

# International Intelligence

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## ***Pope opposes 'clash of civilizations' thesis***

Pope John Paul II opposes the "clash of civilizations" thesis of Harvard geopolitician Samuel Huntington, asserted Lucio Caracciolo, in an interview with the Jan 11 issue of the Italian Catholic daily *Avvenire*. Caracciolo is editor-in-chief of *Limes* magazine, and was referring to the Holy Father's Jan. 10 speech to the diplomatic corps. "The Pope also insists on the risks of globalization, which 'made sure that many countries were left by the wayside.'" "We should also not forget," Caracciolo continued, "more generally, his implied criticism of the 'clash of civilizations.'"

Caracciolo's comment came one day after Bishop Karl Lehmann of Mainz, Germany had called on the Pope to resign. In John Paul's remarks to the diplomatic corps, he responded to Lehmann's attack, saying, "God never demands anything which is beyond our strength. He Himself gives us the strength to accomplish what he expects from us," indicating clearly that he has no intention of resigning.

On Jan. 10, Lehmann, who heads the German Council of Bishops, told a German radio interviewer, "I think the Pontiff, who will turn 80 in May, should have the courage to say, 'I cannot lead this office any longer, in the way it would be necessary.'"

Lehmann's is an existentialist theology, called "the church from below." As a student, he wrote a thesis praising Martin Heidegger, the Nazi ideologue who has become an existentialist icon.

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## ***Putin shakes up top of Russian government***

Russian Acting President and Premier Vladimir Putin made some major changes in the upper echelons of his government on Jan. 10. There will be only one First Deputy Premier, Mikhail Kasyanov, who most recently has been the Finance Minister. Putin stated that it is quite natural for a Finance Minister to be operationally in charge of the government, adding that Kasyanov will now leave his

"shadow" role and will legally be the coordinator when the Premier is absent.

As for the departing First Deputy Premiers, V. Khristenko will remain a Deputy Premier, with the same responsibilities in the domestic economy as before. Nikolai Aksyonenko returns to his old post as Railways Minister. Sergei Shoigu, the Emergencies Minister and head of Medved (the Yedinstvo, or Unity, movement which won a plurality in the Dec. 19 elections for the State Duma), is now a Deputy Premier, with special responsibility for the Russian North.

Lastly, Putin removed Pavel Borodin as head of the Kremlin finances, Borodin being the key person on ex-President Boris Yeltsin's staff, implicated in the Mabetex and other scandals. Putin said that he would propose Borodin as Secretary of the Russia-Belarus Union.

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## ***Venezuelan bishop argues for urgent debt relief***

On Jan. 7, Msgr. Baltazar Porras, president of the Venezuelan Bishops Council, announced that the Catholic Church will launch a campaign asking foreign creditors for debt relief—effectively a moratorium—so that financial resources can be allocated to deal with the enormous destruction wrought by December's torrential rains, floods, and mudslides.

During the December referendum campaign to obtain approval of the new radical jacobin Constitution, President Hugo Chávez had viciously attacked Monsignor Porras and other clergymen, for opposing him. Monsignor Porras, known in the 1980s for his attacks on the corruption of then-President Carlos Andrés Pérez, responded that "no one, much less a politician, can become a sort of ayatollah, a Grand Inquisitor, who has the last word in all things, human and divine."

According to the newspaper *2001*, debt contracts do include a contingency clause allowing Venezuela to appeal to creditors to reschedule payment, in the event of natural disasters or a drop in oil prices, which would affect the ability to pay on time. But the revolutionary Chávez has proclaimed, "the debt

is sacred," and must be paid, no matter what. Responding to Monsignor Porras's announcement, Finance Minister José Rojas declared that "the catastrophe will *absolutely* not affect debt payments . . . the debt will be honored, just as it is, just as the President said." Rojas insisted that Venezuela has "other ways" (unspecified) of obtaining the billions of dollars needed to rebuild the ravaged parts of the country, saying, "We are perfectly prepared for this contingency." Venezuela must pay \$4 billion in debt service this year.

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## ***São Paulo Forum opposes Fujimori third-term bid***

Peruvian opposition figure and mouthpiece for the pro-terrorist São Paulo Forum, Javier Diez Canseco, has announced that his organization, Fuerza Peru, will take legal action against the four members of the National Electoral Council for "abuse of authority," for their refusal to hear legal challenges against Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori's plans to run for a third term this year. Canseco insists that the challenges will now be taken to international forums, such as the Organization of American States' Inter-American Human Rights Commission.

Anti-Fujimori forces both within and outside Peru are increasingly desperate to stop his candidacy before the spring Presidential elections, knowing that he would likely win on the first round of voting. Their efforts to come up with a single opposition candidate *before* the Jan. 10 deadline, were fruitless. Joining the São Paulo Forum, in December 1999, there were deployments from the more "respectable" British Crown, U.S. National Endowment for Democracy, Andean Commission of Jurists, and Prince Philip's Transparency International; all have failed to derail Fujimori's popularity, which is based on his anti-terrorism stance—despite his foolish adherence to neo-liberal economic policies.

