

INTELLIGENCE DIGEST

by John Laughland

Merkel wants to revive EU Constitution

The German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, has said that she will make a government declaration on 11 May on her government's European policy. Sources say that the speech will deal with Germany's priorities for its presidency of the EU, which starts in January 2007. The main points are to be energy policy and 'a foreign policy offensive' towards the Caucasus. Diplomatic sources in Berlin say that the Caucasus should become a new 'neighbour region' for the EU and thus the centrepiece of a 'new EU Ostpolitik'. Furthermore, the German government wants to re-launch the debate on the European Constitution. Berlin does not want to allow the issue to lie dormant until the French presidential elections in June 2007. Faced with a lame duck President in Paris, Chancellor Merkel wants to give the Constitution one last chance under the German presidency. Government circles in Berlin are operating on the assumption that only Germany, the largest EU Member State, is capable of making this effort. But it is not yet clear exactly what form this new initiative to revive the Constitution will take.

Ms Merkel has already started putting together the building blocks of this new Ostpolitik. She told the Spanish Prime Minister, José Zapatero, that a common energy policy was of 'great strategic importance' to the EU. [German government web site, www.bundesregierung.de, 20 April 2006] She told the Estonian Prime Minister that the trans-Baltic pipeline was not directed against any state but would be used to supply all European countries [www.bundesregierung.de, 5 April 2006]. She has also told the Latvian Prime Minister that relations with Latvia are excellent when Latvia, like the other Baltic state and like Georgia in the Caucasus, are in the forefront of the new EU and US hostility to Russia.

This new initiative, indeed, comes just as unease is being expressed in the EU at the attempts by Gazprom, the Russian state energy supplier, to penetrate West European markets. Alexei Miller, the head of Gazprom, has made remarks which have elicited a sharp reaction from the office of the EU Commissar for energy, the Latvian Andris Piebalgs. Miller warned the EU against trying to block Gazprom's expansion into the European market, saying that such attempts would "not lead to any positive outcomes." He said that purely economic questions should not be politicised and that the EU should not forget that Gazprom was seeking to expand in North America and China as well. It appears that these remarks have strengthened fears in Europe about dependency on Russian gas. [*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 20 April 2006]

Germans lose faith in EU

Ms Merkel may have more of a job on her hands at home than she realises. A recent opinion poll conducted by *Readers' Digest European Trusted Brands* has found that 39 per cent of Germans wish the EU had less influence, against only 20 per cent who wish it had more. 87 per cent of Germans think that the EU is too bureaucratic. 83 per cent say that EU subsidies are not distributed fairly. 79 per cent say that Germany's contribution to the EU budget is too high. 72 per cent say they are against Turkish membership of the EU. A further 61 per cent say they do not have enough information about the EU Constitution. [*Die Welt*, 18 April 2006]

Austria wants talks on Constitution, too

Germany is not the only country that wants to revive the Constitution. Austria has called a top-secret meeting of EU Foreign Ministers on 27 and 28 May. It is to be held in an as yet unspecified monastery and the subject for discussion will be the EU Constitution.

Vienna wants to have a second go at finding a way of re-launching the project. The first attempt failed in January when the Dutch Foreign Minister, Bernard Bot, said outright that "for the Netherlands, the EU Constitution is dead" in response to the Austrian call for the matter to be discussed. The Finnish government had also indicated that it thinks the time is not right to resurrect the project: Helsinki takes over the EU presidency from Austria in the second half of this year. But the Austrian Foreign Minister says that the decision to hold the meeting shows that there has been a change of mood. Ursula Plassnik said that it was "a small but not insubstantial step." She also said that there were "many suggestions but none that unites 25 countries behind it." According to the Minister, the meeting would not be about concepts – "it is far too early for that" – but simply an occasion for all sides to express their opinion. [Michael Moravec, *Der Standard*, 17 April 2006]

