

INTELLIGENCE DIGEST

by John Laughland

Austrian Eurosceptics have another go

Heinz-Christian Strache, the leader of the Freedom Party of Austria, has initiated a popular initiative with the title "*Austria, stay free*". The Austrian Constitution allows citizens to present a law to Parliament if they gather enough signatures. The stated aim of Schanze's initiative is to require a referendum on the EU Constitution and Turkish accession but he has been saying in public that the aim is 'to stop EU madness'. Although only 258,277 voters have signed the initiative, which puts it in 21st place out of all such initiatives in the post-war Austrian republic, the fact that so many signatures were collected in polling stations while the weather has been so cold shows that people do care about the EU. Pollsters have also found that Schanze mobilised above all Social Democrat voters, i.e. not people from his own right-wing party, although the Social Democratic Party itself has vehemently contested this finding. In any case, the initiative needs only 100,000 signatures for a Bill to be presented to Parliament. [*Die Welt*, 15 March 2006]

In addition to this, Hans-Peter Martin, an Austrian MEP who has denounced corruption in the European Parliament and who now campaigns against the EU, might stand in the general election this autumn. Martin runs a website which regularly exposes EU fraud and excess; he claims there that if he ran a national list at the next elections, it could win between 17 and 25 per cent of the vote. This may be optimistic but people in Austria are already asking whether he might come third (after the Greens, the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats) which would itself be a sensation. [see www.hp martin.net]

These speculations have been fuelled by the fact that the Freedom Party formerly led by Jörg Haider has more or less collapsed. This follows inclusion of the party in the governing coalition in 2000, which caused huge controversy at the time. The FPÖ has long since collapsed into two rival formations, one of them led by Haider and now called the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ), the other led by Strache. The FPÖ has now lost three out of its five deputies who defected to the BZÖ but both parties are low in the polls (FPÖ between 6 and 8 per cent, BZÖ between 2 and 3 per cent; you need 4 per cent to be elected to parliament in Austria).

Franco-German relationship slightly tense

The first meeting of the French and German cabinets since the election of Angela Merkel as German Chancellor took place in Berlin on 24 March. Franco-German relations are not currently at their best. Ms Merkel came to power promising to re-balance her country's European policy, specifically to water down the relationship with Paris in favour of better links with Washington. On the French side, a certain amount of 'economic patriotism' there has not gone down well in Germany. Ms Merkel's right-hand man, the minister in the Chancellery, Thomas de Maizière (who is the cousin of the last Prime Minister of East Germany, Lothar de Maizière) criticised France's attitude to the fusion between the Italian company ENEL and Suez on the BBC: this German hostility to France's reluctance to see her industries bought by foreigners is surprising in view of the fact that the Germans have very restrictive laws and practices themselves in that regard. Yet numerous sources within the governing CDU say that they are reluctant to propose any projects of industrial cooperation with France for fear of her protectionist instincts. The Germans also feel that France is politically paralysed now until the presidential

elections in 2007 and that nothing significant can be agreed with Paris until a new President has been elected. [Antoine Jacob, *Le Monde*, 14 March 2006]

A place in the sun

France and Germany did agree, however, to participate in an EU military mission to the Congo: the fate of that country, it seems, is always to be ruled by Brussels. But Ms Merkel and Mr Chirac said that numerous conditions needed to be fulfilled before the final green light was given. These included the agreement of the Congolese government, a United Nations mandate and a clear 'time perspective'. Ms Merkel said that a number of European countries had indicated that they would also participate. She added that no final decisions had been taken but that the time for taking decisions was drawing closer. The United Nations has asked the European Union to help with the Congolese presidential elections on 18 June. The Europeans are supposed to help the UN troops who are already in the country. Just what an EU intervention could look like is unclear. One scenario being discussed in Brussels is that between 200 and 450 European soldiers might be stationed in Kinshasa. An extra 800 soldiers might be sent to the rest of the country (which is the size of the whole of Western Europe put together). German army officers are concerned about the deployment, saying that the constitutional position, their armament and even the injections the soldiers will need have not been explained. The Chairman of the German Army Union, Bernhard Gertz, attacked Javier Solana, the EU Foreign Minister, saying that the idea of sending 1500 EU soldiers to oversee the Congolese elections was 'show business' which would put the lives of German soldiers at risk. The current UN deployment has some 17,000 soldiers, stationed mainly in the East where there is serious fighting with rebels.

