



PROPHETIC TIMES

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ISRAEL'S CHIEF RABBINATE SEVERS VATICAN TIES

January 28, 2009 Breitbart.com reported: "Israel's chief rabbinate severed ties with the Vatican on Wednesday to protest a papal decision to reinstate a bishop who publicly denied 6 million Jews were killed during the Holocaust.



The Jewish state's highest religious authority sent a letter to the Holy See expressing "sorrow and pain" at the papal decision. "It will be very difficult for the chief rabbinate of Israel to continue its dialogue with the Vatican as before," the letter said. Chief rabbis of both the Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews were parties to the letter.

The rabbinate, which faxed a copy of the letter to The Associated Press, also canceled a meeting with the Vatican set for March. The rabbinate and the state of Israel have separate ties with the Vatican, and Wednesday's move does not affect state relations.

Pope Benedict XVI, faced with an uproar over the bishop, said Wednesday he feels "full and indisputable solidarity" with Jews and warned against any denial of the full horror of the Nazi genocide. The remarks were his first public comments on the issue since the controversy erupted Saturday.

Israel

The Vatican spokesman, the Rev. Federico Lombardi, said the Vatican hoped that in light of the pope's words, "the difficulties expressed by the Israeli Rabbinate can be subjected to further and deeper reflection."

Lombardi expressed hope that dialogue between the two parties can continue "fruitfully and serenely."

Oded Weiner, the director general of the chief rabbinate's office, welcomed the pope's remarks, calling them "a big step toward reconciliation."

With his comments, the pope reached out to Jews angered by his decision to rehabilitate bishop Richard Williamson, who told Swedish TV in an interview broadcast last week that evidence "is hugely against 6 million Jews being deliberately gassed." He said 300,000 Jews were killed at most, "but not one of them by gassing in a gas chamber."..."

IRAN TELLS U.S. TO SHOW CHANGE IN POLICY NOT TACTICS

January 28, 2009 Reuters reported: "Iran said on Wednesday it would welcome President Barack Obama's offer of a change in U.S. policy provided it involved a withdrawal of U.S. troops from abroad and an apology for past "crimes" against Tehran. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was speaking after Obama offered to extend a hand of peace if Iran "unclenched its fist."

This marked a new approach from George W. Bush, who had sought to isolate Tehran, and Western diplomats said the change in Washington could offer a "once-in-a-generation" chance for the two foes to end three decades of hostility.

But the diplomats said that, while some pragmatic voices in Iran wanted better ties with the West, more hardline voices who control key levers of power could block an opening amid fears that Washington still wants to undermine the ruling system.

"We welcome change but on condition that change is fundamental and on the right track," Ahmadinejad told a rally in western Iran, broadcast live on state television.

"When they say policy would change, it means they would end America's military presence around the world," he said, referring to U.S. troops in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere in the world. Ahmadinejad said any change that was merely a shift in tactics would "soon be revealed."

BLEEDING BANKS PROMPT TALK OF NEW BIG U.S. BAILOUT

January 27, 2009 Reuters reports: "Major U.S. banks are still hemorrhaging red ink, despite massive taxpayer aid, and President Barack Obama is under pressure to take a high-stakes political gamble -- asking for another bailout. Whether he would get one from a skeptical Congress is unclear, given the wide dissatisfaction with the first bailout, known as the Troubled Asset Relief Program, or TARP, a \$700 billion fund to stabilize the banks and Wall Street.

The political danger of backing another aid package was vivid on Thursday when the House of Representatives voted 270-155 against releasing a second allotment of \$350 billion to the TARP. The money will be released, nonetheless, because the Senate previously voted not to block the funds.

With the most recent TARP vote as a backdrop, analysts said that, if Obama sought more bailout money and Congress approved it, financial markets and bankers would certainly be pleased.

But lawmakers who voted in favor of such a program could pay a high price with voters in elections two years away.

And if the new president requested more money and Congress rejected him, the markets might plunge like they did last year when the Bush administration's initial TARP funding request was defeated, although it was later approved."..."

AL QAIDA MULLS TRUCE WITH OBAMA

January 29, 2009 Middle East Newsline reported: "President Barack Obama has been overseeing an effort to chieve an informal U.S. truce with Al Qaida. Diplomatic sources said Obama has engaged several Arab intermediaries to relay messages to and from Al Qaida. The sources said Al Qaida has offered what they termed a truce in exchange for a U.S. military withdrawal from Afghanistan.

