

INTELLIGENCE DIGEST

by John Laughland

The Padua wall

The authorities in the Northern Italian town of Padua have taken an unusual step in order to crack down on illegal immigration and criminal activity: they have surrounded a particularly bad estate with a 3 m high fence and police regularly check the papers of those going in and out. As a result of these checks, 25 illegal immigrants were expelled from the country on 15 August. The surprising measure of erecting a wall has been taken following a long period of tension between the inhabitants of the block and other residents nearby: it is believed to be a haven for drug traffickers and other criminals. The situation is indeed very dangerous there: when two carabinieri tried to arrest a cocaine dealer, they had to call for reinforcements as they found themselves surrounded by about 30 Tunisians who were trying to free their compatriot. The local residents say that the wall has not helped much, however: they say that the drug traffickers have simply moved down the road. They also say that the fence is too low and should have barbed wire. For them, the problems started when rival Nigerian and Tunisian gangs started to engage in turf wars over the drugs market. [Salvatore Aloïse, *Le Monde*, 17 August 2006]

Boat people continue to arrive in Canaries and Sicily

Immigrants from Senegal and Mauritania are continuing to land in their thousands on the beaches of the Canary Islands in small boats which people-traffickers use to take them into the territory of the European Union. One of the beaches has now been nicknamed 'Solidarity Beach' because the tourists there often interrupt their sunbathing to help the Africans ashore. It takes about 10 days for the little boats to make the 1,200 km journey from the West coast of Africa. In this year alone some 16,000 people have made this perilous crossing and consequently the reception centres in the Canary Islands are "at their absolute limit," according to the regional president, Adán Martín.

A patrol boat has now been sent by the new European border protection agency, Frontex, whose offices are in Warsaw and which is run by a Finn. The Spanish police complain that this is not enough (but it is not clear why they do not think that it is Spain's duty to protect her own borders). The conservative opposition in Madrid blames the government for the crisis, especially Prime Minister José Luis Zapatero's decision to legalise 700,000 illegal immigrants last year. The leader of the Partido Popular, Mariano Roy, says that Spain has become "the favourite country for the international Mafia and for gangs of people traffickers and the government is doing absolutely nothing about it." Typically the illegal immigrants are taken to major urban centres in mainland Spain and given menial work for a few euros an hour. Others do a bunk and beg in the streets. But few, it seems, cross the Pyrenees because they fear strict police controls in France. In the first week of August, 160 such boat people were repatriated to Mali but the operation was carried out in secret on the request of the government of Mali. Spain has been trying to reach an agreement with Senegal, where the vast majority of the immigrants come from, but the Senegalese president has named his price: he wants Spain to pay for various infrastructure projects to improve the country's water supply but the Spanish fear that any money paid for such projects will be stolen. The European Parliament estimates that some 80,000 Africans would like to come into the EU, while non-governmental organisations claim that some 1,500 have died this year

while crossing. Boats full of dead people have been found off the coast of the Canaries; one of them drifted all the way across the Atlantic and was picked up in Barbados. [Ute Müller, *Die Welt*, 18 August 2006]

Similar problems are affecting the tiny Italian island of Lampedusa. In the early hours of 21 August, seven immigrants died and 22 disappeared while trying to cross from North Africa to Italian territory in a rubber boat. The tragedy occurred just 36 hours after at least ten people died in a previous crossing: on that occasion, some 70 survivors were fished out of the sea by the Italian navy but one of them said the 10 metre long boat had been carrying 120 people, which would mean that 40 are still unaccounted for. On 29 July, moreover, 13 people were found death of thirst and hunger after having spent 20 days at sea between Libya and Italy. The 14 survivors were hospitalised in a serious condition. Lampedusa is 300km from the Libyan coast. Between 1 January and 31 July 2006, 10,414 persons on 178 boats have arrived in Lampedusa. This compares to 6,901 persons for the same period in 2005. The boats in which they travel are getting smaller and smaller and cannot always reach Sicily, 200km from Lampedusa. [*Corriere della sera*, 21 August 2006]

