

International Intelligence

Menem rejects pardon for war hero Seineldín

Argentine President Carlos Menem officially rejected any pardon for Col. Mohamed Alí Seineldín and the other officers associated with him, who were imprisoned for their part in a December 1990 uprising. Menem told the press on Dec. 26 to “forget about pardons,” in response to questions about the 24-hour Christmas furlough that Seineldín and three other officers were granted. He was thereby closing the door on speculation about a possible pardon, which his government had encouraged. Menem called the granting of a furlough a “humanitarian gesture,” which he said was “not harmful, quite the opposite.”

The case continued in the limelight, on Dec. 27, as his wife Marta Labiau de Seineldín gave several interviews, and various Presidential candidates “took stands,” on whether there should be a pardon for Seineldín, known as the hero of the 1982 Malvinas War against Britain. Would-be President Sen. Graciela Fernández M. of the London-favored Alianza party, called the furlough “scandalous,” because other prisoners were not also granted furloughs, a complaint echoed by jailed members of the “All for the Fatherland” (MTP) terrorists and the *Página 12* daily.

The decision to, once again, refuse a pardon was no “internal” decision, however. When Argentina’s Defense Minister Jorge Domínguez was in London to confer with the British Defense Secretary and other officials in early December, *Clarín’s* London correspondent pointedly asked him if a pardon for Seineldín and his associates had been raised in the meetings. Domínguez simply sidestepped the question.

Kharrazi: Dialogue, not clash of civilizations

In the course of his late-December visit to Athens, Iranian Foreign Minister Dr. Kamal Kharrazi proposed the holding of a dialogue among the ancient civilizations of Iran, Egypt, Rome, and Greece, according to a report from IRNA, the Iranian news agency.

He said that both Italy and Greece had responded favorably, and that Iran had to discuss it with Egypt.

Kharrazi told the Greek newspaper *Kiriakatiki* on Dec. 28, that the dialogue with the United States would not unfold unless the latter ceased its hostile attitude, and stressed, “We respect all the peoples of the world, and we differentiate between the American people and its government. The American people are a great people, with a great civilization. . . .” He said, the hostile attitude to Iran continued, and cited a report, that the U.S. Congress had endorsed budget allocations of \$20 million to topple the Iranian government.

JDL thugs busted in plan to desecrate mosque

Two leaders of the Jewish Defense League/Kach party were arrested by Israeli authorities in mid-December, for planning to throw a pig’s head—an abomination to Muslims and Jews alike—into the Al Aqsa Mosque on the “Temple Mount,” at the beginning of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which started on Dec. 30. One of the two, Avigdor Eskin, had founded the JDL chapter in Moscow in the early 1970s. Earlier in 1997, he had been sentenced to four months in prison, for having publicly placed a cabalistic death curse on Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, one month before Rabin was murdered on Nov. 4, 1995, by Eskin’s crony, Yigal Amir.

“If this plan would have been put into action, I think a lot of blood, both Jewish and Arab, would have been spilled on the Temple Mount,” Jerusalem police chief Yair Yitzhaki said.

According to the Dec. 30 London *Times*, Israel’s senior police officer, Inspector General Assaf Hefetz, said on Dec. 29 that hundreds of Jewish extremists are preparing to incite a bloody conflict with Arabs. He appealed to rabbis and “right-wing” politicians to restrain extremists such as Eskin and Haim Pakovitch, who was arrested with him in the plot. A former deputy chief of Shin Bet, Gideon Ezra, told the *Times* that “all the rabbis and all the people associated with the extreme right wing should denounce this alleged plot by Eskin and his associates. If anyone has reason to believe that somebody

intends to commit a serious act, they should inform the authorities and stop whatever is planned before it happens.”

Eliahu Bakshi-Doron, Israel’s chief Sephardic rabbi, responded to the call, writing in a letter to Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat: “We were sad to hear of the criminal plot by extremists, who wished to harm the faith and the faithful, and inflame relations between the religions. We denounce any attempt and evil thought which could put off peace and friendship.”

Sonia Gandhi to campaign for Congress Party (I)

Sonia Gandhi, the widow of assassinated former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, and Indira Gandhi’s daughter-in-law, has agreed to campaign for the Congress Party (I) in the upcoming national elections, *The Hindu* reported Dec. 30. Mrs. Gandhi said she would campaign “for the party at this difficult moment,” Congress (I) President Sitaram Kesri announced. He expressed his gratitude to Mrs. Gandhi for acceding to “our request” to help campaign. This will be Mrs. Gandhi’s first public emergence into politics since her husband was assassinated in 1991.

Indira Gandhi’s father, Jawaharlal Nehru, was a pre-Independence Congress Party leader, and became India’s first Prime Minister. In the late 1970s, after suffering severe electoral defeats, the party rallied around her, calling itself the Congress (I), for Indira.

On Jan. 1, the Indian Election Commission announced that nationwide parliamentary elections would be held on Feb. 16, Feb. 22, Feb. 28, and March 7.

