

PROPHETIC TIMES

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LIKUD SLAMS PM'S 'SYCOPHANCY' TO BUSH

January 10, 2008 The Jerusalem Post reported: "Prime Minister Ehud Olmert acted like a "sycophant" by excessively praising US President George W. Bush at their joint press conferences, rather than defending Israel's interests, senior Likud sources said Thursday.

The sources said opposition leader Binyamin Netanyahu, in contrast, devoted his 45-minute meeting with Bush and other top American officials to pressing for Israel's security concerns and its history to be taken into account when decisions are being made about the country's fate.

"Jerusalem has belonged to the Jewish people for 3,000 years and the Jewish people will ensure that it will remain undivided under Jewish sovereignty forever," Netanyahu told Bush at the capital's King David Hotel on Thursday morning. To emphasize the connection of the Jewish people to Jerusalem, Netanyahu gave Bush a coin issued during the Great Revolt, just prior to the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. The inscription on the coin included the words "Holy Jerusalem."

Netanyahu outlined a plan for peace with the Palestinians that involved building a strong Palestinian economy that would encourage peace from the bottom up instead of its imposition by politicians from the top.

But most of the meeting was devoted to the Iranian issue. Netanyahu pressed Bush to act against the Islamic Republic before he left office in January 2009. "Iran is a threat to world peace," Netanyahu said, using the same words that Bush used the night before.

The meeting was also attended by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley, Deputy National Security Adviser Elliott Abrams and White House Chief of Staff Josh Bolton."..."

POLAND TOUGHENS STANCE ON US MISSILE SHIELD

January 10, 2008 The EUObserver reported: "US ambitions to place a missile defence shield in Central Europe are running into trouble, as Polish prime minister Donald Tusk says his country will not rush into a decision. Warsaw "definitely shouldn't hurry on the missile defence issue (...) Remember, the shield is supposed to defend America, not Poland," said Mr Tusk, according to AP.

Foreign minister Radek Sikorski made similar comments, saying: "we feel no threat from Iran," challenging Washington's main argument that the shield is to defend the US and Europe from "rogue states" such as Iran and North Korea. He added: "it is not only the benefits, but the risks of the system that have to be discussed fully. It cannot be that we alone carry the costs."

The Bush administration wants to deploy ten interceptor missiles on Polish territory and a radar base in the Czech Republic. The military base is expected to be fully operational by 2013.

In response to Mr Tusk's comments, Washington has reaffirmed its aim "to address all of the government of Poland's concerns," while stressing that the missile shield would serve both countries' interests. "It's in the interests of Poland. It's in the interest of the United States. It's in the interest of other European countries", said US State Department spokesperson Sean McCormack, AP reports."..."

SARKOZY SEEN AS BACKING BLAIR FOR TOP EU JOB

January 9, 2008 The EU Observer reported: "Former UK prime minister Tony Blair will attend a conference of French president Nicolas Sarkozy's centre-right party UMP on Saturday (12 January), in what is said to be his first intervention for a party other than his own.

The move is fuelling speculation that Mr Blair, who belongs to the UK's center-left Labour party, is in the running for EU president – a new high-profile job that can be held for up to five years starting in 2009. The two men will debate Europe and Mr Blair may get clear backing from Mr Sarkozy in exchange of his participation at the conference, according to media reports.

The UMP meeting marks the launch of its pre-electoral campaign before the municipal elections in France on 9 and 16 March – but there is set to be much speculation around Mr Blair's attendance.



The president of the socialist group in the French national assembly, Jean-Marc Ayrault, has accused Mr Sarkozy of preparing the ground for Mr Blair's candidacy for the EU top job with Saturday's event.

"I see something emerging from the UMP's side and from the president of the republic (...), which is preparing Tony Blair's candidacy for EU president", Mr Ayrault was reported as saying by French news agency AFP on Tuesday (8 January). "This candidacy is not acceptable, because it is not acceptable that the first EU president is a man who supported and participated in the war in Iraq", he added.

Other politicians who have already expressed interest in what is set to be one of the EU's top jobs include Luxembourg's prime minister Jean-Claude Juncker and his Irish counterpart Bertie Ahern.

