holding talks with Nigeria about a \$13 billion project to build a pipeline 4,000 km across the Sahara, linking the Niger Delta to an export terminal on Algeria's Mediterranean coast. In Libya, Gazprom is interested in participating in the construction of the second stretch of the Sicily-Libya gas pipeline, built by the Italian ENI consortium. ENI, the largest foreign operator in Libya, discussed earlier this month in Moscow a swap of a quota with Gazprom in the Libyan "Elephant" oilfield.

Apparently, Putin discussed that with Qaddafi. Russia agreed to write off \$4.5 billion of debt for Libya in exchange for a multi-billion-dollar contract with Russian companies, which includes a contract for Russian Railways, the national rail company, to build a 554-km line between the cities of Sirte and Benghazi.

Russia Warns of 'Large-Scale Conflict' Around Kosovo

April 16 (EIRNS)—Russia has warned officially of an escalating Balkans crisis, in the setting of reported EU Commission readiness to ask NATO for military assistance in northern Kosovo, where the ethnic Serb majority is vigorously resisting the EU's attempts to take over the civilian administration on behalf of the Pristina government. The latter declared Kosovo's independence Serbia in February, but the Serb minority in the Albanian-majority province rejects the secession and Pristina's authority. Several attempts by the EU to take over administrative functions in Mitrovica, a heavily Serb-populated city in northern Kosovo, have failed.

On April 10, a Russian foreign ministry statement, "Regarding Media Reports Concerning Strong-Arm Measures the International Presences in Kosovo Are Preparing Against Kosovo Serbs," warned that provocations could cause "an accelerated division of the province [Kosovo] and a large-scale conflict in the region." The term "international presences" denotes NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Neither UNMIK nor the new EU structures are currently able to function in Mitrovica. The Russian statement cited alleged actions being prepared "against the Kosovo Serbs, in order to provoke them to retaliatory measures." The foreign ministry called on the EU and NATO to show restraint.

On April 15, Russian ambassador to the EU Vladimir Chizhov warned that the EU should not attempt to deploy its police and justice mission in Kosovo, known as EULEX, to Serb-populated areas, without permission from the Serbian government in Belgrade. He also warned them not to "reestablish those elements of the international presence that have had difficulty in northern Kosovo by [their use of] force." Chizhov announced that Russia would take actions through the UN, should the EU seek to deploy EULEX into Serb-populated areas of Kosovo.

On April 11, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov discussed the Kosovo situation with visiting UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. Afterwards Lavrov said that the world has seen too many problems due to "unilateral actions without the United Nations and in contravention of the UN Charter," and that he hoped "everyone would learn a lesson from that

experience, and focus on the UN's central role in conflict and crisis resolution."

Russian Officials Push 'Global' Missile Defense

April 12 (EIRNS)—In the aftermath of his talks with President Bush at Sochi on April 6, where the issue of Russia's opposition to U.S. anti-missile facilities in Poland and the Czech Republic was not resolved, President Vladimir Putin emphasized once again that Russia has not abandoned Putin's proposals for what he calls "a global missile defense system," involving both the U.S.A. and Russia. He initially put forward the idea at last year's talks with Bush in Kennebunkport, Maine. "The most important thing," Putin said at the April 6 joint press conference, is "if, at the expert level, and then at the political level, we are able to start cooperation on a global missile defense system, as we are now talking about—missile defense in Europe—if we manage to achieve this kind of level of cooperation on a global missile defense system, this will be the best kind of result."

Interviewed April 8 on radio Ekho Moskvyy, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said, in even sharper terms than previously, that a true "global system" would have to involve "the permanent presence of our officers" on-site, something to which the United States has not agreed.

Chief of the Russian Armed Forces General Staff Yuri Baluyevsky took related diplomacy into Asia, with an April 12 visit to Japan. Following talks with Adm. Takashi Saito, chief of Japan's Self-Defense Forces, Baluyevsky told the press that "Japan is not planning to integrate its national missile shield into the U.S. global missile network"—i.e., one not including Russia—though Japan would continue its close cooperation with the United States for its own missile defense system. Japan has a cooperation arrangement with the United States, concluded in December 2004, to build a national missile-defense network of sea- and land-based components by 2011. Tokyo has authorized using U.S. SM-3 interceptor missiles as part of Japan's two-layered missile shield, and Japan became the only nation to join a SM-3 test with the United States in December 2007.

Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda is due in Moscow April 25 for a three days of meetings with Putin, President-elect Dmitri Medvedev, and other officials.

Ukraine-Russia Sparring Rises in Wake Of NATO Summit

April 19 (EIRNS)—The Ukrainian foreign ministry officially protested on April 10 against statements made by Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and other Russian officials, in the wake of the Bucharest NATO summit at the beginning of this month. On that occasion, the U.K. and U.S.A. had pushed for adoption of NATO Membership Action Plans (MAP) for Ukraine and Georgia, in line with the British drive to confront Russia with an ever eastward-expanding NATO. The MAPs were postponed, but President Bush immediately said he wanted to put them back on the agenda within this year.

In an April 9 interview on radio Ekho Moskvyy, Lavrov stressed that Moscow sees such expansion as a security threat, saying, "We shall do everything to prevent Ukraine and Georgia from being accepted into NATO." Gen. Yuri Baluyevsky, two days later, spoke out even more bluntly. He said that if Georgia or Ukraine joins NATO, "Russia will take unambiguous action toward ensuring its interests along its borders. These will not only be military measures, but also steps of a different character."

While those were public comments, *Kommersant* newspaper poured oil on the fire by publishing an unsubstantiated report that President Putin, behind closed doors at the Bucharest summit, had lost his temper, told Bush that Ukraine was "not even a country," and warned that if Ukraine joined NATO, Russia would reclaim Crimea (which was attached to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, within the USSR, under Nikita Khrushchov in 1953). The Ukrainian foreign ministry

protest cited the *Kommersant* rumor.

The NATO issue is front and center in Ukraine, which is teetering on the brink of another government collapse, if the one-seat "orange" parliamentary alliance of Premier Yulia Tymoshenko's bloc and President Victor Yushchenko's forces fails to hold. Opposition Party of Regions (POR) leader Victor Yanukovich today forecast the imminent breakup of the ruling coalition. POR spokesman Taras Chornovil has announced that the party will toughen up its anti-NATO stance for the next election. Staunch NATO opponent Natalia Vitrenko, head of the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine, is campaigning in various cities against NATO, joining the Communist Party in an effort to block this Summer's Sea Breeze NATO maneuvers in the Black Sea. Vitrenko says there need be no referendum on NATO in Ukraine, since the country's independence referendum in the early 1990s established it as a non-nuclear, non-bloc power.

Southwest Asia News Digest

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Hamas To Accept Israel's Right To 'Live in Peace' Within '67 Borders

April 21 (EIRNS)—Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter said that Hamas is prepared to accept the right of Israel to "live in peace" within its 1967 borders. He also said the Islamist group would be willing to accept a peace deal initiated by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, if it were favored in a Palestinian national referendum.

"There's no doubt that both the Arab world and the Palestinians, including Hamas, will accept Israel's right to live in peace within the 1967 borders," Carter said in an April 21 speech in Jerusalem. "They said they would accept a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders if approved by Palestinians ... even though Hamas might disagree with some terms of the agreement. It means that Hamas will not undermine Abbas's efforts to negotiate an agreement, and Hamas will accept an agreement if the Palestinians support it in a free vote."

Carter, who had just returned to Israel following talks with Hamas leaders in Egypt and Syria, said Hamas wanted to hold a referendum, and that any peace deal must be preceded by reconciliation between the group and Abbas's Fatah faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

"The problem is not that I met with Hamas in Syria," Carter said in his speech. "The problem is that Israel and the United States refuse to meet with someone who must be involved."

Commenting on Hamas's discussions with Carter, Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri said that Hamas, which refuses to recognize Israel, would regard any future Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip—territories Israel captured in the 1967 Six Day War—as "transitional."

Carter said Hamas turned down his proposal for a 30-day unilateral ceasefire with Israel, but that Egypt would continue its

efforts to mediate a truce.

Carter also met in Jerusalem with Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Eli Yishai, whom he told that Hamas was prepared to release another letter from abducted Israel Defense Forces soldier Gilad Shalit to his family. According to Carter, Meshal has promised that Shalit is in good physical health.

Hamas was prepared to transfer Shalit into Egyptian hands as part of a package deal which would include the release of Palestinian prisoners. He also asked Yishai, who has offered to meet with Hamas representatives to secure a prisoner exchange, to consider meeting with officials in Egypt regarding Shalit's release. Yishai responded that he has already met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and the Egyptian intelligence chief, Omar Suleiman, on the matter, but he would consider another meeting.