Constitution ploughs on

The Estonian Parliament has said that it will ratify the new treaty in May. The decision was taken by the leaders of the three main political parties. 14 out of the 25 Member States have now ratified the document. [*Der Standard*, 17 April 2006] Meanwhile, the Czech government has suggested that a 'Declaration on Europe' be signed by the EU Member States. The Czech Foreign Minister, Cyril Svoboda, said that the idea would be to get the debate going again following the failure of the Constitution. Svoboda's idea is that the document, which would not be binding, would set out "how Europe is now and how it should be." Svoboda put the idea to his French counterpart, Philippe Douste-Blazy, during a visit to Paris; Mr Douste-Blazy said he thought it was "good and logical" for there to be a chance to elaborate the European project following the failure of the Constitution in the French and Dutch referenda. The Czechs have not ratified the Constitution, the government there having put the debate on ice following the two 'No' votes. [*Der Standard*, 7 April 2006]

EU paid 100s of millions of euros too much rent

Hans-Peter Martin, the Austrian MEP who campaigns against EU corruption and waste, has suggested that the EU may have overpaid huge sums in rent for buildings in Strasbourg. Martin says that the excess may lie between €29 and €100 million. Markus Ferber, a member of the budget committee, said that Martin's estimates were only guesses but agreed that payments to the city of Strasbourg had been frozen and that everything was under review. The situation is as follows: two parliament buildings in Strasbourg, used by the MEPs for one day a month when they go there for their plenary session, belong to a Dutch pension fund. The fund has rented them to the city of Strasbourg and the city has rented them on to the European Parliament. Ferber says that it would be quite wrong if the city had been charging more than it was itself being charged. Martin says that the EU's anti-corruption unit should also review the €450 million paid to the city of Strasbourg in 2004 for the acquisition of new buildings. "Many experts said at the time they thought the price was too high," he says. "Strasbourg is becoming a symbol of European waste." [*Die Welt*, 26 April 2006]

EU Parliament pays journalists

Hans-Peter Martin has had another success getting a story about Euro-corruption into *The International Herald Tribune*. An article entitled 'EU paying journalists to cover Parliament' has revealed the way in which the European Parliament pays subsidies to journalists to come to Strasbourg once a month for the plenary sessions there. The

payments include free camera crews and a *per diem* of €100 to cover food and other personal expenses. Such practices have been encouraged by the Austrian presidency of the European Union, which organised a luxury trip to Vienna for sixty chosen journalists in February. The former correspondent of the Austrian TV chain ORF, Nicola Doing, who is now press spokesperson for the Austrian EU presidency (itself an indication of the fine line which divides journalism from government propaganda) said, *"That trip was a worthwhile investment."* The journalists were put up in the Hilton Hotel and treated to a fine dinner at a baroque castle with the best food and entertainment by opera stars. [Dan Bilefsky, *International Herald Tribune*, 5 April 2006; for Hans-Peter Martin's own web site, see www.hp martin.net]

Thousands appeal against Brussels' power

Every year, thousands of citizens protest against abuse of power by the European Union. In 2005 there were 3,920 complaints lodged with the EU Ombudsman. This is greatly in excess of the record level reached in 2004. The largest number of complaints comes from Spain, but this is because of a campaign against EU copyright laws by Spanish public libraries. [*Die Welt*, 25 April 2006]

Euroceptics enter Polish government

The governing Law and Justice Party in Poland has agreed to govern in coalition with the Self-Defence Party which is known mainly for its campaigns against the European Union. Law and Justice had originally wanted to govern in coalition with the liberal Civic Platform but they were unable to come to an agreement with them. Self-Defence's leader, Andrzej Lepper, has insisted that he become Deputy Prime Minister as part of the agreement. [*Die Welt*, 11 April 2006] Self-Defence is already being denounced by the liberal continental media as 'extreme right' but in fact its policies are Old Left: the party is in favour of economic protectionism and against EU and Western integration. The government will have to ally itself with at least one further small party, either the Peasant Party or the League of Polish Families, in order to have a stable majority in Parliament, since it has rejected the option of holding early elections. The League is particularly hostile to the EU; its inclusion in the government would bring people into the Polish government whose position is equivalent to that of UKIP in Britain. [Henri de Bresson, *Le Monde*, 16 April 2006]