Britain had MI6 spy on European Union allies

The *Times* of London previewed a Jan. 4 BBC2 television broadcast, quoting successive foreign secretaries that Britain had used its foreign intelligence agency MI6 to spy on its European allies over the years. In its Jan. 2 issue, the *Times* wrote of the broadcast, titled “How To Be a Foreign Secretary”:

“Confirmation of the widely held suspi-

HELMUT KOHL, Germany's Chancellor, was made an honorary citizen of London on Jan. 5, being given the "freedom of the city of London," the first continental European to be so "honored." The award was a result of his slavish implementation of Thatcherite economics in the name of upholding the Maastricht criteria for monetary union.

SOUTHEAST ASIA'S illegal drug trade has boomed recently, especially in marijuana and the deadly amphetamine "ice." The cut-off of U.S. and European anti-drug aid to Cambodia has encouraged pushers to shift their routes through there. Thailand's Narcotics Control Board chief Payont Panthasri said that the "rising unemployment and bankruptcy has resulted in a sharp increase in the number of drug pushers," and a sharp drop in the price of amphetamines.

THE WORLD LIKUD convention in Jerusalem on Dec. 22 was adjourned just hours after its opening, when a group of French delegates, supported by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, started fist-fights over an effort by World Likud chairman, Tel Aviv Mayor Roni Milo, to sponsor an anti-Netanyahu candidate to succeed him as chairman. The *Jerusalem Post* called it "the culmination of the deepening rift between Netanyahu and his party's veteran leadership."

SOUTHERN THAILAND was hit on Dec. 30 by its worst terrorist incident in months, by the small Muslim separatist Pattani United Liberation Organization, which operates in the area of the Thai-Malaysian border. PULO planted a bomb at a school fair, killing three teenagers and injuring 12 others. PULO has recently assassinated seven security officials, and made an attempt on Maj. Gen. Sanan Kachornprasart, who was just named Interior Minister.

SOUTH AFRICA cut its ties with Taiwan, which closed its Pretoria embassy on Dec. 31; China opened its embassy in the South Africa capital on Jan. 1.

cion that Britain's intelligence network has been eavesdropping on Brussels, Paris, and Bonn, comes only days after Tony Blair took over the presidency of the EU [European Union]. Lord Owen, the last Labour Foreign Secretary, has admitted MI6 had provided intelligence material before key negotiations in Europe. He is not alone. Lord Hurd of Westwell, Foreign Secretary under Margaret Thatcher and John Major, also admitted as much. . . .

"Mr. Cook, the first Labour Foreign Secretary for almost 20 years, was also asked whether he had sanctioned spying on his EU counterparts. He said: 'I am sorry, I cannot talk about that. . . . It is secret information. We never discuss that.'"

The *Times* added that MI6 is not London's sole spy agency deployed against the EU: "GCHQ, the worldwide eavesdropping network in Cheltenham which listens in on Britain's enemies, has a role closer to home." U.S. intelligence sources have stated with certainty that Cheltenham GCHQ does target EU member countries, including covert action.

Italian architect plans 'Ancient Rome' theme park

According to an article in the Jan. 2 *Washington Post*, the return of Ancient Rome—this time as theme park, rather than blood-drenched imperium—is being planned by Italian architect Luigi Pellegrin, prompting one scholar to characterize the project as "Pilgrim's Regress." In the poverty-stricken little town of Castel Giorgio, 45 miles north of the real Rome, Pellegrin and his partners intend to build a three-quarter scale model of Imperial Rome—a "\$250 million project . . . to include a historical theme park, where visitors can don togas, listen to orations and watch chariot races at the Circus Maximus or gladiator contests at the Colosseum." Pellegrin et al. also plan to use the theme park as a set for movie and television productions; tourists, having donned their togas, can act as extras in crowd scenes.

If this new theme park goes through (there are stiff objections from many strata of Italian society), its owners hope to open it in the year 2000, to capitalize on the pres-

ence of the millions of real pilgrims who will stream into the real Rome to celebrate the millennium Jubilee.

A most revolting aspect of the project does not appear to have attracted any notice: the notion of a "sentimental journey" through what was, after all, the murderer of millions, the enslaver of the known world, the model for subsequent empires, including the British, and the city represented in the Biblical Book of Revelation as the Whore of Babylon.

New appeal launched for food for North Korea

At a press conference in London on Jan. 6, World Food Program executive director Catherine Bertini appealed for \$378.2 million to expand its emergency feeding operation in North Korea to "avert a heightened threat of famine," this year. After two successive years of extensive flooding, North Korea was hit in 1996 by both severe drought and typhoon-driven storm surges that drastically reduced the harvest. Assuming normal consumption levels, food stocks could run out as early as April or May.

North Korea has been equally rationing its dwindling food supplies, leaving much of its workforce too feeble to operate factories, power plants, and farm equipment, weakening the economy, and leaving the country further prey to disease, as well as starvation.

"The international community must act now to prevent the present food shortage from developing into a famine situation," Bertini urged. The WFP and Food and Agriculture Organization, both UN agencies, estimate that the country will need just over 1 million tons of additional food aid for the 12 months beginning April 1. WFP seeks to provide 658,000 tons of assistance to 7.5 million North Koreans, one-third of the population. "In dollar terms, this is the biggest emergency operation in WFP's history," Bertini said. "The size of this new operation reflects the seriousness of the crisis in North Korea. We recognize that we are providing a short-term solution, but it is one that is absolutely vital to avert a humanitarian catastrophe." The WFP has also been supporting agricultural reconstruction.