

International Intelligence

Jordan's King Abdullah meets Assad in Syria

The semi-official daily *Jordan Times* on April 22 described the meeting of King Abdullah and Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad as historic, quoting a senior official as saying that "a new era in Jordanian-Syrian relations was ushered in yesterday with His Majesty King Abdullah's first visit to Damascus." Abdullah and Assad held two and a half hours of talks dealing with strengthening bilateral relations and economic cooperation such as building the Wahda Dam on the Yarmuk River, and reactivating the Jordanian-Syrian committee chaired by their prime ministers.

King Abdullah's visit to Syria, his first since ascending the throne, follows years of strained relations since Jordan signed the peace treaty with Israel in 1994 without waiting for Syria to conclude peace negotiations with Tel Aviv. Assad had not visited Jordan for five years until he made a surprise appearance at King Hussein's funeral on Feb. 8, a visit which was understood as a major tactical move against Israel.

Al-Hayat covers LaRouche on Balkans

The London-based international Arabic newspaper *Al-Hayat* commented on Lyndon LaRouche's statement, "Gore Provokes Total War," in its April 27 issue. Science and technology editor Mohammed Aref quotes LaRouche as saying: "Given the shallowness and irrationality of the U.S. governmental institutions, and those of most Euro nations, and the mass-murderous insanity of the ruling circles in Israel, and given the ongoing disintegration of the world's present financial system, the Balkan war will create the spectacle of the fools in the U.S. and other commands moving the world, phase by phase into the stage that nuclear-doomsday scenarios become virtually unstoppable. . . . This will not be merely a war fought by armies. This will be a wonders' box—a total war, fought in virtually every neighborhood of the world, thus resembling the Thirty

Years War of 1618-1648.' "

Aref continues, "Since the 1980s, LaRouche was predicting the strange events that took place in the 1990s, not merely their general lines, but each detail and the persons involved in them, their family background, their intermarriages, and their bank accounts. . . . The failure of politicians to grasp LaRouche's ideas—he wants to create a new enlightenment age—is the cause of their misguided stumbling. . . .

"LaRouche believes that saving the collapsing world economy and stopping the madness resulting from this collapse depend on two giant, scientific-economic projects. First: colonizing Mars. Second: building the New Silk Road which links Asia and Europe through railway networks and technological villages extending from Hong Kong to Rotterdam in Holland, and from Sakhalin in Russia to Dubai."

In a related development, on April 23, *El Libertador*, in the Argentine province of Corrientes, published a Spanish translation of LaRouche's statement in full.

Vitrenko preferred by Ukrainians in polls

The English-language *Kyiv Post* of April 22 reports that member of Parliament Natalya Vitrenko, leader of the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine, "for the past two months . . . has had the highest popularity ratings of all probable Presidential candidates." The elections are scheduled for this autumn.

The article by Katya Gorchinskaya leads, "If recent polls accurately predict the upcoming Presidential election, Ukraine will soon become the first former communist country to be led by a woman. . . . According to the latest monthly nationwide opinion poll by Socis-Gallup, 19% of eligible Ukrainian voters are ready to cast their ballots for Vitrenko, up from 6% when the poll was started last September. President Leonid Kuchma, who was still slightly ahead of Vitrenko in the February Socis-Gallup poll, took second place in the March and April polls, although by the bare margin of 2 percentage points."

Kyiv Post profiles Vitrenko as a "dogmatic, combative leftist," and "true Marx-

ist," who "would set the country on a course back to state control over everything and absolute isolation from the West." But, the only evidence they give is Vitrenko's call to end cooperation with the International Monetary Fund.

The article plays up allegations by supporters of Socialist Oleksandr Moroz and Communist Petro Symonenko, that the current regime would secretly support Vitrenko in order to split the left. Vitrenko, however, is quoted, "If you stand for your ideas honestly . . . people start to respect you. Even if they disagree with your views." It notes that "Vitrenko and her colleagues have traveled the country continuously, since they were elected in March 1998, to talk to the public and present their program for reversing Ukraine's post-Soviet economic debacle."

East Timorese to vote on autonomy on Aug. 8

Indonesian President B.J. Habibie and Australian Prime Minister John Howard emerged from four hours of meetings with each other and their respective ministers on April 27 to announce that a vote on expanded autonomy for East Timor has been set for Aug. 8. The date was chosen so that Habibie can report the results of the poll to the opening of the People's Consultative Assembly. The assembly could revoke the bill that legalized Indonesia's control of the province.

The initial agreement was reached at the UN in New York, between the foreign ministers of Indonesia and Portugal, the former colonial power. On April 24, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan hailed the "spirit of cooperation and citizenship" of the two foreign ministers, and praised Indonesia's commitment to ensure peace and order in East Timor in the run-up to the vote. Habibie told a press conference after the meetings that he has signed off on the proposed autonomy package, and it will be signed May 5. He also said he wants the following countries to participate in a UN "civilian police" presence in advance of the voting: Australia, U.S., Japan, Philippines, Germany (as current European Union president), and Britain.