Belarus officials banned from EU

Following the re-election of Alexander Lukashenko of Belarus, an election judged fair by all international observers except those of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Union has issued a rule preventing the Belarussian President from travelling to any other EU country. Thirty other Belarussian officials are also forbidden from entering EU territory. A spokesman for the Foreign Ministry of Belarus criticised the decision, saying that it was 'short-sighted' and that it merited neither a comment nor a response. *"Neither the President nor the head of the government have any reaction to the decision of the Council of Europe and it is certainly useless to express one. It is unlikely there will be any official comment."* [*Agence France Presse*, 10 April 2006] In fact, Minsk has reacted by saying that it will in turn ban the same number of EU officials from visiting Belarus. [*Die Welt*, 12 April 2006] In a further development, Switzerland has said that it too will ban the Belarus officials from travelling to its territory even though of course it is not a member of the EU. [*Radio Free Europe*, 12 April 2006]

Euro-Parliament attacks refugee camps in Malta

There is a huge wave of refugees coming from Africa to the Spanish enclaves in Morocco, to the Southern Italian island of Lampedusa and to Malta. A delegation from the European Parliament's Commission on Liberty has reported that the conditions in Malta are terrible. It has

described them as 'inhuman and degrading', saying that asylum seekers are being kept in cages without any chance of walking around. The Commission said that it met people who had been kept in cages like this for up to 20 months, with no contact with the outside world and in *"unacceptable sanitary conditions."* The MEPs did, however, congratulate Malta on its openness and said that the island of 450,000 inhabitants could not deal with the arrival of 2,000 immigrants each year. Naturally, though, the Parliament called on the whole of Europe to take charge of the problem, saying that it could not be dealt with by small countries alone. (Neither Spain nor Italy can be called 'small countries', however.) It has said that the rules should be relaxed in anticipation of an even bigger arrival of immigrants during the summer. [Rafaële Rivais, *Le Monde*, 11 April 2006]

Will the Iranian President be arrested in Germany?

The possibility that the President of Iran could face arrest if he came to Germany for the football World Cup has been raised by German politicians. The German Interior Minister, Wolfgang Schäuble, has said that the Iranian President is welcome in Germany but the Central Council of Jews in Germany has reacted with horror. *"If that is the way that the Interior Minister deals with racists and holocaust deniers,"* said its General Secretary, Stephan Kramer, *"then people like Horst Mahler and David Irving can relax."* (Horst Mahler is a former extreme left wing terrorist who has become extreme right wing and defends holocaust deniers; David Irving is the British historian currently in jail in Vienna for holocaust denial.) The Iranian President has referred to the Holocaust as 'a myth' and this, in the eyes of many, means that he has denied it. Holocaust denial is a crime in Germany (as in Austria, France and other states) and it is punishable by up to five years in prison. Kramer said that German laws should apply to Ahmadinejad if he comes to Germany. The Bavarian Prime Minister, Edmund Stoiber, has said that he expects that Ahmadinejad will be greeted by protests if he comes. [*Die Welt*, 10 April 2006]

Louis XVI pardoned by his executioner

A manuscript has gone on sale at Christie's which posthumously exonerates Louis XVI for his behaviour on the scaffold. Revolutionary propagandists had claimed at the time that the French king had struggled against his captors and behaved in a cowardly fashion before being executed. They claimed that he had been forced onto the scaffold with a pistol at his temples. But the executioner, Charles-Henri Sanson, wrote to the paper which published this false account on 20 February 1793 to give *"the exact version of what happened."* *"He behaved with a calmness and a firmness which astonished us all,"* wrote the executioner. *"I remain convinced that he drew on the principles of his religion by which no one seems more penetrated or persuaded than he."* Far from behaving like a coward, Louis Capet took off his own coat and offered his own hands to be bound. [Marc Roche, *Le Monde*, 11 April 2006]

Bulgarian and Romanian accession

The Brussels Commissar with responsibility for enlargement, Olli Rehn, has said that the decision on whether to admit Romania and Bulgaria to the EU in 2007 or 2008 will be taken on 16 May. He repeated the usual formula that both countries have made progress but that there was still much to do. He said that the fight against organised crime was still insufficient in Bulgaria (no doubt because the EU's favourite party lost power last year). He reiterated the EU view that the states of the Western Balkans (i.e. former Yugoslavia) had 'no alternative' to joining the EU. [Interview with Christoph B. Schiltz, *Die Welt*, 10 April 2006]