"For the last few months, Obama has been receiving and sending feelers to those close to Al Qaida on whether the group would end its terrorist campaign against the United States," a diplomatic source said. "Obama sees this as helpful to his plans to essentially withdraw from Afghanistan and Iraq during his first term in office."

The sources said Obama has deemed a U.S. reconciliation with the Muslim world, including Iran, his main foreign policy goal. They said the president has been aided by a coterie of Gulf Arab Muslims with ties to the Al Qaida leadership in Pakistan."

RUSSIA, CHINA BLAME WOES ON CAPITALISM

January 29, 2009 The Wall Street Journal reported: "The premiers of Russia and China slammed the U.S. economic system in speeches Wednesday, holding it responsible for the global economic crisis. Both focused on the role of the U.S. dollar, with China's Premier Wen Jiabao calling for better regulation of major reserve currencies and Russia's Prime Minister Vladimir Putin calling over-reliance on the dollar "dangerous."

Speaking on the opening day of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, they both urged more international cooperation to escape the downturn. They also talked up the abilities of their own economies to ride out the recession. Mr. Wen said he was "confident" China would hit its 8% growth target for this year even though that was "a tall order."

The Russian and Chinese leaders also called for cooperation with U.S. President Barack Obama, but it was a chilly reception for the new administration that reflected growing anger in economies that are now getting hit hard by a financial crisis that began with subprime mortgages sold in the U.S.

Mr. Putin was characteristically blunt. He called for the development of multiple, regional reserve currencies in addition to the dollar. "Excessive dependence on a single reserve currency is dangerous for the global economy," Mr. Putin said. The Russian leader mocked U.S. businessmen who he said had boasted at last year's Davos meeting of the U.S. economy's fundamental strength and "cloudless" prospects. "Today, investment banks, the pride of Wall Street, have virtually ceased to exist," he said.

Earlier, Mr. Wen called for an expansion of regulatory "coverage of the international financial system, with particular emphasis on strengthening the supervision on major reserve currencies."

While Mr. Wen never named the U.S., his critique of its failings was as sweeping as Mr. Putin's. The financial crisis, he said, was "attributable to inappropriate macroeconomic policies of some economies and their unsustainable model of development characterized by prolonged low savings and high consumption; excessive expansion of financial institutions in blind pursuit of profit" -- and other excesses.

"The entire economic growth system, where one regional center prints money without respite and consumes material wealth, while another regional centre manufactures inexpensive goods ... has suffered a major setback," Mr. Putin said."..."

RUSSIA SHELVES PLANS TO POINT MISSILES AT EU

January 28, 2009 The EU Observer reported: "Russia is shelving plans to put short-range rockets inside its EU exclave in response to US hesitation on extending its global missile shield to Poland and the Czech Republic. "The implementation of these [Russian] plans has been halted in connection with the fact the new US administration is not rushing through plans to deploy [the missile shield]," an unnamed military official told Russian state news agency Interfax on Wednesday (28 January) morning.

Moscow last year said it would put batteries of Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad - a piece of Russian territory surrounded by Lithuania, Poland and the Baltic Sea - raising fears of a new Cold War. The conventional rockets have a range of 400 km, enabling them to hit targets to within five metres of accuracy in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and the fringes of Germany and Sweden.

The Barack Obama administration has not officially stopped US plans to build a new missile base in Poland and a radar installation in the Czech Republic. But the new president's Pentagon team has said the US will "review" the effectiveness of the multi-billion euro installations, amid a deepening economic crisis in both the US and Europe."..."



COLUMN ONE: THE 'REALIST' FANTASY

December 26, 2008 The Jerusalem Post reported: "Both Iran and its Hamas proxy in Gaza have been busy this Christmas week showing Christendom just what they think of it. But no one seems to have noticed.

On Tuesday, Hamas legislators marked the Christmas season by passing a Shari'a criminal code for the Palestinian Authority. Among other things, it legalizes crucifixion.

Hamas's endorsement of nailing enemies of Islam to crosses came at the same time it renewed its jihad."..."

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