France wants EU immigrants gradually

France is planning to adopt a progressive approach to EU immigration when the transition period is over. Currently people from the EU states in Eastern Europe who joined in 2004 are not allowed to work in any other Western EU state except in the UK and Ireland. On 13 March, the French cabinet decided on the principle of a 'progressive opening' of borders which would start in those areas and professions where France needs workers. The list of these professions will be finalised in the coming weeks 'in agreement with the social partners', i.e. with the unions and other interested parties. Paris is to inform the European Commission by 1 May whether or not it intends to continue with the transition period, which old EU Member States are allowed to do for a maximum of seven years. In the Senate and the National Assembly, a large majority of parliamentarians has called for the current restrictions to be lifted. The government wants to start with an experimental period of 18 months in the sectors where it judges there is not risk. [Henri de Bresson, *Le Monde*, 14 March 2006]

Immigrants continue to flood into Spain

Twenty-four corpses were fished out of the sea by the Spanish navy off the coast of Mauritania and some 400 nautical miles south of the Canary Islands: these were doubtless people from sub-Saharan Africa who were trying to reach the Spanish islands in order to reach the Canaries where they would have doubtless claimed political asylum. Such people are often transported in fishermen's boats carrying between 40 and 60 people and there are often shipwrecks. Some of the dead were wearing lifejackets, some waterproof clothing, and one of them even had a GPS positioning system. In recent weeks, the number

of Africans arriving in the Canary Islands has risen sharply. More than 3,000 have arrived since January, and on one day (14 March) 300 arrived in a single day. The Spanish newspaper, *El País*, has said that half a million Mauritians are waiting to get enough money to pay people-traffickers for a passage out. A number of people who were turned back at the Spanish enclaves in Morocco, Ceuta and Melilla have apparently tried to get in to Spain by this route instead. The regional government of the Canary Islands has called for emergency aid, saying that the temporary accommodation for 1,600 people is totally insufficient. Military buildings will be used to house the other arrivals. The government's representative in the Canary Islands, José Segura, has spoken of "an extraordinary human tragedy", saying that many of the boats carrying asylum seekers have sunk. Previously, people tried to sail to Fuerteventura or Lanzarote from the Moroccan coast but this route is now heavily guarded. They are now trying to make an even more hazardous journey. [*El País*, 16 March 2006]

Bulatovic says Milosevic poisoned

The former President of Montenegro and former Federal Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, Momir Bulatovic, who was due to appear as a witness in The Hague on the day Slobodan Milosevic died, has said that Milosevic was 'strongly and deeply' convinced that he was being poisoned by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. Bulatovic said that the proof that Milosevic was poisoned was that the rogue medication, rifampicin (which was neutralising the effects of the other drugs he was taking to reduce his blood pressure) was found in his blood on 12 January but that Milosevic himself was not told about the result of the tests until 9 March. Bulatovic said, "The same people who put him in prison were the people who were poisoning him." He added, "Milosevic would be alive today if he had been transferred to a hospital." Bulatovic also said that his own testimony, which he had been unable to give because of Milosevic's death, would have provided 'crown proof' that the charges were false that Yugoslavia had been destroyed by a criminal organisation with Milosevic at its helm. [*Montenegrin Mina News Agency*, 15 March 2006]