Some states, however, are trying to put the brakes on further enlargement. The Netherlands wants to impose very strict conditions for negotiations with the states of the former Yugoslavia while The Hague is

completely against the admission of Ukraine and Moldova. There is increasing hostility to the EU and to EU enlargement in The Netherlands, following last year's rejection of the EU Constitution, which was widely interpreted as being a backlash against enlargement. The Dutch Foreign Minister says that he wants states like Bosnia–Herzegovina and Albania to be given candidate status only if they have fully implemented the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, rather than merely signing it. Bernard Bot also says that the most difficult chapters, such as Justice and Home Affairs, should be discussed at the beginning of the process rather than at the end as is customary. It has been the practice to leave difficult chapters until the end, in order to give the negotiations momentum, but this means that the difficult areas are then negotiated in the final stages under considerable pressure. This procedure has been adopted with Bulgaria and Romania, hence the last-minute uncertainty about their accession date, and it seems likely that it will be adopted with Croatia and Turkey as well. [Mark Beundermann, *EU Observer*, 11 April 2006]

Ex-Bulgarian Premier promises no immigration

In spite of overwhelming evidence that there has been huge immigration from Poland and other new EU states, the former Prime Minister of Bulgaria, the ex-king Simeon von Saxe–Coburg–Gotha, has told a German newspaper that he does not think there will be a new wave of immigration from Bulgaria when it joins the EU in 2007. He mouthed the usual nonsense about Bulgarians wanting to 'return to Europe' and about the necessity of 'reform'. "We are still dreaming the dream of a united Europe," he said and he added that the reforms were necessary to bring in foreign investors. His words rang hollow given the appalling economic collapse visited upon Bulgaria while he was in charge of the government. The ex-king even made the claim that young people were returning to Bulgaria as they realised that there are now opportunities in the country: the reality is that the population of the country has undergone an enormous slump thanks to emigration and early death due to poverty. Saxe–Coburg–Gotha, who returned from exile in Spain to govern the country in 2001, claimed that many Bulgarians still like him "in spite of my four years as Prime Minister." [Interview with Jörn Lauterbach and Oliver Schirg, *Die Welt*, 12 April 2006]

However, there are already huge numbers of citizens of Romania and Bulgaria already in the EU. There are estimated to be over 1,000,000 Romanians in Italy and several hundred thousand in Spain. A 10-year old boy who hanged himself because his mother had gone away to work in Italy has shocked Romania, and its people are now plunged into remorse at the way their economic collapse is wreaking havoc on society's weakest members. [Mirel Bran, *Le Monde*, 19 April 2006] In Sweden, moreover, a young Pole was found dead in a police cell after he, too, committed suicide. It seems that he had been persuaded by some friends back in Poland to come and work in Sweden with them. When he arrived there, he realised that they were criminals operating in a shop-lifting gang and they forced him to steal with and for them. When he demurred, they beat him up. He was arrested and told the police what had happened to him, asking them to protect him. A Swedish paper, *Sydsvenka Dagblad*, has found numerous cases of such gangs operating across the country. [Olivier Truc, *Le Monde*, 14 April 2006]

Netherlands postpone labour market decision

The Dutch government has backed down on its plans to open the Dutch labour market fully to workers from new EU Member States, postponing the decision until later this year. The intention had been to lift barriers to workers from new Member States on 1 January 2007 but a parliamentary debate has revealed that there is strong opposition to the plan. Dutch workers fear that a huge influx of Poles will damage their wages and conditions, and they are demanding safeguards against

people working on the black market. Member States from the 'old' EU have until 1 May 2006 to tell the Commission whether they intend to maintain restrictions on workers from new Member States. [Mark Beunderman, *EU Observer*, 13 April 2006]

Marine Le Pen wants to succeed her father

The daughter of the President of the *Front National*, Marine Le Pen, has indicated that she would indeed like to succeed her father when he steps down as party leader. She has said that the question of the succession is not on the table for the time being, since her father seems to have no intention of stepping down in the near future, but that she would like to stand for election to the presidency of the party when he does. She has thus abandoned her previously rather modest position, when she appeared uncertain how to react to her success with the media in 2002. Her father is not necessarily that keen on her approach: he once attacked her in an interview for trying to make the National Front too nice, saying that this would never get anywhere. She has published a book in which she defends her father against allegations of racism and explains her own views about politics. Her position is more moderate than that of her father, and she is also opposed to those religious elements within the National Front who want, for instance, to rescind the Veil law which permits abortion. Divorced, Marine Le Pen is supposed to embody the 'modernising' tendency of a party which, under the long leadership of her father, has always been marginalised as extremist. [Christiane Chombeau, *Le Monde*, 16 April 2006]

Two ladies?

