

International Intelligence

Vietnam party chief will visit Beijing

Vietnam's Communist Party General Secretary Le Kha Phieu will visit Beijing in February, according to the *South China Morning Post*. The announcement is an indication of the improving relations between the two countries. Gen. Le Kha Phieu was invited by Chinese President Jiang Zemin. This is his second trip abroad since becoming party leader one year ago. As Vietnam's Chief of Staff, he had previously developed friendly relations with China.

The view in Hanoi, reports the *South China Morning Post*, is that China and Vietnam are facing many similar problems, including reform of the economy and the effects of the Asian financial crisis. "China can be very helpful to Vietnam in this regard," the *Morning Post* quoted one source.

Vietnamese Prime Minister Phan Van Khai, in announcing the visit on Jan. 2, said that Sino-Vietnamese relations were now of a "higher quality. . . . The leaders have reached a fundamental agreement and important mutual understanding."

Trade, which is worth an estimated \$2 billion annually, and China's relatively low level of investment in Vietnam are expected to be on the agenda. The two sides also have established the year 2000 as the deadline for discussion of resolving disputes over their common border and the Gulf of Tonkin.

London Economist attacks 'inalienable rights' idea

The City of London's weekly *Economist* has declared the U.S. Declaration of Independence commitment to the "inalienable rights" of human beings to be a delusion, under the headline "The Ostrich's View of the World." (While proclaiming the superiority of their vision, however, the *Economist's* editors historical hindsight falls short, attributing the quote to the Constitution.)

"If one is looking for an example of elite self-deception, a good place to start is the American Constitution [sic]. 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are cre-

ated equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights.' Inherent equality is a nice idea, but is it really self-evident? And as for creators and inalienable rights—debatable at best," they write.

"If the American Constitution had begun, 'It would be nice if the following things were true,' it might, admittedly, have had less impact. But in their eagerness to dress up desirable norms as unarguable facts, the framers of the Constitution were demonstrating a habit of elites throughout the ages. For motives that can be entirely honorable, even idealistic, people in power often refuse to look at things which are staring them in the face. (In this particular case, slaves and women)."

According to the weekly, the leading delusion among policy elites today is the belief that "China will not break up." "In a world of almost 200 countries," hisses the *Economist*, "is it really likely that a quarter of humanity will remain citizens of just one nation—China?"

One might ask: Is it really likely that a quarter of humanity would want to remain part of the British Empire?

Menchú book exposed as 'Lies, Rigoberta'

A new book by U.S. anthropologist David Stoll documents that the 1993 autobiography of Guatemalan "indigenist" heroine and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Rigoberta Menchú Tum is a fabrication. Stoll's book, *Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans*, was based on a decade of investigation, including archival research and more than 120 interviews, mostly with her supporters.

Her book, *I, Rigoberta*, claimed that her family had to learn to fight, to keep rich "European" landowners from stealing their land. In fact, they weren't fighting "whites," but her father's in-laws, who claimed title to their 373 acres of land. "It was a family quarrel that went on for years and years," the local mayor complained. "The Tums were our enemies," her half-sister reports. "They were always cutting the barbed wire on our

fences," so their animals could come in "to eat our corn."

She claimed that she watched her younger brother, Nicolás, die of starvation. Nicolás, her older brother, denies the story, and confirms that they had no younger brother.

She also asserted that she "never went to school"; that she was illiterate until the 1980s; that her father didn't trust education, and that she worked on the coffee plantations. Her siblings say she never worked on the plantations, because her father, determined to educate her, sent her to boarding schools from kindergarten through seventh grade. (One school, where she was considered a star pupil, was run by the Belgian Order of the Sacred Heart, which was deeply involved in the Theology of Liberation insurgency project.)

Cape Town daily blasts De Beers' aid to Savimbi

South Africa's *Cape Town Times* on Dec. 29 carried an editorial page commentary, urging that South African diplomacy would aid in ending the war in Angola, which is a danger to the entire region.

It then states: "More to the point is recognition of the fact that [rebel Jonas] Savimbi's power base is funding received from the diamond-mining districts under his control estimated to be about 800 million rand a year. The diamond concessions are held by De Beers. . . . Without that funding from diamond revenues, Savimbi's power base would crumble. As controller through its Central Selling Organization, of the majority of the world's diamond production, De Beers has it in its power to turn off the revenue taps and shut down Savimbi's operation [Unita] once and for all. . . . Peace-keeping forces, with or without South African troops, should then focus on containment to prevent diamonds leaving for funds entering Unita territory. Deprived of revenue, Savimbi's troops will desert in time. Angola, the former Zaire, Congo, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zimbabwe are already involved. Zambia could be next in line. This cannot be allowed."