Various leftist labor, peasant, and student organizations linked to the Forum came out in Lima on Jan. 4 to hold a protest in front of the Presidential palace against Fujimori's "reelectionism" and the civil-military alli-

**BURUNDI'S TUTSI** military killed at least 43 people, including children, in a massacre on a village south of the capital of Bujumbura, reported Amnesty International, according to Jan. 7 wires. According to other reports, at least 30,000 refugees crossed into Tanzania in December due to fighting in eastern Burundi. Inside Burundi, displaced persons camps, into which more than half a million Burundian Hutus have been herded, experienced an epidemic of cholera, with 200 deaths in December, alone.

**RUSSIAN COMMUNIST** Party leader Gennadi Zyuganov will run for President, as the candidate of his and allied parties, he announced on Jan. 6. There is still no announcement from former Premier Yevgeni Primakov on his political plans, since the resignation of President Boris Yeltsin.

**IRANIAN** Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazmi arrived in London on Jan. 10 for the first official visit by an Iranian Foreign Minister since 1979. Kharazmi was to spend two days in Britain, meeting with Foreign Secretary Robin Cook and Prime Minister Tony Blair. It is expected that Cook will make a visit to Iran. Arriving in London the same week was Libya's new Ambassador. British-Libyan relations had been cut since 1984.

**BERLIN'S POLICE** union is proposing to open the force up to corporate or other private sponsorship in order to paper over chronic financial shortfalls, according to the Jan. 8 *Berliner Zeitung*.

**ISRAELI** police have arrested Avi Flexer, an accountant who formerly worked for Attorney Hanina Brandes, the attorney to President Ezer Weizman, *Ha'aretz* reported on Jan. 13. Flexer is accused of stealing the financial records relating to Weizman's trust fund, which was managed by Brandes. The scandal against Weizman, who is playing an important role for peace, is being pushed by corrupt intelligence networks.

ance behind his government. Escalating protests are now planned, leading to a "national civic strike," tentatively scheduled for March 9, one month before the elections.

## ***Communal conflicts rage in Indonesia's Malukus***

In the first week of January there was a chorus of demands for the government of Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid and Vice President Megawati Sukarnoputri to cool out the Muslim-Christian conflict in the provinces of Maluku and North Maluku. Following a leadership meeting Jan. 5, the House of Representatives sent a letter to Wahid requesting urgent action to end the violence. Official estimates suggest that up to 700 have been killed since Dec. 26; of those, 450-502 alone were in North Maluku, mostly Muslims killed by Christians. However, Muslim organizations from the provinces have testified that 1,400-2,000 have been massacred.

In Jakarta, Muslims, many of them veiled women, staged a protest outside the residence of Vice President Megawati on Jan. 5, demanding her resignation for failing to exercise the mandate she had from President Wahid in October to take responsibility for handling the conflicts in the Malukus and Irian Jaya (since renamed Papua). The demonstrators threatened holy war against Christians, including in Jakarta, if the situation is not brought under control.

Indonesian Ambassador to the Vatican Irawan Abidin issued a release on Jan. 7, urging his countrymen to heed Pope John Paul II's message of Jan. 5 calling for peace. Irawan said that the Pope "has unhesitatingly repeated his messages simply because of his closeness to the Indonesian people. It is regrettable that we cannot maintain our favorable image in the international community, simply because we place individual and group interests above national interests. As a nation for whom violence is not a tradition, the Indonesian people should really pay attention to the call of the Pope, otherwise we will be confronted with more serious problems in our nationhood and statehood."

## ***Times author: Soros funding 'drug culture'***

"Britain Is Quietly Turning into a Drug Culture," headlines the *Sunday Times* commentary by Melanie Phillips. She excoriates the growing trends toward drug legalization in Britain, and singles out the role of George Soros in bankrolling the worldwide drug legalization movement. She writes: "It's no accident that there's growing acceptance of drugs legalization. There's a vast amount of money behind it. George Soros, the billionaire financier, has invested millions of dollars in influential charities that are pushing legalization. Soros wants to make most drugs legally available; he says he would first destroy the drug trade by keeping prices low and then would keep raising prices, like taxes on cigarettes, making an exception for registered addicts, 'to discourage crime.' This is utter nonsense. Lower prices would attract new customers. Governments would be turned into drug traffickers. Addiction would be institutionalized."

Phillips warns that "these insanely dangerous arguments are gaining critical mass." She writes that the various Soros-type attacks on the "global war on drugs" all "completely ignore the death, destruction and social danger produced by the drugs." She singles out the growing belief in Britain that "there is such a thing as responsible and safe drug-taking. . . . There's no such thing as a harm-free drug." Cannabis undermines the immune system, can induce psychosis, and aggravates multiple sclerosis, although pro-dope propagandists claim it helps MS sufferers.

She concludes, that with all the talk from Prime Minister Tony Blair and his advisers about fighting drugs, "if this country really wants to wage war on the drug culture, the most effective strategy would be to attack its huge profits, by cutting off the money-laundering routes established through secret banking and offshore shell companies. Would any government, though, have the bottle to take on those City financiers who, after a hard day making a fortune out of laundering drug profits, go home to snort a line or two of cocaine with their fashionable friends?"