Meanwhile, the former Socialist Minister Ségolène Royal has confirmed that she intends to be a candidate in the 2007 presidential elections. She has a good chance of success and would therefore be the first woman ever to govern France, Salic law having forbidden women from ever ascending the throne. If she did win, it would mean that both France and Germany were governed by women. Ségolène Royal is the common law wife of the First Secretary of the French Socialist Party, François Hollande, but an accomplished politician in her own right and currently President of the Regional Council of Poitou-Charentes. Royal has launched her campaign via a 'participatory forum' in the form of a website called *Désirs d'avenir* (Desires of the future). [Ariane Chemin, *Le Monde*, 14 April 2006]

Le Pen in third place

An opinion poll published in *Le Figaro* on 20 April 2006 has put Ségolène Royal in first place if she gets through to the second round of the election. The polls show that she would win 51 per cent of the vote against 49 per cent for Nicolas Sarkozy. In the first round she would come first with 34 per cent of the vote against 30 per cent for Sarkozy. This makes Ms Royale far more popular than the other possible Socialist candidates, Lionel Jospin (23 per cent), Jack Lang (22 per cent), Dominique Strauss-Kahn (18 per cent) and Laurent Fabius (15 per cent). In the first round, Jean-Marie Le Pen would come third (with 10 per cent) ahead of the current Prime Minister, Dominique de Villepin, who is only polling 6 per cent at the moment.

Romanians annoyed at property restitution

Bran Castle near Brasov in Romania has been restituted to Dominic de Habsburg, an architect living in the United States who is the grandson of Princess Ileana of Romania whose home was the castle was until she fled Romania in 1947. The castle has been open to the public for years and is a popular tourist destination. It is billed as 'Dracula's Castle', although without a great deal of evidence for this claim; the castle was in fact built by the German knights who colonised that part of Transylvania in the 12th Century. The locals are worried that the restitution of the castle will deprive them of an important source of

revenue. This restitution follows the restitution of a palace in Bucharest to the former King Michael of Romania, who lives in Switzerland. The royals, it seems, get preferential treatment since there are hundreds of thousands of Romanians whose property was taken from them by the Communists, and only 8 per cent of them have got anything back. In 1995, a law was passed which allowed tenants of former state properties to buy them; this enabled a lot of politicians to obtain grand buildings for a song. [Mirel Bran, *Le Monde*, 15 April 2006]

Ante Gotovina signs Milosevic condolences

The former Croatian General, Ante Gotovina, has put his name to a list of prisoners in The Hague who signed the condolence announcement for the former Yugoslav President, Slobodan Milosevic. It is the practice in Serbia, as in Germany, for family and friends to place sober announcements of people's deaths in the newspapers, usually with a very short supporting phrase like 'beloved father' or 'esteemed friend'. In this case, the phrase read "a last farewell to our fellow fighter in The Hague". [Vrijeme, Zagreb, 14 March 2006]. Gotovina was arrested and transferred to The Hague in December last year, having been on the run for four years. He was indicted for leading the 1995 'Operation Storm' which recaptured the Krajina area of Croatia from rebel Croatian Serbs who had declared a 'Krajina republic' there. The operation resulted in the complete ethnic cleansing of the area, with hundreds of thousands of Serbs fleeing the advancing Croatian troops. In the new version of the indictment against Gotovina (The Hague tribunal often changes the charges against its defendants) Operation Storm is called "an ethnic cleansing operation which drove the Krajina Serbs out of Croatia"; however, in the trial of the former Yugoslav President, the late Slobodan Milosevic, The Hague prosecution had argued that Milosevic had himself been responsible for evacuating the Serbs from Krajina in order to have people with which to repopulate ethnically cleansed areas of Eastern Bosnia and Kosovo. [Goran Jungvirth, *Institute of War and Peace Reporting*, 7 April 2006]