Duma votes to dissolve Hague tribunal

The Russian Parliament has voted for a resolution calling for The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia to be immediately closed. It said there was no point continuing the activities of the tribunal following the death of Slobodan Milosevic, and it instructed that a letter be written to the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, asking him to investigate the allegations of 'doctors who kill' following the obscure circumstances of the former Yugoslav President's death. [www.duma.gov.ru] The Parliament's statement, which is not legally binding, has accused the ICTY of applying double standards and of being 'useless'. Konstantin Kosachyov, the head of the Duma's Foreign Affairs Committee and the man who drafted the statement, accused the international court of being anti-Serb. He said, "The problem with the Hague tribunal is that, in line with a higher political task given to it, it has established once and for all who the criminals are and that they are in Serbia, while NATO is - like Caesar's wife - above suspicion." Kosachyov said. The leader of the Russian Communist Party, Gennady Zyuganov, said, "Even the most pro-American forces in Russia are now silent and ashamed, because they understand that today it is Milosevic, and tomorrow they may get to you. I think all responsible politicians and citizens are seriously asking themselves what kind of tribunal this is, what kind of mock trial, what kind of procedures these are, when one is interrogated hundreds of times for eight or 10 hours. This is enough to push anyone to a heart attack and to death." On 15 March, a group of communists in St. Petersburg

wrote to President Vladimir Putin to request that a street be renamed after Milosevic and a bust of him be erected in the city. In its 15 March statement, the Duma also called for an independent international inquiry into the circumstances of his death. Deputies accused the court of "negligence or malicious intent." The statement echoed earlier comments by Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, who on 13 March slammed the court for denying Milosevic permission to seek heart treatment in Moscow: "The Russian Federation provided the tribunal with 100 per cent state guarantees that after the completion of the treatment Milosevic would return to The Hague. Those guarantees were examined during a special session of the tribunal, which found them insufficient. Essentially they did not believe Russia. This can only disturb us. It can only worry us that Milosevic passed away shortly afterwards." Lavrov also said the late Yugoslav leader had sent a letter to the Foreign Ministry three days before dying. In the letter, he reportedly complained the treatment he was receiving in The Hague was harming him. The Foreign Minister dispatched a team of Russian doctors earlier this week to check the findings of the official autopsy. The Russian medical team later endorsed those findings, but raised questions about what might have caused the heart attack that killed Milosevic. [Claire Bigg, *Radio Free Europe*, 16 March 2005]

Germany empties out

The Berlin Institute for Population and Development has warned of the dire consequences of Germany's demographic collapse. It has said that immigration can no longer fill the gap between births and deaths. The birth rate in Germany is 1.36 children per woman, whereas the rate needed for the population to remain stable is 2.10 children. The German government's own statistical office has predicted that only 676,000 babies were born in Germany in 2005, in comparison to 706,000 the previous year. The only year in which the number of births was lower was 1945, when Germany was being bombed by the Allies as the Second World War came to an end. (525,000 babies were born in that year.) The EU's office, Eurostat, says that Germany and Greece were the only countries in the old EU whose population fell in 2005. The Berlin Institute says that this will mean that regions and towns will have to compete to attract people to go and live in them. Villages are already dying off, by 2020 half of Germany's countryside regions will be suffering from reduced population. East Germany is emptying out, as is the Ruhr area. The Saarland and Bremen are also suffering. The Institute says that regions will have to amalgamate: "Saxony-Anhalt is practically unviable," a judgement it bases on the combination of the region's population collapse and high debt. The Institute attacked both government and trade unions, for instance, by saying that the unions were happy to go on strike over an extra 18 minutes to their working week but not in favour of better conditions for working mothers. The Berlin Institute's report concludes with a dramatic chapter entitled "After man comes the wolf": with the aid of a map, it documents how wild animals like wolves and lynxes are reappearing in the parts of Germany which humans are deserting. [Die Welt, 16 March 2006; see www.berlin-institut.org/]

