



PROPHETIC TIMES

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ANGELA MERKEL REBUKES POPE IN HOLOCAUST ROW

February 4, 2009 TimesOnline reported: "Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, became the first world leader yesterday to condemn Pope Benedict XVI over his rehabilitation of an ultra-conservative British bishop who denies that Jews died in the Nazi Holocaust.

Ms Merkel called on the German Pope to reject publicly the views of Bishop Richard Williamson, who has denied that six million Jews were gassed in Nazi concentration camps. In a highly unusual rebuke to the Pope she said that she did not believe there had been "sufficient" clarification.

"This should not be allowed to pass without consequences," Ms Merkel, daughter of a Lutheran pastor, said. "The Pope and the Vatican should clarify unambiguously that there can be no denial and that there must be positive relations with the Jewish community overall."

Last week Pope Benedict expressed his "full and indisputable solidarity" with Jews and condemned denials of the Holocaust. Bishop Williamson had told Swedish television he believed that up to 300,000 Jews died in Nazi concentration camps, but that none were killed in gas chambers.

Cardinal Walter Kasper, head of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, which covers relations with Judaism, conceded that the episode had been mishandled. His remarks came after expressions of dismay by German bishops over a "loss of faith in the Pope" relating to the annulment of the excommunications of Bishop Williamson and three other ultra-traditionalist bishops."..."

IRAN INSISTS SATELLITE LAUNCH HAS NO MILITARY AIM

February 5, 2009 Agence France-Presse reported: "Iran insisted on Wednesday that the launch of its first home-built satellite has no military aims, despite deep concerns in arch-foe Israel and the West about the development. "This is a scientific and technical achievement and has no military aims," foreign ministry spokesman Hassan Ghashghavi told reporters.

Iran's launch of the Omid (Hope) satellite carried by the home-built Safir-2 rocket on Monday has set alarm bells ringing among Western powers already at loggerheads with Tehran over its nuclear programme.

But hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said the move signalled Tehran's technological achievement and was an attempt to break the Western world's monopoly on science. "We should try to break this scientific monopoly," he said at a seminar on science in Tehran. "Today science and other technologies are monopolised. We should try to get science out of the control of the arrogant and the selfish," he said, adding the satellite launch had raised Iran's global status "one hundred steps".



The West suspects Iran of secretly trying to build an atomic bomb and fears the technology used to launch a space rocket could be diverted into developing long-range ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads. Iran insists its nuclear programme is for peaceful energy purposes and that it has the right to technology already in the hands of many other nations, including archfoe the United States.

The West and Israel reacted strongly to the satellite launch, which came ahead of a meeting in Germany on Wednesday of senior diplomats from six world powers on the nuclear standoff.

But Ghashghavi brushed off the concerns, saying Tehran believed in "respecting international rules about non-militarised space."..."

KYRGYZSTAN BEGINS MOVES TO CLOSE US AIRBASE

February 4, 2009 Voice of America News reported: "Kyrgyzstan's government has asked parliament to approve the closure of a U.S. military air base that supplies U.S.-led troops fighting militants in Afghanistan.

Hours after a draft bill was submitted to the Kyrgyz parliament Wednesday, Moscow said it would be flexible to U.S. requests to route supplies across Russia.

The State Department has repeated that U.S. officials have not received any formal communication from Kyrgyzstan about their decision to close the base. Department spokesman Robert Wood told reporters the United States is discussing the matter with Kyrgyzstan and will address the topic with Russia. He also said the Obama administration will do contingency planning if U.S. access to the base ends.

The Manas airbase is an important staging post for the U.S.-led military campaign against the Taliban.

On Tuesday, Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev said the base would be closed. He made the announcement shortly after the Central Asian nation secured \$2 billion in loans and aid from Russia."..."

MOSCOW MOVES TO COUNTER U.S. POWER IN CENTRAL ASIA

February 5, 2009 The Wall Street Journal reported: "Russia is reasserting its role in Central Asia with a Kremlin push to eject the U.S. from a vital air base and a Moscow-led pact to form an international military force to rival NATO -- two moves that potentially complicate the new U.S. war strategy in Afghanistan.

On Wednesday, Russia announced a financial rescue fund for a group of ex-Soviet allies and won their agreement to form a military rapid reaction force in the region that it said would match North Atlantic Treaty Organization standards. That came a day after Kyrgyzstan announced, at Russian urging, that it planned to evict the U.S. from the base it has used to ferry large numbers of American troops into Afghanistan. Russia said the base may house part of the planned new force instead.