Honour killing in Brescia

Italy is in shock after a 20 year-old woman of Pakistani origin, who lived in Brescia and worked in a pizzeria, was murdered with a kitchen knife by her own father who disapproved of her cohabiting with an Italian divorcé after she had been 'promised' to a cousin back in Pakistan. Admitting the honour killing, the father said, "I did not want her to become a whore like the others." The alert was given by her boyfriend when she disappeared one evening after going to see her father on his request: the body was later found buried in the garden, her head facing Mecca. Police are also seeking an uncle of the dead woman and a brother-in-law: they are suspected of participating in the killing, as custom requires. The mother and the six siblings of the murdered woman had left for Pakistan a few days previously. This honour killing has naturally caused a new argument to erupt about the integration of immigrants into European society, and it comes just as the left-wing government of Romano Prodi is trying to introduce a law which would reduce from ten to five years the residence period required for obtaining Italian nationality: the father had an Italian passport and their most recent child had been born in Italy. [*Corriere della sera*, 14 August 2006]

Dutch police investigate children trafficking

The Dutch have an acronym – AMA – for children asylum seekers. A number of Nigerian children aged under 15 have disappeared from the reception centres where they had been staying following their arrival in the Netherlands. Now, the Dutch authorities assume that they were transported to the country by people traffickers in the first place. The children had said they were orphans but, according to a Dutch police inspector, while this is sometimes true, there are also cases in which children are sent to the Netherlands by the people traffickers, either in order to bring their family into the country later or for more sinister purposes. There seems little doubt that they are brought by traffickers: they have all always 'lost' their tickets, passports and boarding cards. This is to prevent the person who accompanied them onto the plane from being identified. Around a dozen Nigerians and about ten Chinese or Indian children have disappeared in this way from their reception centres. UNICEF fears

that these children end up working in sweatshops or as prostitutes. The Dutch government has tried to crack down on illegal immigration and it seems to have had some success. In 2000, 3,800 child asylum seekers arrived in the Netherlands but the number had fallen to 424 in 2005. Indeed, the overall figures for asylum seekers in the Netherlands have fallen from 34,000 in 2000 to 5,400 in 2005, thanks in part to the policies of the immigration minister, Rita Verdonk. Theoretically the children should be expelled immediately but if they say they are orphans this can be done only if a family or an orphanage in their country of origin is prepared to take them. Consequently, most of them stay in the country until they become adults. [Jean-Pierre Stroobants, *Le Monde*, 17 August 2006]

Russia seeks to repatriate Russians from Latvia

Although Latvia belongs to the European Union and NATO, it practises heavy discrimination against its huge Russian minority. Some 40 per cent of the Latvian population is Russian and yet ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union the Latvian authorities have done all they can to make life difficult for the numerous Russians who live in the country (many of whom were born there, Latvia having always been part of Russia except for a brief interlude between the wars). The worst aspect of this discrimination lies in the refusal of the Latvian authorities to give their Russian citizens passports, i.e. the refusal to recognise them as citizens at all. The country has introduced a very difficult language and history test for Russian speakers and many Russians who were born in Latvia regard the test as insulting. Latvia has forced Russian language schools to teach 60 per cent of the course in Latvian; and there are hundreds of thousands of Russians living in Latvia who do not have citizenship. Latvia gives them only an 'alien's passport' which does not allow them to travel anywhere outside the Baltic States and Denmark. Since the collapse of the USSR, Russia has generally done little or nothing to help its compatriots in the Baltic States or elsewhere in former Soviet republics. Now, however, the Putin administration is seeking to encourage ethnic Russians from the Baltic States to move to Russia itself instead. A package of incentives was approved in June, inspired no doubt in part by the fact that Russia, like many European countries, is experiencing a demographic collapse and needs more people. The incentives include cash and social benefits but many ethnic Russians, in Latvia as in the other Baltic States, are sceptical about the programme. [Claire Bigg, *Radio Free Europe*, 15 August 2006]