Two more positions are also up for grabs next year – president of the European Commission and EU foreign minister."..."

AHMADINEJAD LOSES FAVOR WITH KHAMENEI, IRAN'S TOP LEADER

January 8, 2008 The International Herald Tribune reported: "A rift is emerging between President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Iran's supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, suggesting that the president no longer enjoys the full backing of Khamenei, as he did in the years after his election in 2005. In the past, when Ahmadinejad was attacked by political opponents, the criticisms were usually silenced by Khamenei, who has the final word on state matters and who regularly endorsed the president in public speeches. But that public support has been conspicuously absent in recent months.

There are numerous possible reasons for Ahmadinejad's loss of support, but analysts here all point to one overriding factor: the U.S. National Intelligence Report last month, which said that Iran suspended its nuclear weapons program in 2003 in response to international pressure. The report sharply decreased the threat of a military strike against Iran, allowing the authorities to focus on domestic issues, with important parliamentary elections looming in March.

"Now that Iran is not under the threat of a military attack, all contradictions within the establishment are surfacing," said Saeed Leylaz, an economic and political analyst. "The biggest mistake that Americans have constantly made toward Iran was adopting radical approaches, which provided the ground for radicals in the country to take control."...

The Iranian presidency is a largely ceremonial post. But Ahmadinejad used the office as a bully pulpit, espousing an economic populism that built a strong following among the middle and lower classes and made him a political force to be reckoned with. That popularity won him the strong backing of the supreme leader.

But the relationship began to sour even before the National Intelligence Report was released. A source close to Khamenei, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retribution, said Khamenei had been especially disappointed by Ahmadinejad's economic performance, which had led to steep inflation in basic necessities, from food to property values.

"Mr. Khamenei supported Mr. Ahmadinejad because he believed in his slogans of helping the poor," the source said. "But his economic performance has been disastrous. Their honeymoon is certainly over."..."

MUSLIM CLERICS WARN AFGHANISTAN'S PRESIDENT AGAINST MISSIONARIES

January 6, 2008 The VOA News reported: "Islamic clerics in Afghanistan are warning the country's president to stop foreign aid groups from doing missionary work in the country.

Members of the Afghanistan Islamic Council say they are concerned about the activities of some international non-governmental groups that are trying to convert Afghan Muslims to Christianity. The group made the statement after meeting with Afghan President Hamid Karzai on Friday. The clerics warned of what they called "catastrophe" if the activities were not prevented.

Taliban militants took some 23 South Korean Christian missionaries hostage in July 2007, killing two and releasing the remainder.

Afghanistan's Islamic Council also urged President Karzai to crack down on certain television programming that it says is spreading immorality and non-Islamic culture in the country."

MAN IN CHINA GOT BIRD FLU FROM CONTACT WITH INFECTED SON: OFFICIALS

January 10, 2008 The Agence France-Presse reported: "A man in China contracted bird flu because he was in close contact with his infected son, although the virus had not mutated into a form that is highly contagious among humans, authorities said Thursday.

A 52-year-old man, identified only by his surname Lu, was hospitalised with the potentially deadly H5N1 strain of the virus soon after his son died from it on December 2. Lu has since recovered.

Chinese health ministry spokesman Mao Qunan said Lu's infection was due to close contact with his son, but that the transmission was not technically "human-to-human". "It has no biological features for human-to-human transmission," he told journalists.

Like many human cases of bird flu in China, authorities have not been able to identify the source as neither Lu nor his son had close contact with sick or dead poultry prior to infection, he said. He refused to elaborate on the findings, which was reached by the ministry's expert group on bird flu.

Human-to-human transmission of bird flu remains rare, but experts fear such routes of infection could cause a global pandemic if the virus mutates with each person it infects and becomes more adaptable to humans.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) said Thursday that human-to-human transmission of bird flu in the case of Lu was possible but said it had not mutated into a highly contagious form.

"A human-to-human transmission through close contact between the son and the father cannot be ruled out in this family cluster," Hans Troedsson, the WHO representative in China, told AFP."..."