Carter Welcomed by Arab Leaders

April 20 (EIRNS)—Contrary to falsified U.S. news reports, and rabid statements coming from the White House and its bootlickers, Jimmy Carter's trip to Southwest Asia, engaging Hamas leaders in talks, was a multi-faceted, well-prepared mission of diplomacy. He was received with the warmest welcome by the same top leaders who had met recently with U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney: King Abdullah II of Jordan, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, according to a well-informed Arab intelligence source based in Egypt.

Carter was welcomed on April 20 by the monarchs of Saudi Arabia and Jordan; both wanted to send a message to Washington and the Arab world, that an American policy—contrary to that of Cheney and Bush—is desired and will be supported, the source told *EIR*. The trip had the backing of key members of a group known as "The Elders," which includes former South African President Nelson Mandela and former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. Elders Carter, Mandela, and Annan particularly wanted to intervene against the British-Cheneyac policy on Hamas, and the spreading war danger in the Mideast, said the source, but Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was deployed to telephone Annan and Carter to tell them to hold off at this time. Carter went ahead with the trip.

The source noted that Carter's trip was exceptionally well thought-out. Not only did he meet with Israel's Deputy Prime Minister Yishai to open up the issue of prisoner exchange, but he also met with Noam Shalit, the father of Gilad Shalit, the IDF soldier being held by Palestinians. The Shalit supported Carter's efforts.

Israeli 'Breaking the Silence' Group Exposes Occupation

April 20 (EIRNS)—An Israeli NGO called Shovrim Shtika, or "Breaking the Silence," will publish this week the testimonies of 39 Israeli soldiers who witnessed or experienced Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) brutality against Palestinians in the occupied territories, especially Hebron, reports the London *Independent*. The organization was founded four years ago; this is a major escalation in its attempt to expose the dehumanization of Israeli soldiers by the occupation.

Recently, one IDF soldier from the Kfir Brigade, which covers Hebron, appeared on Channel 2 TV, after serving five months in prison for organizing an armed assault on Palestinian civilians. The soldier, Yaakov Gigi, said of his experience in Hebron: "To lose the human condition is to become an animal." The West Bank town of Hebron includes within it a tiny Jewish settlement populated by the worst militant fanatics, who consider Arabs to be non-human. It is protected by a major IDF contingent.

Iraq Plan Commits U.S. Forces 'in Perpetuity'

April 16 (EIRNS)—Under questioning from Sen. James Webb (D-Va.), during an April 11 hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Assistant Secretary of State David Satterfield admitted that the "framework agreement" under negotiation with Iraq would allow U.S. troops to stay there for an indefinite period of time, based on the 2002 Iraq War resolution, and according to the Bush/Cheney regime's interpretation of Executive authority.

Satterfield told Webb that the authorization "is not limited in time." Webb replied: "So, in perpetuity, arguably," then noted that in the signing statement issued with the resolution, the White House contended that Congress does not have the right to constrain the military deployment, because this would infringe on the President's authority as commander-in-chief. Satterfield had earlier testified that the agreement would include no binding commitments and thus would not require ratification by the Senate—yet it will allow U.S. forces in Iraq to conduct military operations without limit.

Committee chairman Joe Biden (D-Del.) had noted, at the outset of the hearing, that the agreement will bind the Bush Administration's successor "to what I consider to be a failed policy," and to do it "without the informed consent of the American people," by rushing to long-term agreements with Iraq without adequate public debate. This would make it harder, Biden charged, "for his successor to change course."

The agreement is the subject of discussion in France, including among the French chiefs of staff. The newspaper *Le Canard Enchaîné* reports that Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) had leaked a document relating to the agreement, apparently on behalf of those inside the military establishment opposed to Cheney's perpetual war schemes. A copy ended up in the French Embassy in Washington, and was forwarded to Paris. According to the newspaper, the United States is authorized to conduct military operations in Iraq and to detain individuals, when that is deemed necessary for security reasons.

Asia News Digest

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Bush, Neocons Ready To Expand Military Action in Pakistan

April 13 (EIRNS)—Britain's fifth column inside the United States, the Cheney-led neocons, are ready to move inside Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) along the Afghanistan border, to "smoke out" al-Qaeda. As a prelude to that, President Bush, in an interview with ABC News on April 12, said, "If another Sept. 11-style attack is being planned, it probably is being plotted in Pakistan and not Afghanistan." He claimed that if terrorists planning such attacks were in Afghanistan, they would be routed out: "We've got plenty of firepower to take on al-Qaeda cells in Afghanistan."