Merkel's popularity collapses

The opinion poll ratings of the new German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, elected by a whisker last September have collapsed. In January, more than half of the German population (55 per cent) was said to support her but now her rating is a mere 37 per cent. This is the first time that her rating has dropped below 40 per cent. The head of the Social Democrats, who govern in a 'grand coalition' with the Christian Democrats, is faring little better: Kurt Beck's rating is 28 per cent. The CDU/CSU are at 33.3 per cent while the SPD are at 29.3 per cent. Voices are being raised within the Christian Democrats saying that the party must develop a strategy for leaving the coalition. There is resentment at the excessively free-market nature of the Chancellor's current policies, and it has been expressed by the Deputy leader of the CDU, Jürgen Rüttgers. Party activists felt that the 2005 election campaign laid far too little emphasis on social issues, and that this was the reason why the party failed to win a decisive lead. Commentators say that the atmosphere in the 'grand coalition' is bad and that Christian Democrats will soon start to think of forming an alliance with the Greens and the FDP Liberals. [*Die Welt*, 16 August 2006]

Haider calls for referendum on EU membership

On 14 August, the Austrian politician, Jörg Haider, proposed a national referendum on Austria's continuing membership of the EU. Hostility to both the EU in general and the euro in particular are strong in Austria. "*The Austrians should have a new chance to decide whether they really want to be in the EU,*" said Haider, "*or become a neutral and sovereign state again.*" Haider called for this referendum to be held before any referendum on the European Constitution, whose rejection by voters in France and the Netherlands he in any case welcomed. Haider's suggestion was rapidly dismissed by the Christian Democrat Chancellor, Wolfgang Schüssel. A general election is to be held in Austria on 1 October. At the end of 1999, the party Haider then led, the Freedom Party, was included in the national governing coalition (with the Christian Democrat Austrian People's Party) but Haider resigned the leadership following massive pressure from the EU. The Freedom Party then scored badly in the 2002 elections, which were held early, and Haider then led a breakaway faction called the Alliance for the Future of Austria which now gets about 3 per cent or 4 per cent in the opinion polls, as opposed to 5 per cent or 6 per cent for the Freedom Party. However, in a country in which only 34 per cent of the electorate is happy with the EU, Haider's euroscepticism may resonate with the electorate. [*Le Monde*, 14 August 2006]

Polish-German relations reach new low

Following the admission by the German novelist, Günter Grass that he served in the SS, Polish-German relations, already bad, have plunged to a new low. Lech Walesa, the former leader of Solidarity and later President of Poland, has demanded that Grass renounce his honorary citizenship of Gdansk (Danzig) where Grass was born: Grass has declined to do this but has said he would respect any decision taken by the town authorities. Walesa has said that if the Gdansk city council does not rescind Grass' honorary citizenship then he would renounce his own. Other Poles have stuck up for Grass, however. The influential journalist, Adam Michnik, editor of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, has said that Poland had had no better friend than Grass and that his youthful mistakes should be pardoned. The Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Polish parliament, Pawel Zaleski, blamed Germany for the new crisis in their relations. He said the Germans were trying to re-write history. Oil was poured on to the flames when Erika Steinbach, the head of the German Expellees association, who is a hate figure in Poland, said that Grass should give the proceeds from his latest book (which has received massive publicity as a result of his admission that he joined the SS in 1944 and hid the fact until now, spending the intervening sixty years as a preachy left-wing moralist) to Polish victims of the Nazis: many Poles think of Steinbach as little better than a Nazi herself. [Oliver Hinz, *Die Welt*, 19 August 2006]

Anger at German expellees' exhibition

Things have been made only worse by a new exhibition organised in Berlin by the German Federation of Expellees (*Bund der Vertriebenen*). It deals with the history of expulsion of people in the 20th Century and has aroused the ire of Czech and Polish politicians because of course it details the expulsion of millions of Germans after the Second World War as a result of the Potsdam agreement between the Allies. The mass expulsion resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. The BdV says that some 80-100 million people were driven from their homes during the last century, from Armenians and Greeks to Karelians and Germans. The Poles are furious, because the exhibition is intended to form the kernel of a

permanent “Centre on Expulsions” which the BdV wants to set up in the German capital. The Polish Prime Minister, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, has attacked the exhibition as “*an attempt to relativise the history of the Second World War.*” The Mayor of Warsaw, Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, has cancelled a planned visit to Berlin in protest. Many people confuse the BdV with organisations which campaign for compensation from the Polish state for the property lost by Germans sixty years ago but the BdV president, Erika Steinbach, says that this is not her organisation’s position. [*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 12 August 2006]