A large part of the problem lies in the massive and sustained economic collapse of East Germany, which according to *Der Spiegel* has become "an empty country." In the town of Görlitz, for instance, on the Polish border, some 20,000 (or one quarter of the city's population) has migrated to West Germany. This has caused an Polish installation artist to try to brighten the place up by illuminating apartments and putting flowers in the windows of empty flats in order to generate the illusion that there are still people there. Population experts say that East Germany will lose another one million inhabitants by 2020 because there are still plenty of people who live in

the East and work in the West: they will, in time, get bored of commuting and move to where the work is. Westerners who were encouraged to move East with subsidies are now moving West too. Saxony-Anhalt has lost 10 per cent of its population since 1990 and one local Lutheran bishop says, "Of all the ministers, state secretaries and government officials, none are here any more." A retired builder is quoted as saying that even old people are moving West, to join their children. "If things carry on like this," he says, "whole town will disappear." It is also reported that women are leaving East Germany in ever higher numbers than men: this naturally means that there will be fewer potential mothers in the region, and therefore even fewer births than before. [*Der Spiegel*, 16 March 2006]

EU wants common energy policy with Russia

The President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, has visited Moscow in an attempt to convince Russia of the need to build strategic energy relations with the EU. Plans include the construction of a gas pipeline from Iran and Central Asia to Western Europe across the Black Sea. Barroso said he would work towards open access for Russian energy companies to the EU energy market. [*Itar-Tass*, 16 March 2006]

The idea of signing an energy treaty with Russia was first put forward in a green paper on energy security for the EU, published on 8 March by the Commission. The idea came after the gas row between Russia and Ukraine and, in suggesting it, the Commission is treading on the toes of the Member States who generally prefer to deal with energy issues by themselves. [Philippe Ricard, *Le Monde*, 10 March 2006]

More bureaucracy to reduce bureaucracy

As part of its plan to reduce bureaucracy, the European Commission has decided to create a special new office to oversee the programme. Not only is this absurd; it also means that Brussels will oversee itself in its attempt to reduce red tape. A German CDU politician, Klaus-Heiner Lehne, has complained about this: "Bureaucracy is being used to fight bureaucracy," he says. The EU Commission says that reducing bureaucracy could lead to 1 per cent more growth in Europe. The Commission claims that 80 per cent of bureaucracy originates in the Member States through national legislation and the requirement of reporting statistics. Despite this, Brussels says that it is going to revise all 80,000 pages of EU legislation to see if things can be simplified, for instance by combining Directives and making texts clearer. On the other hand, this may lead to even more red tape if discrepancies arise between national laws and the newly revised EU ones. MEP Alexander Radwan, also from the German CDU, has a better idea. "The best way to reduce bureaucracy is not to issue any more Directives," he says. Radwan says that ever more red tape comes in through the back door, for instance most recently under the heading of consumer protection. This is not the first time that the EU has supposedly tried to reduce its own bureaucracy. In 1992 there were 38 recommendations for less bureaucracy, while in 1996 the 'slim' programme was announced as a way to reduce Single Market legislation. Neither programme had any success. [Christoph Schlitz, *Die Welt*, 16 March 2006]

Return of the European Economic Area

The European Parliament has said that the EU cannot absorb any further new members, thereby stepping hard on the brake at the very moment when the EU Council of Ministers has started to give new hope to the states of the former Yugoslavia and Albania that they will soon become members as well. The Foreign Affairs Committee under the chairmanship of Elmar Brok, which prepared the report, thinks though that the EU should not overextend itself. The EU Constitution,

it says, has stalled, there is not enough money to fund future enlargement and the citizens are not on side. The European Parliament has suggested instead that alternatives to full membership be offered, in order to enable states to have a close multilateral relationship with the EU. Socialist and conservative MEPs united in saying that the EU must not overextend itself for fear of destroying the whole EU project. The German SPD says that a new institutional arrangement will be necessary, very comparable to the one proposed by the European Constitution, before there is any more enlargement. Ironically, one CSU MEP, Markus Feber, has suggested reviving the European Economic Area, the successor to the European Free Trade Association which Britain initially set up to counter the federalist drift of the old EEC. The European Parliament has not questioned the accession in 2008 of Romania and Bulgaria but it does question the proposed accession of Croatia, Turkey and the other Balkan states. Accession negotiations have been opened with Croatia and Turkey and Macedonia has the status of candidate country although negotiations have not yet opened. The EU is negotiating stabilisation agreements with Albania, Serbia-Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The most problematic relationship is the one with Serbia, because the EU is demanding that Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic be handed over to The Hague first. There is also disagreement about Kosovo. For instance, the United Kingdom takes the view that independence for Kosovo is desirable and inevitable. The Netherlands, on the other hand, disagrees, saying that Kosovo cannot protect its minorities and that the Serbs there need the constant protection of NATO troops. [Hannelore Croll, *Die Welt*, 17 March 2006]