The U.S.-NATO foray inside Pakistan at this juncture could bring Pakistan to its knees and prepare the ground fully for a British-planned break-up of the country. This would wholly undermine the new Pakistani government, which has

acknowledged public resentment against the foreign occupiers carrying out military actions on Pakistani soil, against Pakistani citizens. Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani has said that Islamabad will be moving away from the old "war on terror" script, and would open a dialogue with the tribal leaders. An invasion of the FATA could lead to an uncontrollable level of violence and loss of lives.

Bush's threat followed a series of violent acts by the anti-U.S. and anti-NATO Afghan insurgents. Afghan and NATO forces fought a series of clashes with insurgents on April 12, in what may be a sign of increasing guerrilla activity as the Spring weather allows more freedom of movement for the fighters. Three Indians and one Afghan driver working on road construction in southwestern Afghanistan were killed in a suicide car-bombing, Afghan officials said. The Defense Ministry reported that 24 Taliban fighters had been killed in a battle with Afghan and NATO forces in the southern province of Zabul.

China Links Uighurs with Tibet Violence

April 13 (EIRNS)—China has arrested nine Tibetan Buddhist monks on charges of bombing a government building on March 23, amid simmering tension following widespread riots, Xinhua news agency reported today. The bombing of a building in the town of Gyanbe was carried out by monks from the town's Tongxia monastery, the news agency said.

Chinese officials have warned that groups campaigning for independence in Tibet have joined Muslim Uighurs fighting for an independent "East Turkistan" in the northwest region of Xinjiang. *Wen Wei Po*, a mainland-backed paper in Hong Kong, reported this week that Tibetan and Uighur forces were collaborating with al-Qaeda for actions against the Olympic Games in Beijing in August.

The link drawn between Uighur and Tibetan separatists by Beijing is nothing new, but it is significant since it provides a window on how the violence in Tibet occurred. What Beijing has not said, is that the Uighur separatists are under the control of Britain's MI6, and the alliance of these Uighurs with Tibetans is primarily a British objective to break up China, or demand concessions from China which would strengthen the City of London, just as the British East India Company did in the 19th Century, in the First Opium War.

China Changing Perspective on Poverty

April 15 (EIRNS)—The Chinese government is raising its official poverty line, in reaction to the pressure on the poor of fast-rising inflation, and to demonstrate that the government will take action on its "the population first" policy, *China Daily* reported today. By saying that the number of really poor people, 80 million, is twice the current official level, Beijing is acknowledging that it faces the huge challenge of bringing tens of millions more people out of severe poverty. In 2006, the government launched a program to eliminate rural poverty, funding very basic infrastructure and other programs, but an enormous amount remains to be done.

The new official poverty level is still abysmal—the current classification of "impoverished" is a per capita annual income of 1,067 yuan (\$152) or less; it will be raised to 1,300 yuan (\$186) a year, 20% higher, stated the Poverty Alleviation Office of the State Council. The new figure takes into account fast-rising inflation, especially in food prices, and also the changes in the yuan-dollar exchange rate.

Chinese Arable Land Just Above 'Critical' Level

April 17 (EIRNS)—China lost 40,700 hectares of its total arable land bank last year, and, with 123.73 million hectares available, China is barely about the "critical" level of 120 million set by the government, the Ministry of Land and

Resources (MLR) said yesterday. China is a big country, but most of it is mountainous, grassland, or desert. China has about 22% of the world's people, but barely 7% of its arable land, so food security is a huge challenge. Urbanization, industrialization, desertification, and reforestation programs have all contributed to reducing the land available for growing food.

The government has been able to slow down the land loss: Last year was the smallest annual decrease since 2001, when the arable land bank was 127.6 million hectares. Now Beijing is working on a long-term land usage plan that will run until 2020. Hu Cunzhi, head of the MLR planning commission, said that the plan "is to better protect the limited arable land and make more efficient use of areas designated for development. Unless there is a biological revolution (that boosts per-hectare grain yields), we will adhere to the bottom line to ensure people are fed," Hu said.

The government has taken strict measures to stop urban expansion on arable land. If construction or transport projects are not approved, "No water, power or gas shall be provided to these projects, and no financial institutions shall be permitted to offer them loans," according to a recent government circular.