US presses for EU membership for Balkan states

Nicholas Burns, the US Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs and former US Ambassador to NATO, has said that the EU must be clear about offering EU membership to the states of the former Yugoslavia. "We Americans would say that Europe should say quite clearly that the future of those countries would be as members of the EU and that we at NATO should also send that same strong signal," Burns said. "Our business in Europe isn't finished because the Balkans remains an island in the heart of Europe that is not connected to the great trans-Atlantic institutions: EU and NATO," he said, speaking at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. The US has often issued such instructions to the EU, for instance to Turkey whose bid to join the EU it pushed heavily in 2002. Burns emphasised the continuity of US support for European integration, saying, "The great strategic objective of every American administration, going all the way back to the beginning of the Cold War, was that Europe should be free and in peace and we are nearly of achieving that great strategic objective. But the Balkans remains unfinished business." [Honor Mahony and Ekrem Krasniqi, *EU Observer*, 12 April 2006]

Greek President attacks 'forgotten promises' on Kosovo

The President of Greece, Karolos Papoulias, has accused the international community of breaking its promises over Kosovo, saying little had been done to improve life in the province of Serbia. "The better life which the international community promised after the bombing in 1999 was lost in the bureaucratic labyrinth of economic and humanitarian aid," Papoulias said, adding that world leaders "quickly forgot their responsibilities and promises." Kosovo has been under UN

administrative rule since mid-1999, following NATO's attack against Yugoslavia. Papoulias said, "Organized crime and the black economy were the real winners of the war." Papoulias, a former Foreign Minister who was elected President by Parliament for a five-year term in 2005, was speaking at the University of Macedonia in the northern port city of Thessaloniki. [*Associated Press Worldstream*, 11 April 2006]

Russian NGO law comes into force

A new law which has been roundly attacked in the West came into force in Russia on 17 April. It governs the behaviour of non-governmental organisations, many of which are in fact paid for by Western governments and many of which engage in overt political campaigning. The law has been defended by President Putin as a way of fighting the war on terror and preventing money-laundering. Mr Putin has insisted that legitimate NGOs have nothing to fear from the new law. Human rights activists in Russia complain that the text is not itself problematic, rather the wording is vague enough to allow the state room for manoeuvre in interpreting and applying the law. The law provides that NGOs must submit an annual report on their activities and that the authorities may inspect their offices to check that they are doing what they say they are doing. [*Le Monde*, 18 April 2006]

EU pours cold water on Moldova's prospects

The EU has sought to dampen the hopes of Moldova that it is anywhere near EU membership. The Moldovan Prime Minister, Vasile Tarlev, was told by EU officials on a visit to Brussels to concentrate on reforms and to work within the EU's neighbourhood policy. The EU said that it might be able to grant trade privileges but that there would be no substantial political progress with its application to become an EU member. [Ahto Lobjakas, *Radio Free Europe Newslines*, 11 April 2006]

This negative reaction comes in spite of the fact that an EU monitoring mission, which was sent at the end of last year to survey the border between Ukraine and the secessionist Moldovan province of Transdnistria, has found very little evidence of the smuggling of which the breakaway republic is always being accused. The mission was composed of 130 customs officials, mainly from the new EU Member States who were chosen because they speak Russian, and was based in the South-Western Ukrainian city of Odessa (near the border with Transdnistria). In March, Ukraine imposed restrictions on vehicles crossing the border; many politicians and citizens in Russia, as well as the Transdnistrian authorities themselves, denounced what they said was a Ukrainian blockade. Convoys of humanitarian aid were sent from Russian cities. The Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, has attacked what he says is the EU's support for this aggressive new Ukrainian border policy. The EU, for its part, is accusing Russia of doing everything it can to prevent a resolution of the Transdnistrian issue and of wanting to create 'another Kaliningrad' (i.e. a Russian enclave) between Moldova and Ukraine. Romania, which borders Moldova, is to join the EU next year. [Natalie Nougayrède, *Le Monde*, 14 April 2006]

In fact, however, the EU monitors have found that there is none of the massive smuggling of which Transdnistria is always being accused. The deputy head of the mission, Antti Hartikainen, said that it has detected only 'minor' incidents and that there is none of the human trafficking or drugs or arms-running which is always being talked about. [Interview with *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 7 April 2006]

Russia and EU agree to cooperate on agriculture

The Russian Minister of agriculture, Alexei Goreyev, and the European Commissar for agriculture, Mariann Fischer-Boel, are due to sign a memorandum to promote cooperation in agriculture and industry. There has not yet, however, been an agreement in the far more difficult area of energy cooperation. [*Interfax*, 10 April 2006]