Poland largest recipient of structural funds

In the coming seven years, Poland is to receive nearly €60 billion from the EU’s structural funds. These figures have recently been confirmed by the European Commission. This makes Poland by far the greatest recipient of EU structural funds, which are aimed at promoting economic development. The second largest recipient will be Spain with €31.5 billion, although this is more than €23 billion less than Spain received in the period 2000-2006. Spain has therefore turned out to be the biggest loser following enlargement of the EU in May 2004. In 2007-2013 Germany will receive €23.5 billion, €5 billion less than in the previous budget period: the cuts will be almost exclusively in the former East Germany, whose *Länder* will have to do without €4 billion less than before. EU Member States agreed to limit the total spending on structural funds to €308 billion; it had been €231 billion in 2000-2006 but then the EU had only 15 Member States for most of that time. The Czech Republic and Hungary will receive more than €20 billion. Romania will get €17.5 billion when it joins the EU next year. [*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 25 July 2006]

Eurozone inflation down

Prices in the eurozone fell by 0.1 per cent in July 2006, bringing the yearly rate to 2.4 per cent. The annual rate by June had been 2.5 per cent. This slight drop has surprised many economists, who expected rising energy prices to push the price index up. The European Central Bank thinks that inflation will continue to be above 2 per cent and for this reason it is expected that euro interest rates will rise in December. Since December 2005 the ECB has raised rates by 100 points, i.e. 1 per cent. The key ECB rate is now 3 per cent. ‘Price stability’, to which the ECB is constitutionally committed, is said to mean inflation of not more than 2 per cent. Spain has the highest inflation rate in the eurozone, 4 per cent, followed by Greece (3.9 per cent) and Luxembourg (3.4 per cent). The lowest rate is in Finland (1.5 per cent). Germany’s inflation rate is 2.1 per cent. [*Handelsblatt*, 17 August 2006]

Gerhard Schröder adopts another Russian child

The former German Chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, 62, and his wife, Doris Schröder-Kopf, 43, have adopted a Russian baby boy from St Petersburg. In the summer of 2004, they adopted a girl, also from St Petersburg, whom they have called Victoria. She is now five years old. Mrs Schröder-Kopf also has a 15 year-old daughter from a previous marriage, while the former Chancellor has no children by any of his four wives including Doris. Like the adoption of Victoria, the arrival of the baby boy was top secret, with even the Schröder’s bodyguards being kept in the dark until the last minute. Following the adoption of Victoria there was some controversy in the German press because it would be very difficult in Germany for a man as old as the former Chancellor to adopt a child. It later turned out that Schröder had spoken to President Putin about his adoption plans. The speculation was then that Putin had helped Schröder out, using his contacts in his original political fiefdom of St. Petersburg. Victoria had previously lived in an orphanage there. Doris Schröder-Kopf does a lot of

charitable work connected with children: she has worked with UNICEF and for drug-addicted children in Albania. She has even published her own children’s book, entitled ‘The Chancellor lives in a swimming pool.’ [*Die Welt*, 17 August 2006]

Orange revolution comes to an end

Following four months of political deadlock, the Ukrainian president, Viktor Yushchenko, has appointed Viktor Yanukovich as Prime Minister. Yanukovich thereby becomes the most powerful man in Ukraine, the Prime Minister having been given most of the governmental powers by constitutional changes urged on Ukraine by the West during the ‘orange revolution’ of 2004-5. On that occasion, indeed, Yushchenko beat Yanukovich in the presidential race following weeks of protests and allegations of electoral fraud. Yanukovich has now had the last laugh, however, especially since there have been no charges against him for electoral fraud since the events around Christmas 2004. There have also been no charges made over the alleged ‘poisoning’ of Viktor Yushchenko, which suggests that, like electoral fraud, the poisoning may have been an invention of political campaign managers rather than a real event.