In another measure to protect agriculture, China will impose an additional 100% export duties on chemical fertilizers and some raw materials from April 20 to Sept. 30, the Ministry of Finance said today. This covers all regions and all kinds of exports. This is the second such measure in 2008. The duties will be 100-135%.

Gutting Agricultural Research Kills!

April 15 (EIRNS)—"Now we're paying the price for decades of neglect of agricultural research," said Robert Zeigler, director general of the International Rice Research Institute, based in the Philippines. The IRRI is one of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) institutions around the world, set up under the initiative of Franklin Roosevelt's Vice President, Henry Wallace, which have been the backbone of the Green Revolution since World War II. Zeigler, in an interview with *EIR* in December 2006, warned precisely of the current grain disaster if the collapse of grain stocks (due to globalization), the gutting of research funding to the CGIAR and related institutes, and the insanity of biofuels were not immediately reversed.

The IRRI newsletter for April-June 2008 quotes the former head of the Thai Rice Exporters Association, claiming that the price of rice "will have to rise to the point where rice can compete financially with fuel crops."

The newsletter also reports that recent pledges of funding for IRRI from Japan, Germany, and the U.K., are being eaten up by cuts in aid from the United States. IRRI is increasingly dependent on donations from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to sustain even their slower pace of research, even while the growth of per-acre yields stagnates, and famine spreads.

During the same time period that IRRI and sister R&D centers experienced funding cuts, research results for seed improvements were—for the first time in history—allowed to be patented by Cargill, Monsanto, and others of the agro-cartel, which are now making a killing from biofuels and food shortages.

Africa News Digest

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Brown Snubbed by Mbeki, Preempted by African Union

April 17 (EIRNS)—South African President Thabo Mbeki snubbed British Prime Minister Gordon Brown yesterday morning in New York, cancelling a meeting with him, which was to take place before the UN Security Council meeting—chaired by Mbeki—took place. Zimbabwe's election, which has been the subject of a broad British propaganda campaign, had been kept off the agenda by Mbeki, but Brown sneaked the issue in during his comments yesterday. Brown, has been called a "little tiny dot in the world" by Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe, charged: "No one thinks, having seen the results at the polling stations, that President Mugabe has won this election. So let a single clear message go out from here that we ... stand solidly behind democracy and human rights for Zimbabwe...." This is British code for the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), which they are sponsoring. "A stolen election would not be a democratic election at all," Brown pontificated.

But the wind had already been taken out of his sails. Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete said the Southern Africa Development Community was taking care of the situation. He praised the SADC for doing a "tremendous job ... to ensure that the will of the people of Zimbabwe is respected," according to Reuters. Tanzania is the current chairman of the African Union (AU).

Having failed to hijack the Security Council meeting, which Mbeki had called as a joint UN-AU meeting to get the UN moving on funding peacekeeping operations in Africa, Brown has been reduced to arm-twisting other African leaders to pressure Mbeki to abandon a policy which the British claim is biased in favor of Mugabe. Mbeki was appointed by the 14-nation SADC to mediate between the Zimbabwean government and the opposition, and has used the position to hold off the British. The desperate Brown even tried to get Kikwete to pressure Mbeki to abandon Mugabe, according to the South African *Independent* today. Zimbabwe opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai tried to help Brown out, calling today for Mbeki to be replaced as SADC mediator in Zimbabwe, according to the German Press Agency.

The *Independent* today quotes an unnamed British official source saying, "We are worried that if we attack Mbeki, he will become more stubborn than ever. He did that over AIDS in Africa and we don't want that to happen on Zimbabwe." This is a reference to Mbeki's declaration that the high rate of AIDS in Africa was not due to Africans being promiscuous, as the Malthusian racists like Al Gore would say, but due to poverty, and lack of sufficient health care and economic development.

After he was snubbed by Mbeki yesterday, Brown cancelled his press conference, apparently worried that answering questions about Mbeki's snub would play to the advantage of Mbeki, his primary enemy in southern Africa.