The steps mark Russia's most aggressive push yet to counter a U.S. military presence in the region that it has long resented. They pose a challenge for the administration of President Barack Obama, which sees Afghanistan as its top foreign-policy priority and is preparing to double the size of the American military presence there.

The developments also underscore the difficulties for Mr. Obama as he seeks to build a closer relationship with Moscow. Russia is signaling that it will be a tough defender of its interests, especially in its traditional backyard of the former Soviet Union. Though its huge cash reserves are rapidly draining because of falling oil prices, the greater needs of its poorer neighbors are still giving it an opening.

"Russia would like to reassert itself in the region, and it is using the financial crisis as an opportunity," said Nikolai Zlobin, senior fellow at the World Security Institute, a Washington think tank.

Russian paratroopers are to form the core of the new military force, which is planned to be about 10,000 men. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said the force will be ready "to rebuff military aggression," fight terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime, and handle natural and technological disasters.

"These are going to be quite formidable units," Mr. Medvedev said. "According to their combat potential, they must be no weaker than similar forces of the North Atlantic alliance."

When Kyrgyzstan said Tuesday that it intended to shut the base to U.S. troops, Moscow announced that it was extending the country \$2 billion in loans plus \$150 million in financial aid. That's a tidal wave of cash for Kyrgyzstan, whose budget is barely more than \$1 billion, and whose populace has been harried by electric shortages, rising food prices and rampant unemployment.

The Kremlin also is discussing aid packages to Armenia and Belarus, other former satellites hit hard by the financial crisis."..."

BIBI VOWS TO TOPPLE HAMAS IF ELECTED

February 3, 2009 The Jerusalem Post reported: "Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu on Tuesday promised that a government under his leadership would topple the Hamas regime in the Gaza Strip.

"[Kadima leader] Tzipi Livni and the people of Kadima scoffed at the predictions regarding rocket fire. A government under my leadership will overthrow the Hamas rule in Gaza and bring about a cessation of rocket fire," Netanyahu said during a tour of Ashkelon following the first Grad rocket attack since the conclusion of Operation Cast Lead some two weeks ago.



"The policy of blindness followed in the past years has brought us to this situation," Netanyahu continued. "Residents can no longer count on miracles and Kadima policy."...

Meanwhile, Defense Minister and Labor leader Ehud Barak said that despite the continued rocket fire, Hamas was still interested in maintaining a state of calm in Gaza."..."

FLA. DOCTOR INVESTIGATED IN BADLY BOTCHED ABORTION

February 5, 2009 The Buffalo News reported: "Eighteen and pregnant, Sycoria Williams went to an abortion clinic outside Miami and paid \$1,200 for Dr. Pierre Jean-Jacque Renelique to terminate her 23-week pregnancy. Three days later, she sat in a reclining chair, medicated to dilate her cervix and otherwise get her ready for the procedure.

Only Renelique didn't arrive in time. According to Williams and the Florida Department of Health, she went into labor and delivered a live baby girl. What Williams and the Health Department say happened next has shocked people on both sides of the abortion debate: One of the clinic's owners, who has no medical license, cut the infant's umbilical cord. Williams says the woman placed the baby in a plastic biohazard bag and threw it out.

Police recovered the decomposing remains in a cardboard box a week later after getting anonymous tips. "I don't care what your politics are, what your morals are, this should not be happening in our community," said Tom Pennekamp, a Miami attorney representing Williams in her lawsuit against Renelique (ren-uh-LEEK') and the clinic owners."..."

SYRIA PREPARED MASSIVE MISSILE STRIKES ON ISRAEL

February 4, 2009 Middle East Newsline reported: "Israel has determined that Syria was preparing to launch massive missile strikes on the Jewish state. Officials said Syria has been upgrading its Scud C and Scud D medium-range ballistic missile arsenal in cooperation with Iran and North Korea.

They said Syria's military was preparing to use these missiles in any war with Israel. "My hypothesis is that we are on a collision course with Syria, and next time there will be rockets in large numbers that target Tel Aviv," Amos Gilead, a senior Defense Ministry official, said. "It is not certain that we will be able to respond."

*Compiled by L. Jim Tuck, Pastor
UCGIA Oakland, San Jose, and Santa Rosa
ljt5053@sbcglobal.net*