Under two weeks after his appointment as head of the Ukrainian government on 4 August, Yanukovich made his first visit abroad, to Russia on 16 August. He is usually described in the Western media as ‘pro-Russian’ but negotiations are continuing between Moscow and Kiev over gas deliveries, a bone of contention which led to a brief interruption in gas supplies in January. Yanukovich went to see President Putin in the Black Sea resort of Sochi, where he was able to meet the heads of state of the Eurasian Economic Community (Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan) at which Ukraine has observer status. This seemed to contrast with Viktor Yushchenko’s determination to make Ukraine a member of the EU and NATO. Yanukovich also had meetings with his Russian opposite, the Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov. Following this meeting, Yanukovich said that he was confident that there would be no sudden rise in the price of Russian gas in 2007. Fradkov, for his part, said that he would not put any pressure on Ukraine but that Russia wanted “*a higher level of integration*” between the states of the former USSR, based on the Eurasian Economic Community. [*Le Monde*, 16 August 2006]

In a further indication of geopolitical reorientation, Kiev has also announced that it wants to increase its trade and political cooperation with neighbouring Belarus. The Ukrainian First Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister, Mykola Azarov, told the Belarusian ambassador in Kiev that Ukraine wants ‘constructive dialogue’ with Belarus. A key priority for Ukraine is to increase cooperation with its northern neighbour. [*Radio Free Europe Newline*, 16 August 2006]

The Belarusian president, Alexander Lukashenko, said that he was happy with the outcome of the Sochi mini-summit. He said, “*We have finally come to a conclusion that we have to establish a customs union. Three states — Belarus, Russia, and Kazakhstan — appear to have achieved more progress in this respect. However, Tajikistan is not lagging behind us in terms of the effort to harmonize regulations, we just don’t have a shared border.*” [*Radio Free Europe Newline*, 17 August 2006]

Kosovo Albanians welcome new UNMIK chief

The Albanians in Kosovo have generally welcomed the appointment of the German diplomat, Joachim Rucker, as the new international governor of Kosovo, the province of Southern Serbia which has been administered by the United Nations and occupied by the West since NATO attacked Yugoslavia in 1999. Various leading Kosovo Albanian politicians called Rucker’s appointment “*the right choice*” and “*the best*

solution". The Serbs, meanwhile, were less positive. Marko Jakšić, a member of Belgrade's negotiating team for the final status of Kosovo, said that Serbs were generally disappointed with Rucker's appointment but added that, in any case, it was the not head of UNMIK who will decide what happens in Kosovo but the government of the United States of America. "*But our experience tells us that the UNMIK chiefs are just figureheads,*" said Jakšić, "*and that their deputies usually make the most important moves from the shadows, and they are regularly Americans.*" [Radio Free Europe Newline, 16 August 2006]

A London based non-governmental organisation, Minority Rights Group, has said that the situation of minorities in Kosovo (mainly Serbs and gypsies) is "*the worst in Europe*". [Report dated 7 August 2006, www.minorityrights.org] This is in spite of the fact that the West attacked Yugoslavia and then occupied Kosovo in the name of minority rights, and in spite of the fact that the province has been administered directly by the international community since 1999. Instead of promoting tolerance and ethnic harmony, the international community has instead looked the other way as new paramilitary groups are formed which campaign for an ethnically pure Albanian Kosovo and, thereby, for a 'Greater Albania.' [Profile of paramilitary leader Albin Kurti by Wolf Oschlies, www.eurasischesmagazin.de]

Bosnian Serbs want own police force

Bosnia-Herzegovina, meanwhile, has, like Kosovo, been administered by the international community since the fighting there ended in 1995. (The war in Kosovo ended in 1999.) In spite of more than a decade of international government and multi-culturalism on paper, Bosnia-Herzegovina remains as artificial a state as it ever was, its two halves (the Bosnian Serb half and the Muslim-Croat federation) agreeing to coexist only on the basis that they are not actually governed by the institutions of the Bosnian state at all. The latest attempts of the international authorities to force integration of Bosnia's three peoples concerns the police force, which the High Representative and the EU want to unify. Currently each entity has its own police. The Bosnian Serb Prime Minister, Milorad Dodik, said on 15 August that he would not give up the police force of Republika Srpska. The EU has laid down police reform as a condition for signing the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. [Radio Free Europe Newline, 16 August 2006]