Chinese Attack Campaign Against Their Role in Africa

PARIS, April 18 (EIRNS)—A conference entitled "China in Africa: Only a Quest for Energy Resources?" took place here, at the press center of the Foreign Affairs Ministry, featuring Hongyi Wang, the deputy director of the Department of Studies of the World in Development center at the China Institute of International Studies (CIIS), and secretary general of its study center on Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. The conference was organized by the Asia Center, based in Paris, and is part of a Chinese offensive to counter hostile propaganda against its intervention in Africa. Wang Hongyi, who was ambassador to Cameroon in 2002, introduced noted that China's interest in Africa goes a long way back. After

the creation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, China started its socialist assistance policy towards Africa and other areas of the world, building factories, hospitals, schools, and infrastructure. The best known of such Chinese-assisted projects is the ambitious 1,860-km Tanzania-Zambia railway line, concluded in 1976, a technological feat because it went through mountains, valleys, and forests. To this project the Chinese contributed loans without interest, for a total of 988 million yuan, and mobilized the participation of 50,000 Chinese engineers and technicians.

While the relationship with Africa started first as one of assistance, now, says Hongyi Wang, it is one of full partnership. Trade increased by 30% between 2002 and 2007. In 2007 alone, the increase relative to 2000 was 32.5%. According to the Chinese Ministry of Economics, China's contribution to African development is around 20%. China is currently investing in 49 countries, in raw materials exploration and exploitation, transports, and energy. The Chinese objective is that trade reach \$100 billion by 2010. For China, the priority will be to increase imports from Africa, eliminating tariffs from most African products.

Africa needs Chinese technologies, said Wang Hongyi, declaring that a Sino-African development fund of \$5 billion has been created, to support Chinese companies that want to invest in Africa, which has been divided in five development zones for this purpose.

Wang Hongyi announced that the objectives adopted at the Sino-African Development Forum of November 2006 have been concretized: Preferential loans to Africa have increased by \$3 billion; debt-cancelling programs have been completed with all countries; and products without tariffs have gone from 280 to 440.

Many African journalists and associations attended the press conference. Those asking questions were favorable to Chinese involvement, but such a large-scale intervention is also creating tension between Chinese workers and the African populations. Questioners pointed out the need for the Chinese to develop local manpower, to increase their interactions with the population, and to take into account the differences in cultures.

Ethiopia Opens Commodities Exchange, Bans Futures Trading

April 20 (EIRNS)—Ethiopia will open Africa's newest exchange for agricultural commodities this week, called ECX, the London *Financial Times* reports today. It will not permit futures trading. The British newspaper attacks the ban, saying a similar move in India last year proved unsuccessful. At the Addis Abeba market, spot contracts for commodities produced in Ethiopia—wheat, corn, haricot beans, and sesame seeds—will be traded. Buyers will be required to deposit cash to cover the full value of their purchase the day before trades are executed, to deter speculation and prevent defaults.

The *Financial Times* says accusingly that Ethiopia is one of Africa's most state-dominated economies and its reluctance to allow futures trading, which pre-dates the current food price crisis, is rooted in suspicion of free markets.

Niger Supports China, Calls for Nuclear Power

PARIS, April 18 (EIRNS)—At a press conference here yesterday, Niger Communication Minister Mohamed Ben Omar, speaking about Niger's development programs, noted that the presence of China and other developing nations in Africa has reinforced the independence of Niger, which, he said, is now able to negotiate higher prices and better conditions for contracts with mining and oil companies.

The purpose of his press conference was to outline what the country is doing with these increased revenues. He indicated the countries to which the 141 exploration permits for uranium, oil, gold, copper, platinum, and other raw materials were granted. The list includes France, China, India, Canada, Britain, and the United States. In the area of oil exploration, in

particular, he mentioned CNPC from China and the Algerian Sonatrach as being among the main recipients of those contracts.

As to the improvements derived from this new wealth to the country, he pointed out that 15% of the benefits of oil and uranium are turned over to the development of the areas where these raw materials are exploited. He was particularly proud to announce that never again would his country, one of the richest in terms of raw materials, allow itself to be treated as one of the poorest in Africa, begging for hand-outs. He also called for nuclear power to be developed in his country.

He said the country is not among those presently hit by famine, because Niger has a stocking system that it developed following a famine in 2005. Niger's agriculture is very poor, due to the lack of rain, and the fact that the part of Lake Chad which is in Niger has completely dried out, has left that area of the country without local water sources. *EIR*'s Paris correspondent asked the Ben Omar what is being done with the project to supply water to Lake Chad, and whether Niger, with its new resources, could carry the greater part of the financial burden for this project. The minister responded that at a recent meeting of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the member-states decided to fund feasibility studies for the transfer of water from the Chari and the Oubangui rivers to nourish Lake Chad. He said Niger President Mamadou Tandja, who presided over that institution until this month, is determined to move ahead with the project.

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