Deficit procedure against Germany sharpened

EU finance ministers have decided to turn the screws on Germany by approving the suggestion of the Commission that Germany be required meet the Stability Pact criteria by 2007. To do this, the German government will have to reduce the structural deficit by 1 per cent and the Federal Finance Minister, Peer Steinbrück, will have to show by 14 July how this goal is to be achieved. If the Commission finds the government's explanation convincing, then the deficit procedure will fall back into abeyance. But if the government does not manage to get the deficit below 3 per cent, then Germany would be liable for billions of euros in fines. The EU's monetary Commissar, Joaquín Almunia, has already told the German government that he thinks it is on the right path, which of course is also what the Finance Minister thinks. The government reckons that the deficit next year will be 2.5 per cent; Germany has been breaking the Stability Pact rules every year since 2002. Berlin's position seems to be supported by the other EU governments: Germany, indeed, is voting with the others to clamp down on itself. Steinbrück has said, though, that he does not want to be drawn on whether Germany might even bring its deficit under control this year, as some economists and the Bundesbank have suggested it might. [*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 14 March 2006]

Kaczynski visits Berlin

On the occasion of his visit to Germany, the new Polish President, Lech Kaczynski, has sharply criticised the attempts of some in the EU to resurrect the European Constitution. He said that if Europeans were serious about democracy then they had to recognise that the people in the Netherlands and France had voted against the Constitution. "There are now various initiative afoot to breathe new life into the project," he said, "but they stand very little chance of success." His remarks were interpreted as a rebuke to his hostess, the new German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, who has indeed spoken of reviving the Constitution. Kaczynski said that there might be room

for a new basic treaty for Europe but that any attempts to draw one up should start over again from the very beginning. The present text, he said, was no longer on the agenda and it would lead to “*semi-federal hermaphrodite structures*” for which the time was not right. Kaczynski also said that it was too early for there to be a European foreign minister (although the EU effectively has one, in the form of Javier Solana). There has been some speculation that when Kaczynski says that any new treaty should be based on an entirely new beginning, this is simply a stalling operation to ensure that the present arrangements, based on the Nice Treaty, be retained, since these are very advantageous for Poland. Kaczynski also repeated his plan for the states of the EU and NATO to form a security pact for energy, which he calls ‘Gas Nato’, which would prevent Russia from threatening individual countries with cutting off their supplies. The Polish President rejected the proposal of the German Foreign Minister, Peter Steinmeier, that such a pact could be based on the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. He said that the OSCE was not a strong enough body for the task of defending Europe’s energy needs. He said that the West had tried to palm the Poles off with the OSCE rather than NATO membership but that they had quickly realised that this was “*a pure illusion.*” [Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 8 March 2006]

In an interview with *Die Welt*, Kaczynski said that he thought the EU had already deepened enough. He said that this did not mean that there could not be further deepening in certain areas: he specifically mentioned the creation of an energy security pact or of an intervention force, two things in which Poland would be happy to participate. He said, “*A superstate which takes away national powers for itself and which remains powerless because it has only a symbolic budget – that is an artificial construction. There is no European public opinion, only national public opinions.*” He said that he was very opposed to the construction of the trans-Baltic gas pipeline because that would enable Russia to deliver gas to Germany while threatening Poland. Kaczynski confirmed that Poland wanted to station the new American anti-missile system because, in its relations with Russia, Poland needed to have the US as its partner. [Interview with Gerhard Gnauck, *Die Welt*, 9 March 2006]