Primakov on Middle East

The former Russian Prime Minister, Yevgeny Primakov, who is well known as an expert on the Middle East, said that he thinks that Israel had planned its attack on Lebanon "*for a very long time ... to bring about the collapse of Lebanon and a possible civil war.*" Primakov claimed that Israel's calculation was that elements in Lebanon would rally against Hezbollah and destroy its power. He added that Israel was preparing to bomb Syria and Iran if they became involved in the conflict. Primakov said that the plan had gone badly wrong for Israel, that it had suffered a defeat and that there was now little prospect of any further conflict in the Middle East since the American government had no interest in one in the run-up to the November mid-term elections. He expressed the hope that Washington had realised that it was unwise "*to export democracy and revolution around the world*" because "*the Trotskyites have already shown that this is a hopeless task.*" [Izvestia, 17 August 2006]

Marko Milošević accuses ICTY

Marko Milošević, the son of the former president of Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milošević, has written a long open letter to a judge at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, which he has copied to the Security Council of the United Nations and other

international bodies, criticising the report authored by judge, Kevin Parker, Vice-President of the Tribunal, on his father's death in custody at The Hague in March. The tone of the letter is firm and bitter. He accuses the ICTY of murdering his father by refusing him medical attention and says that the report into allegations of poisoning were a device to distract attention from the judges' culpability. He denies that either he or any of his family ever maintained that the late former president had been murdered and says that he specifically told the ICTY not to lend credence to this theory by 'investigating' it and then denying it. He also alleges that it was quite wrong for the ICTY to monopolise the autopsy, especially when it was itself being accused of neglect. "*Should I mention the fact that the autopsy was conducted without the presence of the independent expert team sent by our family, even though we insisted on it? Or that the Russian doctors were denied the access to the body and the tissue samples? Or that we have been denied his blood samples? Now it happens that the Dutch medical institutions and doctors, which have already been gravely compromised in the eyes of the public through their involvement with the ICTY Prosecution in numerous manipulations with my father's health, medical treatment, and respective diagnosis, were the only ones to manage the toxicology tests and announce their results?!*" Marko concludes, "*I understand that you have set-up this straw-man accusation of poisoning, and now by finding that there was no poisoning you assert that the ICTY has been relieved of all responsibility for my father's death. Nevertheless, an unquestionable truth remains before the public, the image of my father addressing your so-called "trial chamber" and asking to be allowed medical treatment, and the "presiding judge" responding that he will not listen to him. The question isn't whether or not my father was murdered or poisoned. The point is that a former head of state, being held in UN custody, was gravely ill and constantly complaining of his medical condition. His health condition was assessed many times by medical experts as to be dire. He was denied adequate (if any) medical treatment, and then he died. At the same time those who denied him treatment were undeniably aware of what the consequences would be... The Tribunal, and everyone in charge, has committed a deliberate murder. They condemned him to death on 24 February when they rejected his request for provisional release, ignoring everything: his health condition, his rights, and the warnings of his doctors, which unlike the jail physician hired by the ICTY, had both unquestionable competence and expertise, as well as his confidence... The ruling handed down on 24 February came into effect on 11 March.*" [i.e. when Milošević died] [Letter dated 17 July 2006]

Izetbegovic tomb blown up

The tomb of the former Muslim president of Bosnia-Herzegovina has been blown up in Sarajevo on 11 August at 3 a.m. The cemetery, called 'Martyrs' Cemetery', also contained the graves of numerous fighters from the Bosnian civil war. Naturally the finger is being pointed at those who might want to destabilise the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina and much Muslim commentary says it was the Serbs. Elections are being held in Bosnia-Herzegovina on 1 October, just as the independence of Kosovo is being discussed, and the internal political situation in Bosnia is very difficult. The explosion also comes shortly after the mysterious release of yet another video which, aired on Radio-Television Serbia, purportedly showing war crimes being committed against Serbs by a Bosnian Muslim general, Atif Dudakovic. Serbia has called for him to be prosecuted and the airing of the video has naturally reopened old wounds and grievances (which in any case all sides have been nursing since 1995). [Can Karpat, www.axisglobe.com, 14 August 2006]