Kaczynski’s speech to Humboldt University in Berlin, where he outlined his European policy, was severely disrupted by homosexual activists who reproach him for his conservative social views and policies. Even before the President appeared on the podium, two men were stationed there holding black umbrellas, presumably to deflect any eggs or tomatoes that might have been thrown. But they were not needed because instead protesters made their point by banging on the wall after which others rushed in holding banners which said, ‘Don’t give gay bashers an inch.’ The university authorities had no idea what to do. The man who had formally invited the President then called one of the protesters to come to the microphone, which he did, only to shout insults at the President. The audience took this very ill, however: various older Poles and others started their own spontaneous counter-demonstration, booing the protestors. One man shouted that it was a disgrace to treat the President of the great country in this way. Kaczynski watched all this chaos stoically. When he finally started to speak, he was applauded by the audience. The content of the speech was far less radical than people had thought from his newspaper interviews: he said merely that the time had not come for European federalism, for instance. Things quietened down a little until, during the questions, a young man asked him politely whether he was not himself responsible for the protests because he had banned a gay pride march in Warsaw. He replied that he was not anti-gay but that if

gay culture were raised to the equivalent level of heterosexual culture then humanity would die out. All hell broke loose at this point: some people applauded, others booed loudly. The session was closed with a pathetic and obscure speech by the chairman, who said that he had not organised the demonstration himself, and that everyone had the right to state his point of view.

Observers praise Belarus poll

While the European Union roundly condemned the presidential election which was held in the former Soviet republic of Belarus on 19 March – as it had done before the poll had even started – the official delegation of observers from the Commonwealth of Independent States has said that the poll met democratic standards. It said that the elections were “*free, open and transparent.*” [Interfax, 20 March 2006] This positive assessment was echoed by numerous other observers from all parts of the world, whose opinions were posted on the website of the American embassy in Belarus on 19 March. Only the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the EU attacked the poll, as it has attacked every other election in the country since 1994.

The mouse that roared

The Flemish Parliament (one of the seven parliamentary bodies in Belgium) has ratified the defunct European Constitution. The vote removes the last obstacle to the ratification of the Constitution by Belgium as a whole. Flemish deputies voted by 84 in favour to 29 against (with one abstention). Following this formality, Belgium is expected to become the fourteenth EU Member State that has ratified the European Constitution. British MEP, Andrew Duff, has said that this will put the Belgian government in a strong position for the re-negotiation the European Constitution “*something which will undoubtedly happen after a period of reflection.*” [Le Monde, 8 February 2006] Duff’s remarks, and the Flemish Parliament’s vote, shows that federalists have not abandoned their goal of seeing the document ratified. This is indeed the conviction of those who are campaigning against the Euro Constitution. Jens-Peter Bonde, the anti-federalist Danish MEP, has drawn attention to the fact that Finland intends to ratify the text before it takes over the presidency on 1 July. Bonde fears that France may try to ratify the Constitution in bits, for instance submitting only short sections of the text to a referendum while ratifying the rest in the French Parliament. [www.euabc.com]

New EU states don’t want euro

The governing party in Poland has said that it does not think there is any point adopting the euro. “*We don’t see any benefits in adopting the euro,*” said Jaroslaw Kaczynski, leader of the governing Law and Justice Party and brother of the President, Lech Kaczynski. “*Euro adoption would lead to lower exports, lower national income and higher unemployment.*” People in other new Member States agree: László Halpern, an economist at the Hungarian academy of sciences in Budapest, has said, “*To think of the euro as a driving force for any reform is a thought that has proved to be rather naïve.*” Some of the smaller new Member States (especially Slovenia, Malta and Cyprus) seem well on track to adopt the euro. [Carter Dougherty, *International Herald Tribune*, 15 February 2006]

Jobs for the girls

The European Parliament has given the go-ahead for the creation of an EU Gender Institute. The institute is supposed to gather and analyse information on gender-related issues. Slovenia, Slovakia and Lithuania are vying with one another to host the new body. The budget for the new body is •8 million per year. [Lucia Kubosova, *EU Observer*, 14 March 2006.]